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Israel

# Six remarks about the elections in Israel

- IV Online magazine - 2019 - IV531 - April 2019 -

Publication date: Thursday 18 April 2019

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### **The first comments on Netanyahu's victory, right and far right in Israeli politics, how did Arab Israelis vote.**

#### **A clear victory for Netanyahu**

Not only did Netanyahu win the elections but his Likud party increased the number of its members in the new Knesset from 30 to 36, one more than the list of the IDF chiefs of staff (Blue-White list). His big success was made possible by attracting the votes of other far-right parties: the list of his former minister of education, Naftali Bennett, and its former minister of justice, Ayelet Shaked (The New Right) didn't even get the minimum in order to enter the Knesset. Netanyahu's personalized campaign strategy ("me or the left") worked well for him.

The right wing block, i.e. the parties which indicated already throughout the campaign that they will be part of Netanyahu's coalition, represent 65 Knesset members out of 120, a clear majority even before negotiation.

#### **Israel is definitely on the right**

One cannot deny it anymore: a clear majority of the Israeli-Jewish community shares right wing, chauvinistic and racist values. Their vote for the Likud is not anymore a "protest vote" but a political and ideological choice. The fact that the leader of the right is suspected of several charges of corruption, didn't harm his massive support.

#### **Labor Party - the end**

With its 6 elected MKs, the Labor Party continues its fall to its programmed end. The party which created the State of Israel and led it until 1977 is the shadow of its historical road. In the last elections it still got 24 MPs and could pretend to be an alternative to the Likud. Not anymore, and the decline seems to be irreversible.

#### **A good score for the "chiefs of staff" list**

In few months, a new list was built by former chiefs of staff of the IDF, led by General Benny Gantz, the Blue and White list. Their only program was to get rid of Netanyahu's corrupted regime. However, they refrain to attack him as they could have, may be in order to leave the door open for a future participation in the Likud coalition. The list of the generals, allied with former minister of finances Yair Lapid, got 35 MKs, one less than the Likud. It is definitely a success, but a useless one: most of the center-left parties (like the Labor party) lost their voters to Blue and White; as a result, and unlike Netanyahu, Gantz doesn't have potential allies to build an eventual alternative coalition.

#### **Increase of the strength of the ultra-religious parties**

The two ultra-religious parties - The Flag of the Tora and Shas - got together 15 MKs (from 13 in the last elections) and may increase their successful attempts to increase the weight of religion in the public space. Netanyahu seems ready to provide them at least part of their demands (closing more shops and reducing public transportation on Saturdays).

### Massive abstention among the Palestinian minority

Gantz and its supporters from the center-left are accusing the Arab voters for having helped the victory of Netanyahu, through their massive abstention (around 50%). How typical! Gantz refused to denounce unequivocally the Constitutional Law of "Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish people" that formally stated the discrimination of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Why should the Palestinian minority mobilize in support of this copy of Netanyahu?

Moreover: the Palestinian parties decided to break up the unity which, in the last elections, allowed the Palestinians to become a clear political voice of opposition to racism and discrimination. That decision, initiated by MK Ahmad Tibi - a well-known opportunist - was adopted by Communist party leader Aiman Odeh. It was a shot in their own leg: the Tibi-communists got only 6 MKs, and, together with the National-Islamist block, the Arab representatives were reduced from 13 to 10. Half of the Palestinian voters decided to abstain, both as a protest to the new law and as an expression of disappointment for the braking of national unity.

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