Israel starts tortured process to form the next war and genocide government

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Following Israel's election on October 27 that produced no clear winner with the necessary 61 seat majority in the 120-seat Knesset, President Isaac Herzog has called on Gadi Eisenkot, leader of the largest opposition party Yashar to form a government.

Eisenkot declared in a statement on X, "Now is the time to form a national emergency government. I will do everything to ensure we are worthy". He has up to four weeks to form a government to replace that of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving premier, amid signs that US President Donald Trump is preparing to resume military operations against Iran.

Should Eisenkot fail to form a government, Herzog could turn to Netanyahu to form a national unity government or call fresh elections. Either could leave Netanyahu in power for months.

What is at stake in all these scenarios is the formation of a government able to carry out Washington and Tel Aviv's war agenda. The election campaign was largely fought as a contest between two war criminals over how best to prosecute the genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza and extend it to the West Bank, and continue the ongoing wars against Lebanon, Syria and above all Iran.

Netanyahu has been indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity by the UN's International Criminal Court, while Eisenkot joined Netanyahu's war cabinet for eight months to prosecute Israel's war on Gaza. It was Eisenkot who formulated, in 2008, the Dahiya doctrine that calls for the use of overwhelming, disproportionate force against civilian infrastructure in enemy-controlled territory that has become Israel's standard operating procedure.

Both camps, the ultra-nationalists and supposed "liberal" Zionists, fought a racist campaign against the Palestinians. They are all committed to the continuation and expansion of the wars against the Palestinians and back US President Donald Trump's war on Iran, pledging Israel's services as Washington's proxy in its bid to dominate the resource-rich region.

Eisenkot criticised Netanyahu's approach to war for being poorly planned and called for a balance of military strikes and diplomacy to end the war.

According to a report by Israeli broadcaster Channel 12, Netanyahu and Mossad chief Roman Gofman had planned an operation against Iran on the eve of the election. Israel's military and security establishment, who feared it could trigger a major escalation with Iran and lead to the postponement of the election, opposed it. Nevertheless, preparations continued until the Trump administration intervened to put a stop to any action prior to the US midterm elections, after receiving an alert from an Israeli security operative. The *New York Times* reported that Netanyahu had "sought for weeks to orchestrate a new airstrike on Iran" but was blocked by Eyal Zamir, Israel's military chief. Netanyahu's office denied the report as "fake news."

The opposition parties accused Netanyahu of endangering regional stability for his own political ends, with Eisenkot warning Netanyahu not to "dare to place your own political interests above the security of the state." He posted on X, "Netanyahu, my eyes are on you."

Avigdor Lieberman, head of the right-wing Israel Our Home party, which is part of Eisenkot's opposition bloc, demanded that the attorney general open a criminal investigation into Netanyahu for possible treason. He cited Netanyahu's "attempts to drag Israel into a war on the eve of elections, including a willingness to sacrifice (Israeli) soldiers out of fear of losing the election."

The election was little more than a factional struggle within the Israeli bourgeoisie over how best to prosecute the war and present Israel in a better light so its wars can be endorsed by the major imperialist powers in the face of rising popular revulsion. That the ruling elite thinks presenting a less hawkish face, reining in Israel's settlers and curbing the racist language of cabinet ministers will sanitise Israel's toxic brand and improve its image abroad only demonstrates how out of touch it is.

Whether Eisenkot or some other politician succeeds in forming a government to replace Netanyahu, or Netanyahu

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retains power, it will not make an iota of difference to workers in Israel, the region and the wider world.

Eisenkot's path to the premiership is far from straightforward and is likely to compound the political turmoil roiling the country. The former army chief won 21 seats, with his "Change" allies securing a further 27 seats, while Netanyahu's coalition secured 53.

Eisenkot set out four conditions for joining his proposed "broad Zionist government committed to the national interest". These include recognition of Israel as a "Jewish, democratic, liberal and egalitarian state; a commitment to the values of Israel's Declaration of Independence; mandatory military, national or civilian service for all Israeli citizens and "recognition of Hamas as a terrorist organization whose military and governing capabilities in Gaza must be dismantled".

These conditions were designed to exclude the Arab-majority parties from his coalition. Two Arab-led lists won a combined 19 seats: the Joint List with 11 and Ra'am with eight. The Joint List is an alliance of Hadash, Ta'al and Balad, headed by Hadash chairman Yousef Jabareen, with Ta'al leader Ahmad Tibi as faction chairman. Ra'am is the Islamist party led by Mansour Abbas, which joined the short-lived 2021–22 "government of change." Their support gave the anti-Netanyahu camp 67 seats and left Netanyahu's bloc on 53, short of a majority.

They have traditionally rejected conditions regarding the definition of Israel as a strictly Jewish state and the implementation of universal national service. Ra'am leader Abbas and Jabareen have nevertheless said they are prepared to support Eisenkot's government from outside, without signing a coalition agreement.

Eisenkot set out his priorities for a new government, including establishing a state commission of inquiry into the October 7 attack, repealing legislation associated with the Netanyahu government's judicial overhaul, expanding military personnel numbers and improving benefits and recognition for those serving. In relation to any further military action against Iran before a new government is formed, he said he "would support military action", adding the caveat "only in response to direct and immediate threats against Israel that cannot wait until the government is sworn in".

President Herzog's preferred option was clearly an agreement between Netanyahu and Eisenkot to form a national unity government. He was, however, forced to call on Eisenkot to form a government after the two Arab parties said they would support a Eisenkot-led government—giving him a majority.

That these two Arab parties could support a political bloc committed to war against their fellow Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank testifies to their political bankruptcy. They justify this with the "lesser of two evils" argument and the forlorn hope of some amelioration of the treatment of Israel's own Palestinian citizens, who have suffered decades of economic, social and political discrimination.

Netanyahu and his coalition bloc have whipped up a vicious anti-Arab campaign, repeatedly claiming that the elections were stolen by Arab parties, alleging bribery, intimidation, forgery and other irregularities. His Likud party is preparing to appeal the election results—either in part or in whole—based on allegations that Arab political parties used electronic means of tracking voters to boost turnout in a manner banned by the High Court of Justice just before the election.

However, the Central Election Committee said that the allegations being probed, even if found to be accurate, were not of a scale that could affect the results. Two other cases of alleged election interference brought by Likud in a bid to delay the official certification of the results have fallen apart.

One of Netanyahu's longstanding allies, the ultra-orthodox United Torah Judaism that won seven seats, also refused to support Netanyahu's nomination to form a government for failing to introduce a law exempting the ultra-orthodox Jews who choose to study in religious seminaries from military conscription. Instead, it has secured the support of Lieberman—which along with Eisenkot's "Change" bloc had campaigned on compulsory military conscription for all Jewish Israelis—for a compromise on exemptions from military service.

Lieberman's aim in creating what he hopes would be a bloc of 20 seats in the Knesset—if the other ultra-orthodox party Shas were to join—is to secure the premiership for himself. In announcing his decision, he attacked Eisenkot, without naming him, over his claim to lead the "largest party". Lieberman also criticised Eisenkot's plans to form a minority government with the support of the Arab parties, saying that talk of such a government cost the "government of change" bloc seven or eight seats in the last 10 days of the campaign.



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