



[Netanyahu and Gantz Agree to Form Unity Government](#)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and rival Benny Gantz signed an agreement earlier this week to form a unity government. The deal comes after a year-long political stalemate caused by three inconclusive elections since April of 2019. Under the terms of the agreement, Netanyahu will remain prime minister for 18 months before handing the position over to Gantz. Netanyahu has been criminally-indicted on multiple charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust, and is therefore set to face trial while still serving in his post. His trial was originally scheduled to begin last month in March, but has been delayed due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Gantz had long-pledged not to serve alongside Netanyahu due to the impending criminal charges against him, but backtracked recently and began negotiations with the incumbent prime minister.

The agreement reached by the two sides includes multiple clauses aimed at insuring that power is indeed transferred between Netanyahu and Gantz. Firstly, if Netanyahu dissolves the Knesset during his 18-month term, Gantz would take over as prime minister for the interim period before new elections. Additionally, if the Israeli High Court of Justice rules in the next six months that Netanyahu cannot serve as prime minister because of the criminal indictments against him, the Knesset would dissolve and new elections would be held, with Gantz serving as interim prime minister during that period as well. The terms of the deal also contend that no legislation unrelated to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic will be brought before the Knesset for a period of six months without consent. However, Netanyahu will be allowed to advance legislation as early as July 2020 to annex illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank – as per the Mideast plan proposed by U.S. President Trump back in January, which was met with widespread condemnation outside of the Israeli far-right.