

Netanyahu's Power Grab

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Netanyahu's main aims are staying in power and out of prison — no matter how grievously he breaches the rule of law or harms ordinary Israelis and Palestinians by his increasingly dictatorial policies.

On the phony pretext of tracking COVID-19 carriers, he extrajudicially ordered mass surveillance without Knesset or judicial approval.

On Thursday carrying banners with his image saying "CRIME MINISTER" and "No to dictatorship," hundreds of Israelis protested outside the Knesset, defying his ban on large gatherings.

He virtually shut down judicial proceedings to delay his scheduled March trial for bribery, fraud and breach of trust to May, perhaps another delay to follow — a power grab stunt to avoid trial altogether.

New emergency orders were issued by his regime, mandating a near-national lockdown other than for essential services and activities, effective Thursday, a statement saying:

"(C)itizens of Israel are required to stay home. It is no longer a request. It is no longer a recommendation. It is a binding directive that will be enforced by the enforcement authorities."

On Thursday evening, Israel's Supreme Court issued a temporary injunction that limits electronic surveillance by Shin Bet, Israel's security service.

While COVID-19 patients can still be monitored, if a parliamentary oversight committee is not established to monitor the practice by March 24, tracking will be banned, according to the Supreme Court ruling.

It came in response to petitions against police state mass surveillance by the Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, the Joint (Arab) List party, and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI).

Adalah responded as follows to the ruling, saying:

"We applaud the Israeli Supreme Court's decision, which stresses that the government is not allowed to act without oversight."

"Nevertheless, even parliamentary oversight cannot legitimize such a serious violation of human rights."

“Public health emergencies must not be exploited to grant additional powers to the Shin Bet security service and the Israeli police.”

Likudnik/Netanyahu loyalist speaker Yuli Edelstein dismissed the Knesset on the phony pretext of obeying a Netanyahu diktat that limits public gatherings to no more than 10 people — a fear-mongering/survival as prime minister tactic when Israel only had a few hundred COVID-19 infected people and no deaths.

The real reason for suspending proceedings is to prevent adoption of legislation that could end his tenure as prime minister.

By recorded message, main opposition Blue and White party member Yair Lapid slammed the Netanyahu regime, saying:

“There is no judicial branch in Israel. There is no legislative branch in Israel. There is only an unelected government that is headed by a person who lost the election.”

You can call that by a lot of names” — dictatorship most appropriate.

On Thursday, Blue and White party leader Benny Gantz said he won't out unity government with Netanyahu, reversing a campaign promise otherwise, adding:

“At the moment, all options need to be on the table. It wouldn't be responsible on my part not to consider any alternative.”

“Citizens (want) a solution to the political crisis.” Slamming Edelstein, he said:

“It can't be that we need to turn to the High Court of Justice to jumpstart the Knesset. The...speaker is acting in service of Netanyahu and hindering developments.”

Shortly after the above remarks, he said talks with Likud “were stopped...(T)here are no agreements.”

“What we have seen throughout the day is cynical spin during a great and difficult crisis for Israeli citizens.”

According to Channel 12 news, Gantz supported unity government with Likud. Because key Blue and White party members expressed opposition, it's off the table, at least for now.

Haartz editors slammed the idea, calling it “capitulation” by Gantz if agreed on with Netanyahu to let him remain prime minister for up to another two years, adding:

“(U)nity government led by a criminal defendant” could hand Netanyahu a stay-out-of-prison pass.

Gantz's main campaign promise was “Anyone but Bibi.”

Strongly opposing him, Haaretz editors called for “(l)iberating Israel from the clutches of the defendant in the prime minister's office, and putting an end to his corrupt and corrupting

reign.”

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