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# PM still pushing for war in bid to keep power; Eisenkot strikes back

**Amos Harel**



**Knesset members yelling in the plenum on Wednesday, the first day of parliamentary activity for the 26th Knesset.** *Oren Ben Hakoon*

It seems Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is unimpressed by U.S. President Donald Trump's heavy-handed hints about his intention to end the war with Iran.

Numerous signals on Wednesday from Netanyahu and his rivals in the change bloc indicated growing tensions within Israeli leadership regarding the possibility of a renewed flare-up in the Gulf. This is despite Trump's remarks on Monday that the war was "effectively over," and that its renewal is "highly unlikely."

Yashar leader Gadi Eisenkot, who was tasked earlier this week with forming a government, sent Netanyahu an unusual letter on Wednesday.

"In this sensitive period, you must demonstrate national responsibility. Exercise caution and restraint in making dangerous moves that could await the swearing in of a new government with the Knesset's confidence," Eisenkot demanded of his rival.

"Do not violate the people's trust in government institutions and the decision-making process. The use of security forces in the absence of a direct and immediate threat that cannot wait could lead to devastating consequences for the Israeli democracy," he wrote. "Do not place senior defense officials in a constitutional conflict."

The Prime Minister's Office responded to the letter, saying, "Every decision was made solely based on security considerations and in full coordination with the defense establishment. Eisenkot's letter is an irresponsible move. Instead of sowing fear and division, one must act responsibly."

Eisenkot sent another letter to Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara requesting that she instruct Netanyahu to provide him with regular defense briefings, arguing that the prime minister is obligated to brief the coalition builder in the absence of a serving opposition leader.

Eisenkot's harsh language reflects the dispute raging behind the scenes, and adds to a political battle currently underway in the Knesset.

The change bloc appointed Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman as chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. The move – which was made before it is known whether Eisenkot and his partners will succeed in forming a government – is aimed at increasing parliamentary oversight of Netanyahu's defense decisions during this sensitive security period. It follows a prolonged period during which the security cabinet has not convened.

Lieberman has already said he intends to summon Shin Bet chief David Zini and Police Commissioner Danny Levy to testify before the committee on their

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# On Knesset's first day, change bloc gets key panel approved

**Ben Kroll, Noa Shpigel and Aaron Rabinowitz**

The Knesset on Wednesday approved the establishment of the Arrangements Committee, which determines the composition of the parliamentary committees and the party affiliation of their chairs – a key step toward advancing legislation in the new parliament.

MK Roey Folkman, faction chairman of Gadi Eisenkot's Yashar party, is set to serve as chairman of the panel, which was approved in accordance with the composition he had proposed. According to the proposal, approved by a majority of 63 supporters against 50 opponents, the committee will have 22 members based on the size of the factions – one representative for every five Knesset members.

According to the approved composition, the committee will have five representatives from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud, four from Yashar, two from Together, two from the Joint List, two from the Democrats and two from the United Arab List. Yisrael Beiteinu, Otzma Yehudit, United Torah Judaism, Shas and Religious Zionism will each receive one representative.

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**Esther Solomon**

# PM's hatefulness will help seal his downfall

During Tuesday's Knesset swearing-in ceremony, the country's second "festival of democracy" in the two weeks that have followed Election Day, there was applause, self-righteousness, jeers, opportunism, impropriety and walk-outs. In other words, normal service. But these are not normal times. And the festivities were muted.

Despite the outgoing Netanyahu government blocking a state commission of inquiry into October 7, its shadow was present, in the applause for a Likud MK Elisha Medan, who lost both his legs in a booby-trapped tunnel in Gaza in November 2023, and for Shira Shapira, from Gadi Eisenkot's Yashar party, whose son Aner heroically saved Nova partygoers' lives by throwing back Hamas grenades hurled into the bomb shelter where they'd sought sanctuary until he was eventually killed. Eisenkot's party submitted a bill to establish a state commission of inquiry on Tuesday.

Despite the outgoing Netanyahu government's obsessive dedication to undermining judicial independence and the rule of law, Eisenkot announced that his bloc would be prioritizing the reversal of the legislation

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# Officials: Shin Bet chief adopts far-reaching measures in election probe

**Josh Breiner**

David Zini, head of the Shin Bet internal security service, has authorized the use of unusual and far-reaching investigative methods in an attempt to gather evidence on alleged foreign election interference, a senior defense official told Haaretz.

According to the official, Zini authorized agency personnel to use special technological tools and to deploy an operational unit to gather evidence for the case. He noted that the use of such technological tools is unusual and is being done at the expense of "other national security missions."

Zini and his deputy, N., claim in closed discussions that foreign funds were channeled to sway the Israeli election held last month, describing it as one of Israel's "most serious affairs." The Israel Police's corruption and major crimes unit, Lahav 433, however, opined after examining the Shin Bet's evidence that it is insufficient to open a criminal investigation. Police say it raises, at most, a suspicion of party financing offenses and no suspicion of security offenses.

Lahav 433 also cast doubt on the Shin Bet's suspicion that former Joint List leader Ayman Odeh received hundreds of thousands of shekels from the Palestinian Authority. The Shin Bet did not respond to Haaretz's request for comment.

Several law enforcement sources said the Shin Bet has so far failed to present concrete information corroborating Zini's suspicion of foreign election interference. "People in the agency are going very far to please the Shin Bet chief and his deputy, who adamantly refuse to back down from the position they've taken, even though all the ladders are there," a senior source said.

Another source said the Shin Bet's conduct in the case calls for the establishment of a government commission of inquiry. "People need to know that they are under a spotlight and that the day after this saga ends, how everyone acted in this incident will be examined. Zini does not understand his role as Shin Bet chief and the danger of his conduct in this incident," he said.

According to information obtained by Haaretz, Zini's and N.'s conduct has caused a deep rift among agency personnel and has also drawn sharp criticism from senior officials in law enforcement, police and the Justice Ministry.

Haaretz previously reported that the Shin Bet's legal adviser, also N., and the head of the investigations division, A., confronted Zini and his deputy about the lack of evidence. H., head of a division whose areas of responsibility include Israel's Arab population, also expressed doubts about the probe.

In an attempt to distance the three critics from the investigation, Zini assigned its management to Y., who is directly subordinate to Zini's deputy and who previously worked with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

**As bipartisan U.S. support for Israel breaks down**

# Jews put off by Democrats may be even more put off by Vance



**U.S. Vice President JD Vance.** *Jacquelyn Martin/AP*

**Arno Rosenfeld**

As the bipartisan consensus on support for Israel began to break down during the Obama administration, supporting Republicans became the default for Jewish voters whose top priority was a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.

For many years, there just weren't that many of these voters — even Jews who care about Israel tend to vote based on domestic issues like everyone else. Now, just as some Jewish Democrats appear poised to jump ship, Vice President JD Vance seems determined to keep them out of the Republican coalition.

Vance, a leading contender to run for president in 2028, appears to be betting that the political winds are blowing against Israel and has repeatedly positioned himself as sensitive to those concerns.

The latest example came one day after Republicans suffered devastating losses in the midterm elections, when he wrote a postmortem that laid much of the blame on Israel. Vance listed the war in Iran — launched at Israel's behest — and "our relationship to Israel" as two of the four reasons Republican voters abandoned the party. "Everyone knows why we lost," Vance wrote.

But Vance has been positioning himself as increasingly critical of Israel for months. He suggested over the summer that Israel had been thwarting U.S. efforts to end the Iran war through diplomacy, and then delivered a series of strange remarks at a Republican Jewish Coalition gathering in which he appeared to crib a definition of antisemitism from his friend Tucker Carlson.

He followed that up by suggesting that the U.S. had been "subservient" to Israel.

It's a noxious mix for any Jewish voters who thought they could respond to the leftward drift on Israel in the Democratic Party by throwing their weight behind Republicans.

Vance isn't guaranteed to be the Republican nominee

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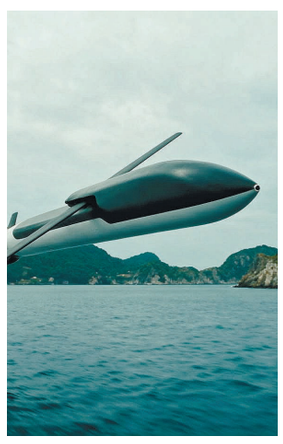
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*Rafael*

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# Nowhere to sleep: Rain floods 40,000 tents of displaced Gazans

**Nir Hasson and Maysan Madi**

A United Nations agency has accused Israel of restricting Gazan civilians' ability to evacuate from flooded areas, hindering their ability to seek the assistance they need.

Approximately 200,000 people in Gaza suffered from floods over the weekend due to heavy rain, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated on Tuesday. The report states that approximately 40,000 tents, over 900 sanitation facilities and nine medical facilities were flooded or severely damaged in the storm.

In the report, published on behalf of humanitarian organizations operating in the enclave, the office warned that there is not enough space in Gaza to evacuate residents living in flooded areas or those residing in structures at risk of collapse due to the weather. The statement read: "Humanitarian partners say there are not enough places to which people in flooded areas and war-damaged buildings can relocate. This is because Israeli authorities are still restricting Palestinian access anywhere behind the so-called 'Yellow Line,' which means that most of Gaza's land remains off limits."



**The aftermath of an Israeli airstrike on Tuesday at a foundry in Gaza City.** *Mahmoud Issa/Reuters*

The UN partners also warned of a severe shortage of essential equipment for assisting the population, including heavy mechanical tools, engine oil, spare parts, generators and water pumps. These shortfalls come on top of the ongoing shortage of basic humanitarian supplies like tents and tarpaulins. "They are calling on everyone with influence to also expedite the entry of shelter and other humanitarian supplies critical for the winter, stressing that this is a matter of life and death," the statement added.

On Monday, the Board of Peace called on the government "to act immediately to authorize and facilitate the entry of all necessary winterization and humanitarian supplies." On Sunday night, a mother and her two children were killed in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza when a sandbank collapsed on the tent where they were sleeping. Two more people were killed that stormy night in the enclave.

In recent days, distressing footage of Gazan children appeared on social media, showing them struggling to navigate water currents in

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