

Israeli Convoy and Protest Against COVID Mandates Gets Evicted

Human rights activists, truckers, citizens protesting government COVID policies had possessions seized by police, ending six-day peaceful protest outside Knesset

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Starting in the early hours last Monday morning, convoys departed from over 40 locations across the small country, from as far as the southern vacation city of Eilat, and the northern town of Metula.

Participants decorated their cars with slogans in Hebrew and some in English. “Freedom”, “I want my country back”, “Green pass = black stain” and “end the coercion” were some of what was seen plastered along the vehicles in the convoy.

Their destination was Jerusalem, the holy city from where, according to the bible the court is to “proclaim liberty throughout all the land for all its inhabitants,” and is now the seat of government of the State of Israel.

The demand was a “repeal of all the COVID and anti-democratic legislation enacted over the past two years, according to their [press release](#).”

In particular:

- A total termination of all COVID restrictions and the return to normal life. Including complete cancellation of the Knesset’s “Enabling Act” which facilitates the state of emergency in Israel,
- Return to a normal routine for all Israel’s children without any further school closures, quarantine periods, medical procedures on school grounds or mandatory mask wearing,
- Complete opening of the economy and a ban on harassment of employees based on vaccination or testing or masking,
- Full disclosure of contracts and protocols which to date have been withheld from

public review,

Ending the violation of the individual's privacy through street cameras or other illegal surveillance,

- Each individual's dignity and human rights should be respected unconditionally by the government regardless of vaccination status.

With excitement, the convoy was greeted by a few supporters at the entrance to the city.

There were hundreds of cars and trucks that entered the city and made their way to the Knesset, where police blocked the one access road. With horns blasting catchy tunes, usually reserved for sporting events, the convoy circled around the government district. Some stopped on the side arguing with police to be allowed past the barricades to no avail.



Source: David DW

With the street access to the Knesset closed, many parked and walked up to as close as they could get to the government building. Police took extra precautions after having seen what was happening in Ottawa, where dozens of trucks parked directly in front of the Canadian parliament, refusing to move until the government eliminated all regulations that were put in place ostensibly to fight COVID.

The Canadian experience empowered thousands of people across the world to stand up to their own governments and demand their freedoms be restored. Citizens in New Zealand, Australia, across Europe, and North America, after nearly two years, tolerating massive government encroachment into nearly every aspect of their lives, and after seeing how these policies were [not even effective](#) at reducing the spread of COVID, finally had enough.

A crowd of hundreds of people were making their voices heard on the closed street in front of the Knesset. The atmosphere was defiant, friendly, and somewhat festive. Many people were just happy to see and interact with other people who shared their views. Religious, secular, old, young, Jew, and Arab, there were people from every cross-section of Israeli society. Live music was played at times, and passersby handed out fruits and treats to support the group of protesters.



Source: David DW

Frontline News interviewed some of the English-speaking participants, "It is immoral. People have rights and there are things that other people can't do to them," said Shmuel Zuckerman, originally from Baltimore.

Shawn Eracner's parents immigrated from Soviet Russia, where, he explains, "they let the

government trample all over them, and many people ended up dying, and here people are letting it happen without even putting up a fight.”

Yael Yarmish, in speaking directly to the Jewish population, reminded them how the events of the Holocaust started – when the population gave up their rights, “we are not going to allow that to happen again. Never again.”

Ber Lazarus, and his daughter Sophia, both originally from Canada spoke with Frontline News saying that while they thought they lived in a free country, through this “non-emergency” they have had even fewer rights than they thought, and that even those rights were being trampled. “The primary right is that we decide what goes into our bodies,” they said.

As the day wore on, more protesters arrived and set up tents along the side of the road, while others called it a day and went home. The protesters maintained a presence on-site in front of the Knesset until Friday when another convoy was planned.

Starting from Latrun, about halfway from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a smaller convoy began a slow roll up to the Capital.

Friday afternoon saw a reinvigorated protest, and festival-like atmosphere, with people joining with tents to settle in for the Sabbath starting later that evening.

The songs and prayers that mark the start of the Sabbath were conducted among the tents, reminiscent of the days at overnight camp, for some.

After a restful Sabbath on the surrounding grounds of the Knesset, without incident or violence, all of a sudden, police and municipal contractors arrived unannounced with trucks and significant personnel, to evict the protesters and seize their property. And that’s what happened.

[Avi Barak](#), compiled a video documenting the events:

Valentina Neilin, an attorney for land use law, told Frontline News that according to Israeli law, the government must give at least 30 days’ notice before removing people or property off public lands.



Source: Noam Kampf

Even cabinet Minister Eli Avidar described the protest’s eviction as against the law, “violent and brutal” in a [Tweet](#) the following day.

The movement that started in Canada and spread across the world also galvanized thousands in Israel. The same Israel, where the green pass and invasive population monitoring in the name of fighting COVID started, is the same Israel where citizens are standing up and demanding change.

While the police succeeded in removing the protesters, they did not succeed in removing the experience of unity, or the resolve in their hearts to take back the basic human liberties that still remain a distant memory, but also a determined hope for the future.

Video montage to the soundtrack “Jerusalem of Gold”

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Featured image: Boy waves as the convoy enters Jerusalem. The sign on the truck reads “Enough with the restrictions! We’re returning to life” (Source: AFLD)

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