



[Joint List is Set to Become the Third-Largest Party in Israel's Knesset](#)

Following last week's election, the Joint List – an alliance of the four main Arab political parties in Israel – is set to become the third-largest party in Israel's Knesset. High turnout in Arab communities allowed the group to win 13 of the Knesset's 120 seats, making it the third-largest bloc behind only the Blue and White party and the Likud party. The Joint List's priority issues include an end to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the dismantling of Israel's settlements in the West Bank.

In last Tuesday's election, the Joint List ran on a more united front than it did back in April's election and as a result, Arab turnout increased sharply. According to the numbers, approximately 60% of eligible Israeli Arab citizens voted last week, in comparison to around 49% back in April. The Joint List attributed this uptick in voter participation to what they described as an "unprecedented campaign of incitement against the Arab public" by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ally right-wing parties. In addition to his recent controversial pledge to annex a large portion of the West Bank, Netanyahu had also made allegations of voter fraud in Arab communities an issue in his re-election campaign and advocated for cameras to be deployed to polling centers, a request that was shot down by Israel's top court.

With both Netanyahu and political rival Gantz (from the Blue and White party) short of the necessary 61-seat majority, consultations began on Sunday with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin regarding who should be tasked with forming a coalition government. During these discussions with Rivlin, 10 of the 13 Joint List members recommended the Blue and White party's Benny Gantz to be the next Prime Minister over Benjamin Netanyahu. This marked the first time that Arab parties made a recommendation for Prime Minister since 1992, when they supported Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin who campaigned on peace with the Palestinians. The remaining 3 Joint List members – from the Balad party – decided not to recommend Gantz or Netanyahu. After the various pledges of support from Knesset members, Netanyahu held a slim lead over Gantz in building a parliamentary bloc with 55 member-backings to 54.

Following the days of consultations with all of the party heads, Rivlin expressed his desire for both sides to form a unity coalition. Thus, negotiations began taking place between Netanyahu and Gantz to discuss a power-sharing deal, even though Gantz had previously stated he would not join a government that includes Netanyahu – since the latter is facing a series of corruption allegations and could be indicted in the next few weeks. After negotiations stalled, Rivlin announced on Wednesday that he is tasking Netanyahu with forming a coalition government, giving the Prime Minister up to six weeks to establish a majority coalition in the Knesset. Netanyahu will have 28 days to do so, with a possible 14-day extension, before Rivlin can turn to someone else or call for another round of elections.