

# Are Netanyahu's Days as Israel's Prime Minister Numbered? Fraud and "Lavish Gifts from Wealthy Supporters"

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*Damning evidence indicates he warrants indictment for bribery, breach of trust and fraud.*

They're civil crimes, minor ones compared to major wrongdoing he's unaccountable for - namely, waging undeclared war on Palestinians throughout his tenure as prime minister.

Investigations into his wrongdoing showed he accepted about \$1.1 million in illicit gifts from accused French fraudster Arnaud Mimran, Israeli billionaire Arnon Milchan and others.

He faces potential charges in so-called Cases 1,000, 2,000, and 4,000 - the first on suspicion of inappropriately or illegally receiving lavish gifts from wealthy supporters, amounting to possible bribery.

The second case involves getting caught red-handed on tape, negotiating a quid pro quo with Yedioth Ahronoth publisher Arnon Mozes for more favorable broadsheet coverage in return for legislation prohibiting distribution of the free daily Israel Hayom, YA's main competitor, owned by Netanyahu supporter Sheldon Adelson.

Case 4,000 alleges police suspect Walla news owner/controlling shareholder of Bezeq telecommunications company Shaul Elovitch ordered favorable coverage of Netanyahu on his news site in return for benefits arranged for Bezeq.

Walla news CEO Ilan Yeshua said he faced intense pressure to suppress negative news about Netanyahu, along with reporting positively about his wife Sara.

Last June, she was indicted on charges of systematic fraud, involving hundreds of thousands of shekels, illegally spent for lavish meals at the Netanyahu residence - courtesy of Israeli taxpayers.

She ordered residence staff to conceal violations of rules - so her actions "wo(u)ldn't) be found out by the treasury and the office manager." She falsely claimed unawareness of rules she breached.

She's charged with using public funds for personal use, fraud and breach of trust. It runs in the Netanyahu crime family.

All along, the prime minister rejected accusations against him, claiming he did nothing wrong, despite evidence indicating otherwise.

He should have been indicted, prosecuted, and held accountable long ago. He's a regional

menace to Jews and non-Jews alike.

Claiming he had an important announcement to make on Monday, he used television airtime given him to lash out against police and Israel's justice ministry, claiming the police probe into his actions was improperly conducted, accusing justice ministry officials of suppressing exculpatory facts.

A ministry spokesman responded, saying its probe was "conducted professionally and thoroughly. It is inappropriate for law enforcement authorities to relate to the investigative activities and the testimonies in the media, certainly not at this stage."

On live television, making a spectacle of himself, he demanded the right to confront witnesses against him, expressing willingness to do it live on air.

"What are they afraid of? I'm not afraid, I have nothing to lose," he roared, adding: "Let the public see everything, hear everything."

A senior police official called his demand inappropriate, unrelated to the investigation into his affairs, adding:

"We are not talking about a specific incident at a given time, in a given place, or something similar to someone's word versus somebody else's word. A confrontation would not have changed the general picture in this case."

Israeli attorney general Avichai Mandelblit should have indicted him long ago. Despite strong evidence against him, it's unclear what he'll do, especially with early elections called for April 9.

One thing has nothing to do with the other. Netanyahu announced the April date, believing he'll be reelected, indicating a mandate to govern if things turn out this way, despite possible charges against him, and as a diversionary tactic to shift attention to the political process.

He could end up losing twice over, though nothing is sure at this point. It's Mandelblit's call. Acting before April risks being accused of influencing the election's outcome.

A further delay could draw criticism for withholding vital information from voters. Netanyahu's top aides turned state's witnesses against him.

Labor Party chairman Avi Gabbay slammed him for using Israel's Channel 10 as a platform for attacking the country's law enforcement authorities, adding:

"Instead of dealing with the security of the residents of the south, the cost of living, or the collapse of the health system, Netanyahu is busy rescuing himself from the investigations."

He called on leaders of other parties to refuse to be part of his coalition if Likud wins the largest number of Knesset seats. No single party in Israeli history ever won majority control, coalition partners needed to govern.

On Monday, Haaretz editors accused him of “go(ing) from bad to worse (for) attack(ing) the judicial system, lest the attorney general dare issue his decision on whether to prosecute him before the election.”

He fears indictment – subject to a hearing, giving him a chance to counter charges against him. “Claiming there will be nothing because there was nothing” isn’t good enough.

Nor is saying

“(y)ou don’t start a hearing before the elections if it isn’t completed before the elections.”

Former Supreme Court Justice Eliahu Mazza slammed him, saying

“(i)n my entire career I don’t recall such talk against the law enforcement authorities by anyone who wasn’t the head of a crime organization.”

Are his days in power numbered? Will he be indicted, damning evidence supporting charges against him? If charged, convicted, and sentenced will he avoid prison time?

He’s holding on for dear life to avoid prosecution and remain in office. Whatever unfolds ahead, he’ll remain unaccountable for apartheid ruthlessness, far more serious offenses than civil wrongdoing.

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