



### [Gantz Tasked with Forming Israeli Government](#)

The Israeli election of this past September saw incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fail to win the requisite number of parliamentary seats to form a government. Netanyahu's Likud Party won 32 seats in the Knesset, one fewer than the Blue and White Party, which is led by Netanyahu's challenger, Benny Gantz. Despite this, Netanyahu was initially tasked to form a coalition government by Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, but failed to do so. Initial discussions saw the Likud and Blue and White parties express support in working together to form a government, but talks between the two ended without a resolution. As a result, Gantz has now been authorized by Rivlin to form a government, which allows the Blue and Whites to seek partners from minority parties in the Knesset to form a coalition government. Gantz has just under a month to gather the requisite support, and this marks the first time in over a decade that someone other than Netanyahu was mandated to form an Israeli government.

Talks between the Likud and Blue and White broke down as a result of neither leader being willing to compromise. Gantz refused to work under Netanyahu while he is being investigated for corruption, and also took issue with the hardline parties that Netanyahu wanted to bring into the coalition. These parties, which represent the religious and nationalist right-wing, are strong allies of Netanyahu and he has relied on their support in the past. On the other side, Netanyahu refused to form a coalition without his supporters, which led to the deadlock. President Reuven Rivlin called for both parties to compromise when he tasked Gantz with forming the government.

Gantz's Blue and White Party is ideologically centrist, and now faces the difficult task of forming a coalition with parties it does not have strong philosophical similarities with. Gantz is likely to negotiate with Yisrael Beiteinu, a secular, ultra-nationalist party, the left-leaning Labour-Gesher, and the Joint List, which is comprised of Arab parties who have never been in a majority Israeli government before. The leader of Yisrael Beiteinu, Avigdor Lieberman, previously refused to sit in a coalition with Netanyahu's ultra-religious allies in September, which led to the inconclusive election, and the current situation. Lieberman has also expressed his intention to not sit in a coalition with Gantz, and has called for the Likud and Blue and White parties to reach a coalition between themselves.

At this stage, the likelihood of Gantz coming to an agreement with these parties appears to be small. If Gantz is unable to form a government before the deadline assigned to him by Rivlin, Israel will hold its third election in less than a year. Hanging over the electoral process is the potential charge of corruption against Prime Minister Netanyahu. The Israeli Attorney General is due to decide whether to charge him in the coming weeks, and this decision could significantly shift the landscape.