



The Rise of the Far-Right in Israel

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Historical Context to Israel's Shift to the Far-Right



01

Historical Context to Israel's Shift to the Far-Right

Israeli politicians have increasingly used anti-Palestinian rhetoric to advance their careers, shifting Israel's politics more openly to the right.¹ Israeli politicians such as former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and finance minister Avigdor Lieberman used racist language towards Palestinians, and have now been incorporated into the mainstream of Israeli politics.² This ongoing incorporation of right-wing politics into the mainstream has pushed the Israeli political spectrum further towards fascism.³

Israel's far-right have been increasingly elected to the Knesset since 1984, when Meir Kahane was elected for one term before being convicted of terrorism.⁴ In Israel, he was convicted for plotting to blow up the Libyan embassy in Brussels in revenge for the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, receiving a suspended sentence and probation.⁵

Kahane believed that non-Jews wishing to dwell in Israel should have three options: remain as “resident strangers” with limited rights, leave Israel and receive compensation for their property, or be forcibly removed without compensation.⁶ He also proposed numerous laws, none of which passed, which include:

- emphasising Judaism in public schools
- reducing Israel's bureaucracy
- forbidding sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews
- separating Jewish and Arab neighbourhoods
- ending cultural meetings between Jewish and Arab students.⁷

Kahane's legacy continues to influence militant and far-right political groups active today in Israel.⁸ Several Kach supporters have remained active in Israeli politics, including Michael Ben-Ari, who served in the Knesset as a National Union lawmaker between 2009 and 2013, and Itamar Ben-Gvir, current Minister for National Security.⁹

Netanyahu brought these Kach supporters into government in 2019 and 2022 through deals with the Jewish Power party, to ensure he has enough partners in the Knesset to form a ruling coalition.¹⁰ Since 2019, these extremist far-right Kach views, previously proscribed as terrorist in the US, are now influencing the Israeli government's politics and policies.¹¹

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Israel's Far-Right Supporters Today



02

Israel's Far-Right Supporters Today

Netanyahu's current government, the most right-wing in Israel's 75-year history, has made settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank a priority since it took office at the end of 2022.¹²

Most of Israel's far right support comes from the younger generation.¹³ 73 percent of Jewish Israelis between ages 18 and 24 identify as right-wing, compared with only 46 percent of Jewish Israelis over 65.¹⁴ A common explanation for this is the higher birth rate amongst ultra-orthodox Jews: the fertility rate for ultra-orthodox Israeli women is 6.6, compared to just 3.9 for orthodox Israeli women, and secular Israeli women at 2.0. More religious families tend to be more likely to vote for right-wing politicians.¹⁵

Another factor influencing this shift to the right is Israel's construction of the apartheid separation wall in the West Bank, which has limited interaction between Palestinians and Israelis far more than in previous generations.¹⁶ Younger generations in Israel have not been witness to the same frequency of peace talks as their parents.¹⁷

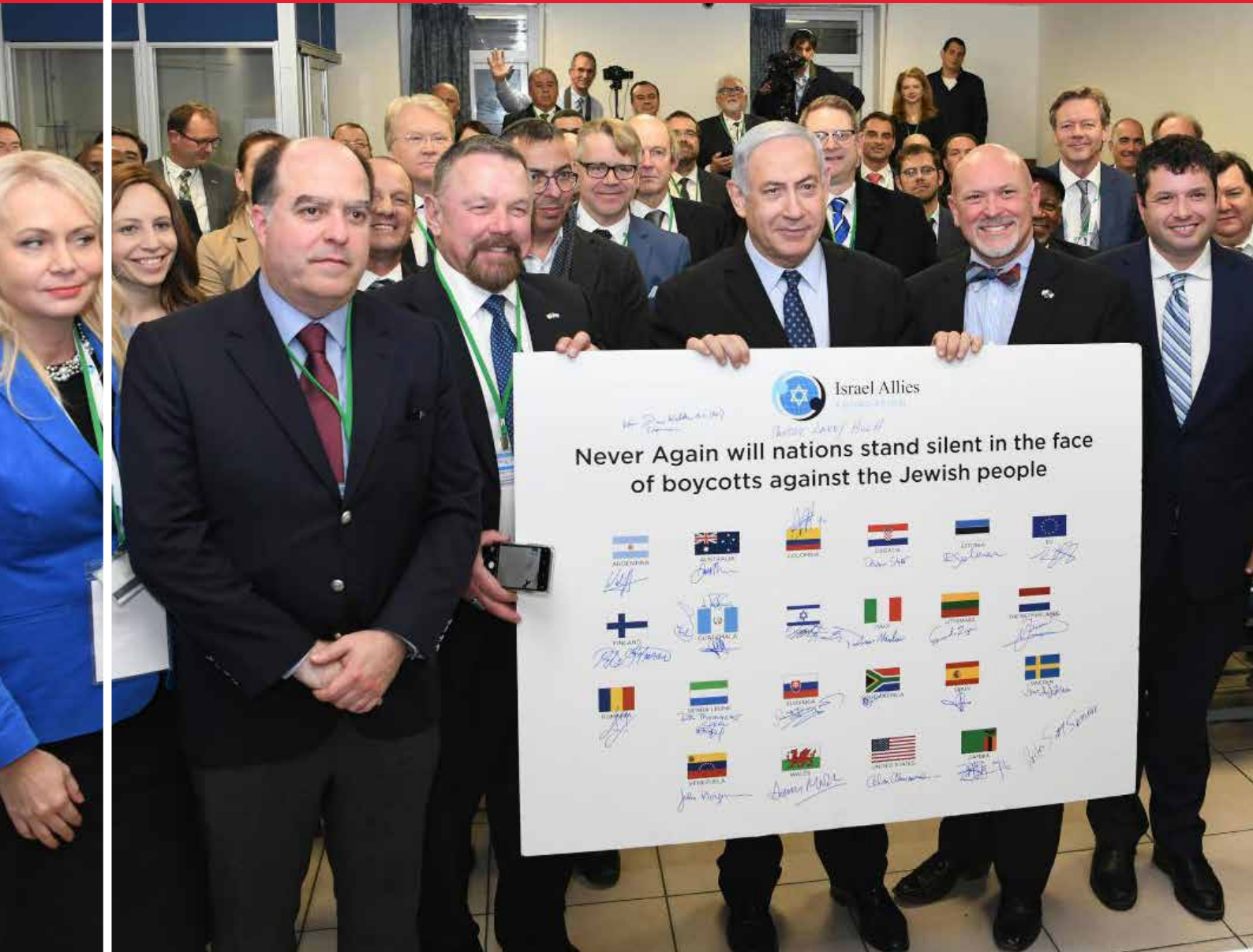
Israel has also seen the rise of right-wing newspapers, including Sheldon Adelson's Israel Hayom, the most widely read daily newspaper in Israel.¹⁸

While all Israelis' faith in the state to ensure security has plummeted dramatically in a short time, the right's has dropped more than any other political groups'.¹⁹ Only 30 percent of right-wing Israelis said in 2022 that they feel the state can ensure their security, compared to 84 percent in 2020.²⁰ The most obvious event that could have contributed to this shift is the May 2021 Unity Intifada.²¹

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International Support for Israel's Far-Right



03

International Support for Israel's Far-Right



Joe Biden, US President

During his 36 years in the Senate, Biden was the chamber's biggest recipient in history of donations from pro-Israeli groups, taking in \$4.2 million, according to the Open Secrets database.²²

Since 7 October, Biden has repeated right-wing Israeli lies, including claiming to have seen non-existent photos of the Israeli "beheaded babies" – which later had to be retracted.²³ He has also sought \$14 billion of American support for Netanyahu to continue his ongoing attack on Gaza, despite evidence of war crimes and genocide.²⁴



The German Government

The German government has not only provided wide-ranging political and diplomatic support for Israel but has also fast-tracked arms exports to facilitate the Israeli slaughter of Palestinian civilians in Gaza since 7 October.²⁵

The German political elite has vehemently rejected calls for a ceasefire in Gaza and relentlessly repeated the false claim that under international law, Israel has the "right to defend itself" from the Palestinian population it occupies.²⁶

Pro-Palestinian activists' freedom of speech in Germany has also been suppressed.²⁷ Recently, the Federal Ministry of the Interior banned the slogan "from the river to the sea", considering it a call to destroy Israel.²⁸ The state of Bavaria has labelled the phrase a "symbol of terrorism".²⁹

Long before 7 October, the anti-Palestinian tactics of the German authorities were already escalating.³⁰ Protests were banned, pro-Palestinian voices, including those of Jewish activists, were silenced, and cultural events and award ceremonies were cancelled.³¹ The crackdown on protests and police violence have increased in recent weeks, and numerous pro-Palestinian demonstrations have been banned.³²

International Support for Israel’s Far-Right continued...



Rishi Sunak, UK Prime Minister

In October 2023, Sunak flew to Tel Aviv to “express solidarity with the Israeli people” during the Israeli attacks on Gaza and told Netanyahu: “we want you to win”.³³ In a televised address, Sunak also said he “knew” Israel was “taking every precaution to avoid harming civilians”.³⁴ Sunak also stressed the UK supports Israel’s right to protect itself “in line with international law”.³⁵



Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil’s former President

A religious nationalist and former army captain, Bolsonaro is known for patriarchal, misogynist, and racist comments.³⁶ He insulted African, Middle Eastern, and Haitian refugees as “the scum of humanity,” attacked LGBT populations, and promoted legal inequality of women.³⁷

Upon assuming office in 2018, Bolsonaro broke with Brazil’s moderate stance on Palestine.³⁸ During his presidential campaign, Bolsonaro advocated for the closure of the Palestinian embassy in Brasilia, dismissed Palestinians as “terrorists”, and promised to move Brazil’s embassy to Jerusalem.³⁹ At his election rallies, the Israeli flag often appeared alongside the Brazilian one.⁴⁰

As president, Bolsonaro made his first official state visit outside the Americas to Israel and was warmly welcomed in Tel Aviv, where he proclaimed his love for Israel in Hebrew.⁴¹



Rodrigo Duterte, former President of the Philippines

Duterte, who once compared himself to Hitler and his bloody war on drugs to the Holocaust, met Netanyahu to discuss weapons sales during his presidency, on the first visit by a Filipino head of state to Israel.⁴² In 2017, Netanyahu’s government sold the Philippines radar and anti-tank equipment worth £16m.⁴³

Since 7 October, Duterte said Israel should “crush Hamas” and turn Gaza into “world’s biggest cemetery”.⁴⁴ He also said if he were Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he would “pulverise Gaza and make it the biggest cemetery in the world”.⁴⁵

International Support for Israel’s Far-Right continued...



Matteo Salvini, Deputy Prime Minister of Italy

Following Netanyahu’s demand for Italy to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, Salvini tweeted: “I firmly say yes to Jerusalem capital of Israel, in the name of peace, history and truth” and promised to move the Italian embassy.⁵³

In October 2023, Salvini accused the Italian branch of Amnesty International of “racism” for refusing to attend a comic and games festival, due to Israel’s Embassy in Italy sponsoring the event.⁵⁴



Viktor Orban, Hungarian Prime Minister

Hungary voted against an Israeli ceasefire at the UN due to Orban’s close ties with Netanyahu.⁵⁵ After 7 October, Orban tweeted: “[we] unequivocally support Israel’s right to self-defence”, and that Hungary will not allow any rallies supporting “terrorist organisations”, in reference to pro-Palestine protests.⁵⁶

The Orban government has consistently made gestures towards Israel, pushing the Palestinian issue to the sidelines, and trying to block everything at the EU it believes is anti-Israeli or pro-Palestinian.⁵⁷

During the 2018 Hungarian election campaign, Orban’s party, Fidesz, used material produced by an Israeli private intelligence firm to try to discredit NGOs linked to Orban’s opponent, Soros.⁵⁸



Juan Guaido, Venezuela’s ‘interim president’

Juan Guaido, the US-backed self-declared president of Venezuela, was working to restore ties with Israel.⁶² During his brief time in power, Guaido told Israel Hayom newspaper: “I am very happy to report that the process of stabilising relations with Israel is at its height. First, we’ll restore the relations, then we’ll announce the appointment of an ambassador to Israel, and we very much hope an envoy will come here from Israel.”⁶³

Netanyahu recognised Guaido as Venezuela’s president, after which Guaido appointed a rabbi from Caracas as ambassador to Israel.⁶⁴

International Support for Israel’s Far-Right continued...



Geert Wilders, Dutch Politician

Wilders is a far-right Dutch populist who came to power in the Netherlands election in November 2023.⁴⁶ Wilders has touted his support for Israel as the Netherlands’ “close friend”, volunteered on an Israeli kibbutz as a young man and is married to a Hungarian-Jewish former diplomat.⁴⁷ He has also advocated for Israel’s settlements in the West Bank and suggested that all Palestinians should be relocated to Jordan.⁴⁸

The Dutch Intelligence Service opened an investigation into Wilders in 2009 for his “ties to Israel and their possible influence on his loyalty”.⁴⁹

Wilders’ election campaign demanded a halt to the country’s “asylum tsunami” and called for a ban on Islamic schools, Qurans, and mosques.⁵⁰ In 2016, a court found him guilty on insult charges after he led supporters in a chant for “fewer” Moroccans in the Netherlands at an election rally.⁵¹ In 2009, he was refused entry to the United Kingdom on the way to screen his film “Fitna,” which associated the Quran with terrorism and sparked international protests.⁵²



Roberto D’Aubuisson, leader of the far-right party ARENA, who served as president of El Salvador’s Constituent Assembly in the 1980s

Recently declassified documents in the Israel State Archives reveal that during the civil war in El Salvador in the early 1980s, while masses were arrested, kidnapped, tortured, murdered, or disappeared by the US-backed regime, Israel campaigned to convince El Salvador to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.⁵⁹

In 1983, El Salvador announced that it would move its embassy to Jerusalem.⁶⁰ This was heralded in Israel’s Foreign Ministry telegrams as Israel’s most important achievement in Latin America that year.⁶¹

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Return to Gaza Conference



Return to Gaza Conference

On 28 January 2024, hundreds of Israeli settlers attended a ‘Resettle Gaza’ conference in Jerusalem calling for Israel to rebuild settlements in Gaza and the West Bank, and “voluntary migration” of the Palestinian population elsewhere.⁶⁵ Israeli minister Shlomo Karhi explained that, in war, “‘voluntary’ is at times a state you impose [on someone] until they give their consent’.”⁶⁶

The conference was organised by the right-wing Nahala organisation, which advocates for illegal Jewish settlement expansion in territories including the West Bank.⁶⁷

Israel’s Channel 12 reported that 12 ministers from Netanyahu’s Likud party, along with public security minister Itamar Ben Gvir and finance minister Bezalel Smotrich - both from far-right parties in the governing coalition - attended the conference.⁶⁸

During the conference, participants were presented with details of Jewish settlements, maps, and the stages of preparation, along with calls for decision-makers to acknowledge that a war victory can only be claimed through the Jewish resettling of the Gaza Strip.⁶⁹

One speaker was Rabbi Uzi Sharbag, a former leader of the banned far-right terrorist group Jewish Underground, whose members were arrested on terrorism charges for allegedly plotting to bomb the Dome of the Rock and other targets.⁷⁰ Several participants carried guns, and outside the convention centre vendors sold T-shirts reading: “Gaza is part of the land of Israel”.⁷¹

The prominent role of government figures in the far-right conference appears to violate the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling last week that Israel must “take all measures within its power” to avoid acts of genocide in its war in Gaza, including the “prevention and punishment of genocidal rhetoric”.⁷²

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Hate Speech from Serving Ministers



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Hate Speech from Serving Ministers



Itamar Ben-Gvir, Minister of National Security

Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of Israel's Jewish Power party and new Minister of National Security, has a long track record of racist and specifically anti-Arab statements.⁷³ He has encouraged Israelis to arm themselves, and at one pre-election rally in East Jerusalem, he drew a gun

and called for police to shoot Palestinian counter-protesters.⁷⁴

Ben-Gvir also ordered police to remove all Palestinian flags in occupied East Jerusalem, and inside Israel, calling the Palestinian flag an act of "terrorism".⁷⁵

"My right, my wife's, my children's, to roam the roads of Judea and Samaria [West Bank] are more important than the right of movement of the Arabs."⁷⁴



Bezalel Smotrich, Finance Minister

Smotrich is Israel's current Finance Minister and member of Israel's Jewish Power Party.⁷⁶ In March 2023, he stood behind a map of "Greater Israel" that included modern-day Jordan, and said the Palestinian people were "an invention" from the last century, and that there was "no such thing

as Palestinians because there's no such thing as the Palestinian people."⁷⁷

In the same month, Smotrich also said that the Palestinian town of Huwara "needs to be erased", when he was asked about the settler pogrom which had attacked the town.⁷⁹

"There is no such thing as a Palestinian nation. There is no Palestinian history. There is no Palestinian language."⁷⁸

Hate Speech from Serving Ministers continued...



Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel

In October 2023, Netanyahu also called for ‘a holy war of annihilation’ against Palestinians in Gaza by invoking the ‘Amalek’, a nation in the Torah that the Israelites were ordered to wipe out in an act of revenge.⁸¹ “You must remember what

Amalek has done to you”, he said in a speech announcing the start of a ground invasion in Gaza, adding that Israeli soldiers were part of a legacy that goes back 3,000 years.⁸²

“The Jewish people have an exclusive and unquestionable right to all areas of the Land of Israel. The government will promote and develop settlement in all parts of the Land of Israel.”⁸⁰



Limor Son Har-Melech, Member of Jewish Power Party

Limor Son Har-Melech, also a member of the Jewish Power party, has served as a member of the Knesset since 2022.⁸³ She described Amiram Ben-Uliel, a convicted Israeli terrorist who killed three Palestinian civilians and burned their 18-month-old son, as a “holy righteous man”.⁸⁴

Following the settler attack in the Palestinian town, Huwara, in February 2023, she called on the government “not to issue condemnations and

appeals for calm” towards Israeli settlers carrying out the attacks.⁸⁵

In an interview with Ynet radio, Har-Melech also argued in favour of different sentences for Palestinians compared to Israelis.⁸⁶ She said that a Jew who kills an Arab should receive life imprisonment, while any Arab “who kills a Jew needs to die.”⁸⁷

“We must be vigilant and understand that the Palestinian Authority is equal to Hamas.”

Hate Speech from Serving Ministers continued...



Almog Cohen, Member of Otzma Yehudit Party

Almog Cohen from the far-right Otzma Yehudit Party, announced he will “break and blow up” joint summer camp for Israelis and Palestinians who have lost loved ones to the occupation, organised by the Israeli-Palestinian group Parents

Circle-Families Forum.⁸⁸ He continued: “We will come, 10 MKs, and wish luck to our forces in killing as many terrorists as possible and as few innocents as possible.”⁸⁹

“Good and professional work by the fighters in Jenin, keep killing them.”



Oren Hazan, Former Israeli politician

Knesset member Hazan, a member of the Likud party, said on Facebook that he would demolish the home of Palestinian assailant Omar al-Abed and “execute” his family as revenge for an operation that killed 3 Israelis in an illegal settlement in the West Bank.⁹⁰ In the video, he stated: “if it was up to me, I would’ve gone to the terrorist’s house yesterday, grabbed him and his whole family and executed them all together”.⁹¹

Hazan also did not believe that Abed, who was shot by Israeli forces, should have been

hospitalised in an Israeli facility, saying: “Let him [Abed] die, let him wallow in his own blood. They don’t have a right to live, they don’t have the right to even exist, and I hope that everyone will say that with me”.⁹²

In the past, Hazan has also pledged his support for France’s populist politician Marine Le Pen. On an Israeli radio show, he remarked: “Le Pen says that France belongs to the French. This is the way to stop radical Islam, and to stop France from becoming a Palestinian state in Europe, and that is why I support it”.⁹³

“Your son is a dog. He is a dog. You come to visit the scum who are sitting here in prison, whom you see as your family members.”

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