
Israeli Elections Bulletin | May 30

The Israeli Knesset voted last night to dissolve itself triggering a new election after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to form a governing coalition. Elections will take place on September 17, less than six months after the April 9 elections.

BICOM will be producing an Election Bulletin every two weeks with everything you need to know leading up to the September 17 election. Be sure to listen to our weekly podcast and to follow our [election page](#) featuring our regularly updated poll of polls, campaign updates and analysis of the parties and politicians.

What happened?

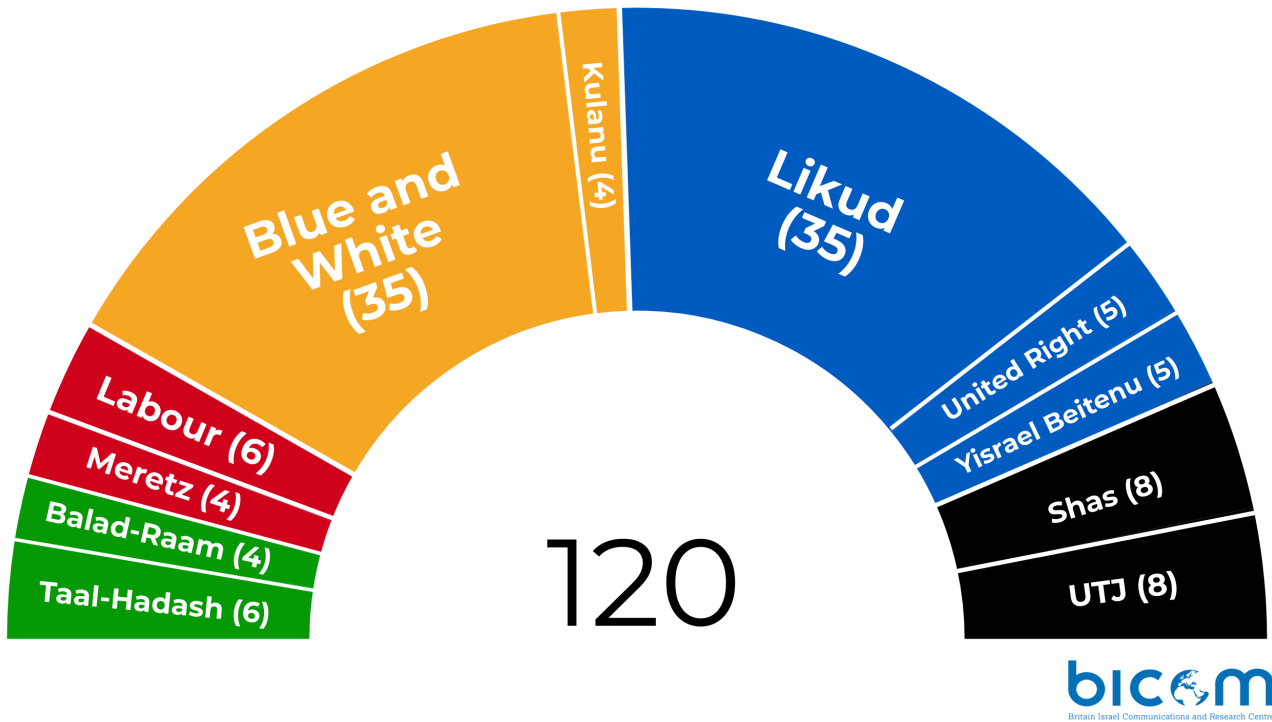
Benjamin Netanyahu told the Likud party last night that he did not succeed in reaching a compromise between Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beitenu party and the ultra-Orthodox parties over the conscription bill. This is the first time in Israel's history that a candidate for prime minister failed to form a coalition after being given the mandate from the president. Netanyahu had tried to form a coalition with the ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and UTJ (8 seats each), Kulanu (4) United Right (5) and Yisrael Beitenu (5).

Lieberman told reporters: "The State of Israel is going to elections because of the Likud's refusal to accept our proposal. This is a complete surrender of the Likud to the ultra-Orthodox. We will not be partners in a government of Jewish law." Netanyahu slammed Lieberman immediately following the Knesset vote, saying: "He has dragged the country to unnecessary elections due to his own political ego". Netanyahu also said that Lieberman wanted to topple the government in order to win a few more votes in the next election and he had no intention of coming to an agreement.

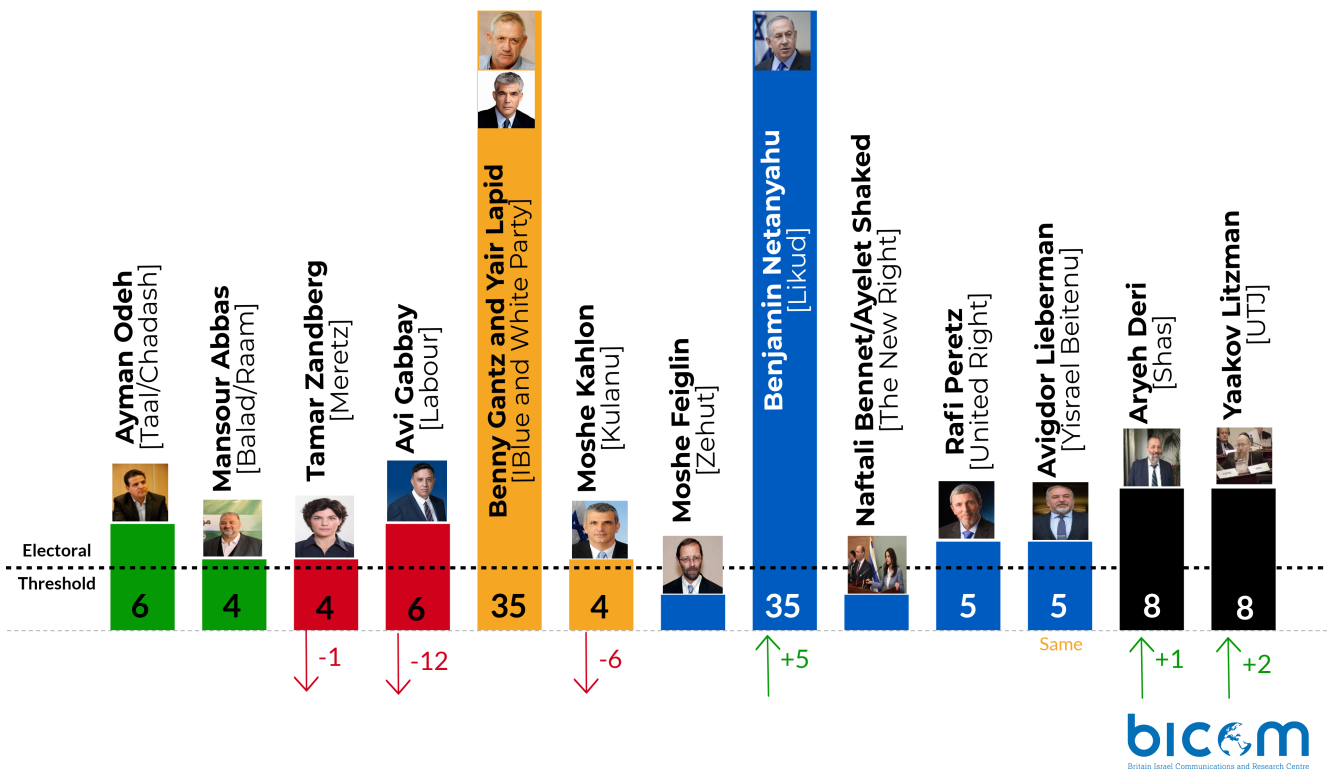
Netanyahu reportedly asked the Labour party to join his coalition. Israeli media said he offered them two senior ministries and the Presidency, but they rejected the offer.

Seventy-four MKs voted in favour and 45 voted against dissolution. The votes in favour included the parties who Netanyahu had tried to form a coalition with, and the Arab parties who believe that they could win more seats in a new election.

Will anything change? Result of April 9 election



How the parties and their leaders shaped up in the April elections



Splits, rumours and mergers

Former Ministers Ayelet Shaked and Naftali Bennett, whose New Right party failed to win a seat in the last election, can try again. Shaked is rumoured to be joining the Likud and Bennett is reported to be trying to merge his new party, New Right, with his old party which is now in a group called the United Right.

Moshe Kahlon's Kulanu party agreed this week to join Likud.

Former IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkott is eligible to join a party and stand as a candidate, but he hasn't indicated whether he is interested in entering politics.

The four Arab parties are reported to be ready to reform their Joint List which will likely boost the number of seats they win.

The Labour party will hold a leadership election and there are rumours that Labour could merge with Meretz.

Orly Levy's party, which received almost 75,000 voters but failed to win any seats, can now merge with another party. She was unable to do this in April as she had been part of Yisrael Beiteinu in the 20th Knesset.

The Blue and White party are expected to run again in a similar format but they could amend their clumsy rotation agreement where Yair Lapid was due to take over as Prime Minister from Benny Gantz after two and a half years had they formed a Government.

How we got here | news stories from BICOM

Netanyahu fails to form government | [May 30](#)

Kulanu to join Likud for early election | [May 29](#)

Knesset votes for new elections | [May 28](#)

Coalition talks deadlocked over conscription bill | [May 24](#)

Netanyahu Hearing postponed until October | [May 23](#)

Likud rival opposes Netanyahu immunity law | [May 17](#)

Netanyahu 'considering Immunity Law' | [May 16](#)

Lieberman threatens to join opposition | [May 14](#)

Kahlon offered Foreign Ministry | [May 2](#)

Israeli President tells politicians to 'clean up the mess' | [May 1](#)

Ultra-Orthodox parties set out demands in coalition talks | [April 29](#)

United Right says Israeli sovereignty must be applied to settlements | [April 23](#)

Israeli President calls for unity | [April 18](#)

Israeli President to ask Netanyahu to be Prime Minister | [April 17](#)

Is Netanyahu in a better or worse position?

The return of the lost right-wing seats

Over 250,000 votes for right wing parties (New Right received 138,598 votes and Zehut 118,031) were wasted as those parties didn't win any seats. If the Likud or a large right-wing bloc can find a way to win these back it could boost the numbers of seats they win.

Detailed evidence against Netanyahu could now leak

Netanyahu convinced the Attorney General not to send evidence documents to his lawyers before the April elections to prevent embarrassing leaks. But this time they will be out in the open. And the elections will take place only two weeks before Netanyahu's scheduled pre-indictment hearing on October 2 and 3. After the hearing the Attorney General will issue his final recommendation whether to indict Netanyahu for bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three cases. In February [BICOM published a briefing](#) examining the corruption cases, mapping out the different stages of the legal and political processes, and analysing potential future scenarios.

The US plan for Israeli-Palestinian talks

This was due to be published after the Israeli Government was formed. Now that won't happen until November, by which time the Trump team will be engrossed in their re-election campaign for 2020. Will this US plan ever be published? If Trump is re-elected this could be something that re-emerges in 2021.

Who will be blamed?

Netanyahu is trying to paint Avigdor Lieberman as the spoiler who dragged the country into another election. Lieberman in turn is blaming Netanyahu and will fiercely attack him in the election campaign. Its unclear at this stage how this will affect their relative political support.

The moderate right voters

The Blue and White party did well in April winning 35 seats, but they largely failed to win over moderate right voters. Netanyahu argues that the merger with Kulanu will bring the party more seats. Netanyahu has showed his hand since the election with attempts to pass an immunity law and limit the power of the supreme court. A strong campaign focusing on these issues by the centre left bloc could win over some of these moderate right-wing voters uncomfortable with Netanyahu's policies. Kahlon's party received 152,000 votes in the April elections.

Arab voter turnout

The Arab parties suffered from very low voter turnout in April – 50 per cent in contrast to 63 per cent in 2015. But having supported the dissolution of the Knesset, they are betting big on getting higher numbers this time.

Will anything actually change?

Netanyahu has succeeded in forging a strong alliance between right wing parties and the ultra-Orthodox. But if the relationship between the ultra-Orthodox and Avigdor Lieberman (or even Netanyahu) is now broken, it may be harder to create a future coalition.



Best Knesset speech

Ayman Odeh, chairman of the Hadash party, made fun of Netanyahu's last minute coalition promises as he scrambled to form a government last night. [Odeh joked](#) that Netanyahu offered him full withdrawal from the West Bank, cancellation of the nation-state law, and recognition of the Nakba in exchange for the immunity law.

[Watch here with English subtitles](#)



[Our latest podcast](#)

[Episode 55 | We can't quite believe it, but there's going to be another Israeli election...](#)



James Sorene talks to Richard Pater and Caley Ben-Dor to try and understand why the 21st Knesset voted for another election and whether Benjamin Netanyahu has been weakened by his failure to form a Government. In the second half of the episode, Richard Pater interviews Royal Marine veteran Andrew Garland who helped organise the Britain-Israel Veterans Games that took place in Israel this week.