

Israel on the Brink of Full Authoritarianism: The Moves Toward Regime Change

- The coalition agreements signed between the Likud and its coalition partners in the aftermath of the November 2022 elections, as well as the declarations of ministers in the new Netanyahu government, reveal that the latter's intention is not to change existing practices **but to totally abolish the rules of the game and establish a full authoritarian regime, headed by a leader-for-life and a single ruling party and satellite parties subordinated to it.**

- *Pseudo Democracy: State of the Regime in Israel*,¹ a report published by Zulat in June 2022, warned of the authoritarian processes that have accelerated since the establishment of Netanyahu's new government. The report described the characteristics of the regime in Israel and showed that, **ever since the inception of the state, it has corresponded to a hybrid model combining democratic and authoritarian components** of varying quality and quantity, which at different periods has tilted toward one of those extremes. The more a regime leans in the authoritarian direction, the greater its tendency to violate human and civil rights. The mechanisms for the protection of human rights and their functioning are a key measure of a country's level of democracy.

- **Beginning with his second term in office, Binyamin Netanyahu took advantage of existing authoritarian elements** and followed in the footsteps of previous prime ministers in order to entrench his and the Likud party's rule. In addition, he led radical legislative and public moves that changed the rules of the game in the State of Israel.

- Now, the upcoming abolishment of existing practices by means of legislative amendments is **intended to transform full authoritarianism into an irreversible situation**. Indeed, in democratic countries such as Poland and Hungary, legislative changes like those spearheaded by the Netanyahu government **have turned authoritarianism into a permanent and highly irrevocable situation**.

- The rights of women, LGBTQ, religious and national minorities have always been the "punching bag" of Israeli governments subject to political "horse trading" between coalition and opposition, but a **transition to a full authoritarian regime will lead to the denial of human and civil rights across the board and the elimination of any possibility to protect minorities**. Indeed, ministers in Netanyahu's government have already announced their intention to abolish the anti-discrimination law that bans businesses from refusing to provide services due to religious beliefs.

- The more democratic the society and the regime within the recognized borders of the State of Israel and the more elements of democracy are upheld, the greater the chance of a political solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and of reducing the human rights violations of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. **The establishment of a full authoritarian regime will lead to a total suppression of those who support a political solution and protecting the human rights of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.**

¹ Eitay Mack, [Pseudo Democracy: State of the Regime in Israel](#), Zulat, 20 June 2022.

- On 4 January 2023, Justice Minister Yariv Levin revealed his plan **to promote a regime change by crushing the independence of the judiciary and fully subordinating it to the executive branch**, which already fully controls the legislative branch.² In order to implement this revolution, Levin announced a package of legislative amendments including a clause to override Supreme Court decisions by a slim majority of 61 MKs, increasing the number of politicians in the Judicial Appointments Committee, ending the standard invoked by the Supreme Court to overrule government decisions deemed unreasonable, and making legal counsels in government ministries positions of trust.
- Rather than be considered individually, **the proposed amendments should be taken as a whole transforming Israel into an authoritarian regime and completely eliminating the checks and balances between the branches of power**. For example, if the Supreme Court's judges will be political-personal appointments by the government, there will be no need to activate an override clause with any majority since in any case the judges will be the servants of the government and its whims. Likewise, making the job of legal counsels a position of trust will severely damage the status of the Attorney General whose guidelines will be sidestepped and contravened through the creation of a separate legal counselling system in every government ministry.
- Therefore, Zulat recommends to the MKs representing the democratic public:
 - ✓ **Realize that what we have here is a plan for regime change, whose implementation will cross the authoritarian threshold that the State of Israel has been treading for many years.**
 - ✓ **Refuse to discuss any proposed amendments separately, and treat them as a whole transforming Israel into an authoritarian regime and completely eliminating the checks and balances between the branches of power.**
 - ✓ **In view of the contradictions between the content of the agreements signed with the coalition parties and the declarations of their leaders on the one hand and Prime Minister Netanyahu's "reassuring messages" on the other, you must refuse to start any discussion at all before the government reveals all the "chapters" of the package of legislative amendments it intends to promote on the basis of the coalition agreements. The salami method is meant to throw off MKs and the public with regard to the overall move planned by the government to carry out a regime change.**

² Yael Freidson and Noa Shpigel, [Netanyahu's Justice Minister Presents Plans for Radical Judicial Overhaul](#), *Haaretz*, 4 January 2023.