

Saturday night mass protests have become the norm in Tel Aviv for months now

Ronen Zvulun / Reuters



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# A Pause Before the Storm?

By **Shira Sorko-Ram**

PART FOUR

Since his government was formed last December, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rabbinical right-wing coalition has been pushing new legislation to grant the Prime Minister and his Knesset partners the ability to pass virtually any law they wish without hindrance or obstruction.

Israel's middle class and professional "hard-working, tax-paying, army-serving citizens" see it as an attempt to turn Israel into a dictatorship with strong rabbinical control. Taking to the streets by the hundreds of

thousands across the nation, protestors have amassed in the largest demonstrations in the history of Israel—two or more times a week since the beginning of the year.




Entering the fourth month, we began to hear continuous rumblings, and then loud warnings from senior defense officials that Israel's enemies were viewing the Jewish state as weak and crumbling, due to our political chaos. Israel's media has been quoting our military leaders across the board. Everything points to the fact that our enemies believe "Israel is in

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a serious crisis that could lead to the collapse of Israel.” They recognize an opportunity. There has been serious damage to our deterrence and “there are attacks being planned based on their assumption that Israel is paralyzed.”

As the messages became stronger, it was rumored that Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant (from Netanyahu’s Likud party) was so concerned about possible attacks from multiple enemies, that he felt he must warn the nation. In fact, he asked the prime minister to pause the legislation that was going to neuter the Supreme Court—the cause for the massive protests.

Our nation waited all day to hear Yoav Gallant’s TV appearance. But it didn’t happen. He had been forbidden to speak. The fearful crowds grew larger, blocking highways and protesting at the homes of the leading right-wing politicians, including Netanyahu and Gallant. Instead, Netanyahu flew off to visit another head of state in Europe for a long weekend, as he had done for some weeks, taking a break from the absolute chaos of the nation.

*What could be more nightmarish than to lose some or even many of Israel’s most experienced pilots? And it appeared that the numbers were growing by the day.*

Israeli fighter pilot prepares to take off on a mission



Ofer Zidon / Flash90

## Air Force Pilots: We Will Not Serve In a Dictatorship

The most serious development that Israel now faced for the first time in history, was large numbers of Israeli Air Force pilots in the reserves who went public saying that if Israel’s independent judiciary were destroyed by Netanyahu’s legislature, they would no longer serve in the air force. (Reservists are free to serve or not serve.) What could be more nightmarish than to lose some or even many of Israel’s most experienced pilots? And it appeared that the numbers were growing by the day. Their reason? They said they would not serve a dictatorship, which was the direction the legislation was moving. This reason was more than just ideology.

Europe has an International Criminal Court in the Hague. They can charge anyone, anywhere if they perceive what they call “war crimes” are being committed. The ICC, being very anti-Israel, has longed to get their hands on Israel’s pilots, when, for instance, they return fire against terrorists in Gaza, or destroy Iran’s weapons depots in Syria.

But the ICC has never had a chance; international law states that if a nation has a proper judicial system, that nation is able to investigate its own military for alleged crimes. And, internationally, Israel has a highly-respected judiciary. Now, with Netanyahu and his coalition bent on dismantling our own Supreme Court, the ICC could bring cases against multiple Israelis, especially in the air force. The minute any IAF personnel flew out of Israel, they could be arrested when they stepped off the plane in any one of the 123 states that are party to the ICC.



Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant was publicly fired by PM Benjamin Netanyahu for issuing a warning to the nation - and then rehired

Yonatan Sindel / Flash90

Finally Minister Gallant could not hold back. As Minister of Defense, he knew it was his obligation to speak out. He stood at a podium, with all of Israel watching. Gallant conceded that pressing ahead with his coalition’s legislation could threaten Israel’s security. As a member of Likud, he asked his prime minister to pause the legislation and give time for negotiations to pull the country back together. The pause, he said, was needed “for the security of Israel.” He then tweeted, “The security of the State of Israel has always been and will always remain the mission of my life.”

## How Would Netanyahu Respond?

The next day, Israel waited all day to hear from Netanyahu. Finally he appeared in the evening and fired Gallant on the spot. The nation exploded. Hundreds of thousands of protestors jammed streets, highways and neighborhoods of politicians across the nation until the wee hours of the night. The biggest protest in the history of Israel. The nation demanded that Gallant be reinstated. He is widely considered to be the most competent defense minister by far in the coalition.

Netanyahu didn’t reinstate him—but he didn’t send him an official letter of firing either. Gallant continued his work, while Netanyahu mostly ignored him—even when he was in his presence.

The nation without an official defense minister! This is chaos.

Many other former generals and officials chimed in. They warned that the country was at the brink of civil war. Asaf Zamir, Israel’s Consul General in New York, resigned. “I believe that this [judicial] reform undermines the very foundation of our democratic system and threatens the rule of law in our country.”

Former Justice Minister Sa’ar called the firing of Gallant “an act of madness.” Sa’ar said there was “no precedent in the history of Israel for a defense minister to be fired for issuing a warning, as his job requires, about security dangers...Every day Netanyahu is in power endangers Israel and its future.”

For the first time in the history of Israel, the Labor Union shut down many businesses, including Israel’s main airport! Banks and stores across the nation closed. The

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Yonatan Sindel / Flash90



PM Netanyahu in consultation with two of his main assistants, Constitution Committee Chair MK Simcha Rothman and Shas party leader Aryeh Deri

*“What our enemies see in front of them, in all arenas, is an incompetent government. A cabinet no one trusts. A defense minister in limbo who was fired for telling the truth. A national security minister who leaks recordings of the police chief to the media. A finance minister who says he wants to wipe out villages.”*

famous “Startup Nation” began sending millions of dollars out of Israel to other nations’ banks. The economy, one of the strongest in the world, began to sputter. International credit rating agency Moody’s Investors Service warned that if the judicial revolution proceeds as planned, Israel’s credit rating could be downgraded.

Poll numbers for Netanyahu and his coalition members plummeted. If there were an election today, his coalition would be completely out of a job. Netanyahu went into shock. He decided to pause his legislation for the month of April, citing the Passover holidays, and also Memorial Day for the Shoah, the Memorial Day for Israel’s Fallen Soldiers, ending in Independence Day.

Finally, facing dire polls and growing public anger and anxiety over a wave of terrorist attacks on multiple fronts, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced on April 10, he would permanently

reinstate Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. He also blamed the last government for causing all the chaos and terrorist attacks.

Furthermore, he vowed to press ahead with his reforms, including plans to give the government full control over the committee which appoints judges and totally “reform” the Supreme Court. All the legislation for the new laws will again go into motion in May. And this is just the beginning of an extensive list of new laws he has plans to pass—all of which will give him and his coalition new, enormous powers. However, also in May, by law, his government must pass a two-year budget or the country goes automatically to new elections. He hopes by this slow-down of his judicial legislation, it might wear down the protesters. Ultimately, he believes he will have all his new laws for “reform” passed by the end of July.

**The Nation Weakens, The Enemy Plots To Destroy**

Former Prime Minister Yair Lapid said after a security briefing with the prime minister, he was even more worried than before. “What our enemies see in front of them, in all arenas,

is an incompetent government. A cabinet no one trusts. A defense minister in limbo [now reinstated] who was fired for telling the truth. A national security minister [Ben Gvir] who leaks recordings of the police chief to the media. A finance minister [Smotrich] who says he wants to wipe out [Arab] villages.”

Everyone knows that during this latest administration, terrorism against Israelis has been on the rise. In just the first two months of this year there were 451 terrorist attacks, besides the many hundreds of attempted attacks prevented. Yet 20 Israelis were murdered.

Now it has gotten much worse. During Passover, (and simultaneously, Ramadan, the most violent time for Islam) Gaza and Lebanon fired 34 rockets at Israel in the south, and now also at the Golan Heights. Fortunately, the Iron Dome downed most of them, with no casualties, but there was some property damage.

The media continues to warn that with Israel’s politically-weakened state, it faces enemies whose objectives are nothing short of genocidal. They are

seeking to drag Israel into a multi-front war along its borders, in Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem and with Israel’s Arab population. On cue, during Ramadan, Arabs began rioting inside their Al-Aqsa Mosque and fighting the police who were trying to bring order on the Temple Mount. Just what Iran ordered.

The Iranian octopus of partners and groups is seeking to threaten Israel from multiple areas. This is also unprecedented in terms of the rocket fire from Lebanon and now Syria over such a small period of time. And Hezbollah is Iran’s key ally in the multi-front war. Iran is showing it can heat up any border using various groups whenever it wants to.

Prime Minister Netanyahu rightly said, “Iran is responsible for 95% of the security threats against us. When former President Trump brought together three plus Arab nations into the Abraham

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Firefighters fight flames in northern Israel caused by rockets fired from Lebanon during Passover



Foadi Amun / Flash90



*We encourage you to spend time, as we will—especially this month—praying and fasting, as you are able, for the people and the government of Israel.*

Family and friends mourn the death of Maia and Rina Dee who were murdered in a terrorist attack. They would return the next day to bury the mother Lucy, who fought for days to survive the wounds from the same attack. "Our family of seven is now a family of four", mourned the father, Rabbi Leo Dee.

Accords, Israel had great hopes that Saudi Arabia would also join the Accords, creating a strong anti-Iran alliance. The Saudis were showing interest, but asked in exchange that America would offer some security guarantees and help them develop a civilian nuclear program, together with fewer restrictions for purchasing U.S. arms. It was more than the Biden administration was willing to give.

Now Russia is receiving drones from Iran, a setback for the West. China, moving deeper into the Middle East, has mediated a peace agreement between the Saudis and Iran! Israel finds its hope for an anti-Iranian coalition with Saudi Arabia dashed.

And this just came over the wire: America had stored a large inventory of weapons in Israel for emergency use in our region. It has been emptied in recent months to help Ukraine. America itself has depleted its own inventory of weapons and munitions. Another possible reason for Iran to believe this is a good time for action.

### But God...

A few months ago, a number of international groups felt the need to set the month of May apart for prayer and fasting for Israel. This seems to be a true leading of God's Holy Spirit as things are only heating up. We encourage you to spend time, as we will—especially this month—praying and fasting, as you are able, for the people and the government of Israel. We know the Scriptures promise that Israel will not be destroyed in the Last Days. But history has shown that though the people of Israel will ultimately survive to fulfill God's plan, massive numbers of Jewish lives have been blotted out along the way. The question is, are we looking at another wave of destruction of Israeli lives—even in our own homeland? And who but God and His promised Great Awakening can we hope for? The days are serious, and we hope you will join us in much prayer for God's rescue. ■



Shalom from Jerusalem!

May 2023

In this most chaotic time that Israel has experienced since its miraculous rebirth exactly 75 years ago, Israel needs us.

More than ever, we have a mandate from Heaven to reach out to our people in every possible way.

Israelis are at a place where they are willing to question everything they thought was a given—like living however they want in their own free land.

The internet, television and press are covering our nation with fearful and anxious reports—and no one has the answers to their distress. **This is the time to make God's truth accessible to them.**

We've labored for years to translate outreach and discipleship materials and make the Bible accessible to everyday Israelis in a way they can understand.

Parents of children who are reading our newly released **comic-style Action Bible in Hebrew** tell us the kids don't want to put it down!

Our **Narrated Bible is an awesome resource for non-believers to be introduced to the God of Israel and His Son Yeshua the Messiah in a way they can understand!**

If you can believe it—we are almost out of our first printing of the **Narrated Bible!**

**100% of the funds from sales go back to reprinting more Bibles.** However, since we gave most of the Bibles away to leaders and students across the country and during outreaches, we need to raise funds to reprint. In addition, as we have joined with the Israel Bible Society for this project from the beginning, we have only \$17,000 left to raise of the \$45,000 needed to reprint.

We thank you for your prayers and your financial investment into the area where God gives you a heart to team up with us!

For Israel's sake,

*Kobi and Shani Ferguson*

**Kobi and Shani Ferguson**

**Kobi Ferguson**  
President & CEO

**Shani Ferguson**  
Chief Creative





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