

# *Israeli Prime Minister Says Tel Aviv Will Not Ratify Nuclear Test Ban Treaty*

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Tel Aviv, June 21 (RHC)-- Israel, which is widely believed to possess hundreds of atomic bombs, says it is not yet ready to ratify a UN pact on banning nuclear tests adopted nearly 20 years ago. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with Lassina Zerbo, the head of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Organization, on Monday, when he refused to make any commitments for the Israeli regime to ratify the CTBT.

Following the meeting, Netanyahu's office said in a statement that while the Israeli regime has signed the treaty, it has no plans to ratify it. According to the statement, Netanyahu told Zerbo that "the issue of ratification depends on the regional context and the appropriate timing."

The CTBT, passed by UN General Assembly in September 1996, has 196 signatories but has not entered into force because it needs ratification by all nuclear-armed signatories.

The Israeli regime is widely believed to have between 200 and 400 nuclear warheads, though it refuses to confirm or deny its existence under a policy of deliberate ambiguity. The regime has also refused to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), denying international access to its atomic arsenal.

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