

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #80



SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR



3 AUGUST 2022



In a brief ‘Webinar’ session organized by the Washington based MEF, in the absence of Ashley Perry, the MEF’s Nave Dromi (A former commander in the Israel Defense Forces and frequent contributor to Haaretz) provided the weekly update on Israeli politics.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BY NAVE DROMI

- Nave Dromi (a lady) focused her entire presentation by taking a look at the way competing political forces in Israel were preparing themselves for the upcoming elections on 1st November.
- Dromi said that for the time being the political left was in a better position given that matters regarding their political leadership – i.e., the unquestioned position of the current PM, **Yair Lapid** and the list of candidates the various coalition parties would be having were generally settled. Dromi noted that the political left had also been better organized and more active in the past week in field work and taking their campaign to the people.
- While according to recent surveys, Lapid’s [arty was projected to get between 20-22 seats in the next Knesset, the situation for the other parties such as Meretz or the ‘Blue & White’ coalition between **Benny Gantz** and Gideon Saar was unclear. It was also unclear if **Ayele Shaked**’s Yamina Party would continue with the current coalition or join forces with Netanyahu.
- Dromi said that already another partner of the Lapid Coalition, current Finance Minister, **Avigdor Lieberman** had taken steps for the state to forgo half a shekel of taxes per liter of gasoline. - an enormously popular act that would undoubtedly boost his party’s chances in the upcoming elections [as of this month, Israelis pay NIS 7.44 per liter (\$8.76 per gallon) for unleaded gasoline, over half of which is taxes. With the price drop, Israelis will instead pay NIS 6.94 per liter (\$8.20 per gallon).
- According to Dromi, the picture with regards to organization and the like was not the same at this time for the Likud Party, given the fact

that a series of inner elections are still to be held for determining the final list of candidates who will be contesting seats under the leadership of Netanyahu.

- Dromi said that the religious Zionism party chair **Bezalel Smotrich** and 'Otzma Yehudit Party' chair, **Itamar Ben-Gvir** will soon begin "accelerated negotiations" for merging their two parties into one list so that they can both make the election threshold of receiving 3.25% of the popular vote which is required for having representation in the Knesset.
- According to Dromi, a recent credible poll published by Israel's Channel 13, the Religious Zionist list would rise to 13 seats if **Itamar Ben-Gvir** headed the list, compared to nine or 10 seats if the list was headed by current leader **Bezalel Smotrich**.
- According to the same poll, the Likud Party would fall to 32 seats compared to 35-36 seats if **Bezalel Smotrich** headed Religious Zionist. Meanwhile, other tight wing political Parties, 'the Shas', would fall to eight seats and 'United Torah Judaism' would receive seven seats.
- Dromi said that based on this survey, the bloc of parties currently supporting former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu would earn 60 seats, which was still one vote short for forming a majority government.
- Dromi ended her comments by saying that most Israelis knew who they would be voting for. As such the fate of the next government would be decided by the outcome of as few as 5 or 6 seats contested by people from the centre-right and centre-left.

