



[Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Indicted on Three Charges](#)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was indicted by the country's Attorney General on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. It marks the first time that a sitting Israeli leader has been indicted. The indictment also throws Israel's political future into question, with two elections this year failing to show a clear winner. In announcing the indictment, Israeli Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit said that Israel was a country of laws, and nobody was above the law. Ironically, Prime Minister Netanyahu came to power in 2009, after his predecessor Ehud Olmert resigned in disgrace over a bribery scandal.

The charges against Netanyahu stem from allegations of offering wealthy media tycoons official favors in exchange for favorable coverage and gifts. There are three cases against Netanyahu, including financial and political misconduct, and each case carries the possibility of a jail term. In one of the cases, Netanyahu allegedly promised the owner of Israel's largest newspaper that he would limit the circulation of one of its competitors in exchange for more favorable coverage. In another case, Netanyahu and his wife Sara are accused of accepting personal gifts from billionaire Arnon Milchon, an Israeli American, and James Packer, an Australian businessman.

Netanyahu has repeatedly blasted the charges as being politically motivated, and stated his intention to remain in power. Under Israeli law, there are no provisions to prevent an elected official from remaining in office while under indictment. Netanyahu has retained support from his right-wing base throughout the investigations, but that support is expected to dry up now that he has been formally indicted. In a recent survey, roughly two-thirds of voters said they didn't believe a Prime Minister could serve while also clearing his name in court. Another potential issue for Netanyahu is Gideon Sarr, a young and popular member of his Likud Party. Sarr has called for a new election and said he would contend as the Likud representative. Sarr also said that he would be able to unify the nation, and that it would "not be reasonable" for Netanyahu to contend a third election. Outside of Mr. Netanyahu's supporters, critics are expected to petition Israel's Supreme Court to force him into stepping down.

The indictment of Prime Minister Netanyahu comes as opposition Blue-White Party leader Benny Gantz was unable to form a ruling coalition after Israel's second election in as many months. Netanyahu was also unable to form a ruling coalition, having been given the chance to do so prior to Mr. Gantz. This means that Israel will likely be pushed into having a third election in the coming weeks. At the onset, Gideon Sarr and Benny Gantz will be the favorites to win the Prime Minister position. In the previous election, the Blue-White party won more votes than the Likud party, but fell far short of the requisite votes to form a majority. However, in an election without the possibility of indictment hanging over a candidate's head, the results could differ greatly.