

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #87

SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR ENTITLED ‘ISRAEL UPDATE’



21 SEPTEMBER 2022

In a brief ‘Webinar’ session organized by the Washington based MEF, Ashley Perry, an adviser to Israel’s minister of foreign affairs and deputy prime minister in 2009-15, provides weekly updates on Israeli politics.

SUMMARY OF ASHLEY PERRY’S WEEKLY COMMENTS

- Perry started by saying that it is now 6 days since the list of candidates from various parties has been officially closed.
- According to Perry, a major development that could alter the outcome of the election – possibly in Netanyahu’s favour, is the split that has taken place in the ‘Joint Arab List’
- The ‘Joint List’ originally consisted of four of the Arab-majority political parties in Israel: Hadash (leftist/communist), Balad (advocate of Arab citizens right in Israel), Raam (Islamist) and Taal (Centre Left). Ra'am left the alliance on 28 January 2021 before entering into coalition with government of Naftali Bennet.
- While, according to Perry, only 40% of Arab voters supported the ‘Joint List’ in the previous election, this time Balad decided not to join and as such, this should now hurt the chances of the other 2 parties.
- Hence, it is now quite possible that the remaining parties might not reach the election threshold that is required (i.e., 3.25%) under Israel’s proportional representational system for having parliamentary presence in the new Knesset.
- More importantly, these developments clearly changes the bigger map for the upcoming elections. Recent polls indicate that Netanyahu is at worst already hovering around 60 seats or more bearing in mind that 61 is the magic number for forming the next government.
- There is no question that the breakup of the ‘Joint List’ will work in favour of Netanyahu.
- Perry said that for his part, Benny Gantz in trying to counter Netanyahu’s message, has tried to project himself as someone who can bring various parties including certain Ultra-Orthodox elements together, though the outcome for such claims do not seem very realistic.

- Perry said that prospects of Aylet Shaked's 'Zionist Spirit party' had also come under strain following a split between her and her potential ally, Yoaz Hendel given the latter's refusal to sit with Netanyahu under any circumstances and Shaked's intention in being a part of a future Netanyahu government.
- Finally, Perry commented about Yair Lapid's speech at the UN General Assembly in which he had once again revived the possibility of Israeli-Palestinian talks and a new push for a 2-state solution.
- Lapid's comments were described as a "bombshell" by Perry especially, as anything having to do with the Palestinian issue did not rank very highly at this time in terms of priorities for the Israeli electorate.

