



[Protests Follow Netanyahu Overseas](#)

By Colin Bailey

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu faced heavy protests over his proposed judiciary changes to the Israeli government during his visit to the United States. Netanyahu, who made multiple stops around the United States, is expected to meet with President Joe Biden in Manhattan in their first cordial meeting since Netanyahu reclaimed office back in December 2022. The proposed judiciary changes in Israel have been of ongoing discussion in the country, sparking mass protests within the nation for several consecutive months.

Already, thousands of individuals across San Francisco have taken to the streets as Netanyahu arrived at America's tech capital to meet with Elon Musk, the owner of X, formally known as Twitter, to discuss anti-Semitism on the platform along with the dangers of artificial intelligence (AI). Protestors lined the streets of Netanyahu's motorcade through San Jose in condemnation of the leader. The phrase, "Welcome to Alcatraz Bibi" (Netanyahu's nickname) was projected onto the Alcatraz Prison walls.

Netanyahu met with President Biden for the first time since regaining power at the United Nations General Assembly. In their meeting, Biden invited Netanyahu to the White House for the first time since Netanyahu returned to power to continue discussing Israel's governmental reform. In the 11 months that Netanyahu has been back in power, Biden has not once requested his presence, which is unusual in Israeli-American policy. This extended absence of a face-to-face meeting largely stems from Biden's disapproval of Netanyahu's judiciary plans.

The first component of Netanyahu's judicial overhaul that went into effect this July has caused a considerable divide among the Israeli populace. What the opposition has described as a "power grab," the "reasonableness bill" has removed the Supreme Court's (and lower courts) ability to strike down governmental decisions deemed "extremely unreasonable." This will dismantle the balance of power in the Israeli government, effectively giving the majority party or coalition authority to enact radical forms of legislation.

Beyond this, Netanyahu's government wants to pass further legislation that would weaken the power of the Supreme Court to throw out new legislation giving the Knesset considerable control over policymaking should a majority be in place. Opponents of the policy fear that this would dismantle Israeli democracy because it would leave the judiciary system with little say in policymaking, undermining the current system of checks and balances.

Defenders of the judicial overhaul have argued that the way the judicial branch is in place today is a relic of the past and is an unnecessary roadblock preventing the government from installing any reasonable level of change. In the past, Israel's Supreme Court has struck down many bills supporting liberal values. Many have regarded Netanyahu's government as the most 'far-right' government in Israel's history. Many of Netanyahu's opponents regard him as a "wannabe authoritarian leader." Outside of discussions for the judiciary overhaul, the two political leaders discussed the "normalization" efforts between Israel and Saudi Arabia, to which Netanyahu remarked, "I think such a peace would go a long way for us to advance the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict, achieve reconciliation between the Islamic world and the Jewish state and advance a genuine peace between Israel and the

Palestinians.” Mending the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Israel has been a policy priority of the Biden administration for the past year. Said normalization policies have been pushed in hopes that more significant economic connections between Israel and its neighbors will be yet another step towards lasting peace in the region. Recent statements by Saudi Arabia have indicated some progress on this front, but both countries are still far from normalization.

Protests followed Netanyahu to New York. On Wednesday, New York The protestors in New York City were predominantly made up of the American Jewish community chanting “Protect our democracy,” in reference to the judiciary changes in Israel that would see the Supreme Court lose power. It has been regarded by many as a way for Netanyahu to gain control over the government. Activists in NYC held up signs urging President Biden to denounce Netanyahu and that “Netanyahu does not represent Israel.” Many of the protesters present have also been calling for the outright resignation of Benjamin Netanyahu.

The protestors across the United States are making it loud and clear, that many in the Jewish community in the United States do not see kindly to Netanyahu’s policies. The protests in Israel have been more intense, with tens of thousands of activists marching in the streets every month. Many worry for the nation's state as hundreds of military reservists have vowed not to show up due to the changes. Despite all the domestic and international activism, Netanyahu seems hard-set on moving forward with his judicial reform. It is important to note that even with all of the protests in Israel and abroad, there is still a large base of conservative Israelis who support the changes.

Addressing this issue has been relatively low on Biden’s foreign policy to-do list, opting to steer clear of the political quagmire. The administration seems to be focusing most of its time and energy on creating a normalization deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel. It is very unlikely Biden will move to take more concrete actions against Netanyahu’s government, especially with an upcoming election. Following the meeting, the White House stated that Biden, “reiterated his concern about any fundamental changes to Israel’s democratic system, absent the broadest possible consensus.” It is more likely that we will see more softball comments in an attempt to appease the more left-leaning members of the Democratic Party.