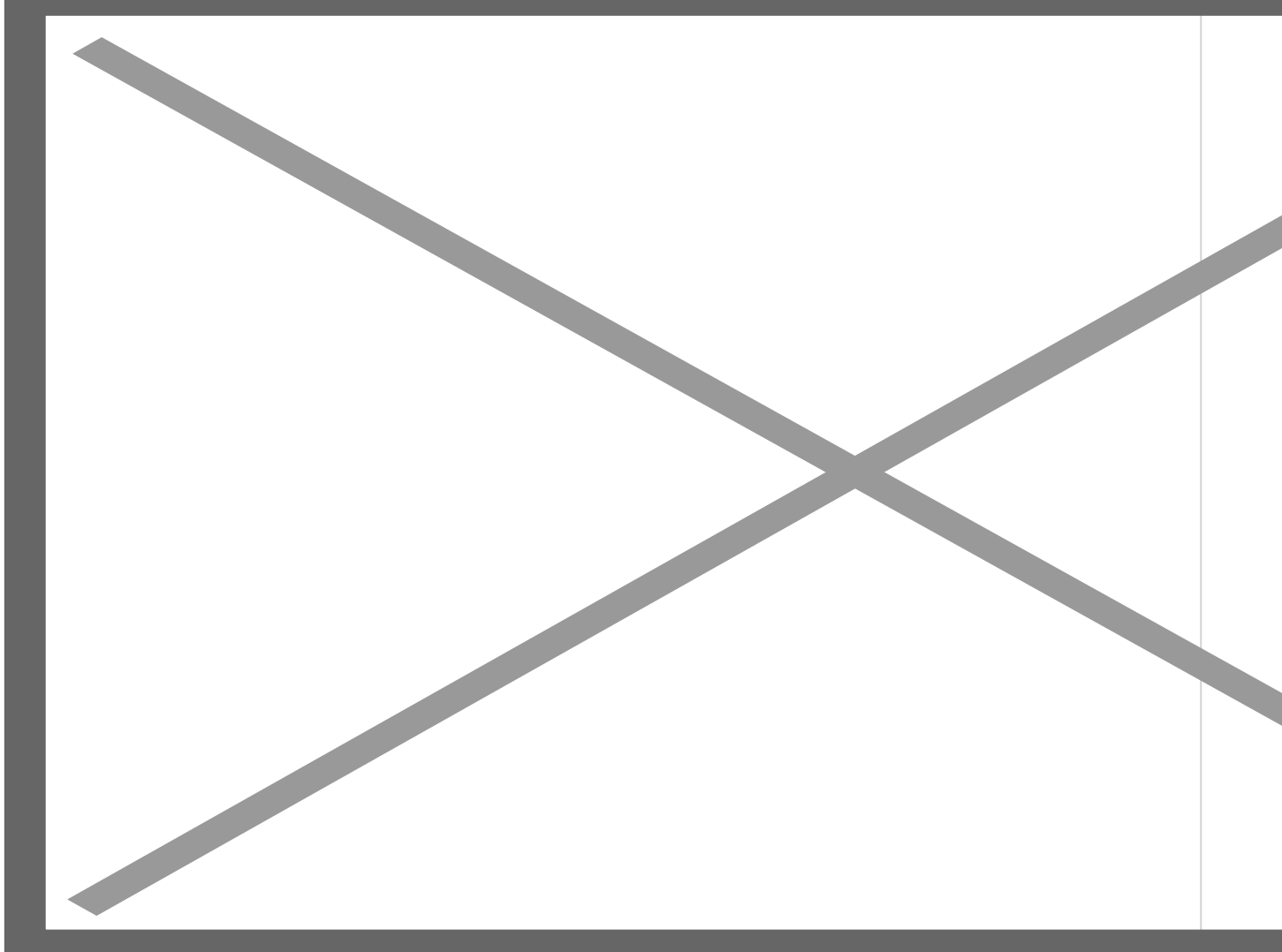


Thousands protest Israeli prime minister's plan to loot public money

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C) and his political allies attend a press conference

at Knesset (the Israeli parliament) on the regime's planned annual budget vote on May 23, 2023.

Tel Aviv, May 24 (RHC)-- Thousands of Israeli settlers rally in the occupied holy city of al-Quds in protest at the Israeli prime minister's plan to use public funds to buy the support of his extremist political allies. The demonstration saw the participants rally towards the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) on Tuesday.

The demonstrators lambasted the regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for seeking to allocate huge amounts of money in the annual budget to ultra-Orthodox Israelis' welfare. The protesters amassed in front of the Knesset as the legislature was about to vote on the budget.

A day earlier, Netanyahu had announced that the regime would grant married ultra-Orthodox Israelis, who are engaged in religious study rather than work, a total of 250 million shekels (\$67.5 million) in the annual budget.

The grant was part of a last-minute deal with one of the ultra-Orthodox parties in the regime's coalition of hard-right and ultra-Orthodox political parties to ensure the party's support for the budget. Chanting slogans, beating drums, and blowing horns, the protesters said the prime minister was seeking to "loot" public money to curry favor with his coalition allies.

The demonstration was organized by the same group of activists, who have been protesting since January at the cabinet's similarly controversial plan to "overhaul" the regime's judicial system.

Under that scheme, Netanyahu seeks to give the regime's extremist cabinet more say in the process of selecting the Supreme Court's judges, while seeking to empower the politicians and the Knesset to override the court's rulings.

Hundreds of thousands have been protesting the so-called "reforms" on a weekly basis since January when Netanyahu announced them.

Faced with overwhelming public pressure, including the biggest protests ever seen across the occupied territories as well as several strikes, Netanyahu announced a pause in the scheme on March 27 to supposedly enable talks on the reforms.

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