



[Israel Moves Towards a Likely Fourth Election in Less than Two Years](#)

Israel is likely heading toward a fourth election in less than two years following the passing of a motion to dissolve the Knesset. The Knesset, Israel's parliamentary body, voted 61-54 in favor of a motion presented by the opposition to dissolve itself. The motion then advanced into committee for debate, where it passed 10-7. The Knesset House Committee has set March 16th as a target date for new elections. The vote passed in part due to the breakdown of the relationship between the two main ruling parties in Israel's coalition government. The Likud Party and the Blue and White Party formed a coalition last year after three elections failed to give one party a majority, although the two have been at loggerheads since the moment the government was formed.

Last year, the Likud and Blue and White parties formed a ruling coalition after three inconclusive elections. At the time, the Blue and White leader Benny Gantz was heavily criticized for joining incumbent Prime Minister and Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu, but the coalition agreement dictated that Gantz would succeed Netanyahu as prime minister in 2021. The only scenario in which Gantz would not automatically succeed Netanyahu came in the instance that the government was unable to pass a budget for 2021, which would automatically trigger the dissolution of the Knesset and fresh elections. With the deadline to pass these budgets approaching, the Likud Party has begun to stall the process with many observers believing that this is a political ploy from Netanyahu to remain in power. The vote to dissolve the Knesset is partly a response from the Blue and White Party to this, as they joined the opposition parties in voting to dissolve the government.

A significant aspect of the vote to dissolve the Knesset is it gives the Blue and White Party the power to decide when fresh elections are called. When Likud was stalling negotiations over the budget, part of their rationale was to dissolve the government and call elections next summer when a large majority of the Israeli populace is expected to be vaccinated against the coronavirus, and criticism over Netanyahu's handling of the pandemic has potentially subsided. Now however, because the committee that passed the final legislation dissolving the Knesset is controlled by the Blue and White Party, they have the power to set the timing of the election.

In opinion polls conducted recently, new elections seem to be favorable to Israel's right-wing parties. Likud, which is Israel's largest conservative party, faces a challenge from a right-wing competitor, the Yamina Party, which is currently in the opposition. It is expected that Yamina will take seats from Likud, although it is possible that the two are able to form a coalition government which would see Netanyahu remain in power. On the other side, the Blue and White Party seriously hurt its standing among the Israeli public by making a deal with Likud following the election impasse last year. At the time, Benny Gantz had stated that he would never join a government with Netanyahu, but he reneged on that promise. Gantz held a televised address prior to the vote to dissolve the Knesset in which he accused Netanyahu of being a serial liar and playing political games to stay in power while duping Israel's electorate. The Blue and White Party could attempt to form a ruling coalition with other minority parties, but would need the support of parties such as Yamina, which are closer to Likud ideologically.