

Netanyahu cancels trip to UN over poor election results



Tel Aviv, September 18 (RHC)-- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has canceled his planned visit to the United Nations General Assembly in New York amid a political deadlock following Tuesday's general elections.

The decision was announced on Wednesday after both Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party and the centrist Blue and White alliance of former military chief Benny Gantz failed to garner enough seats to secure a parliamentary majority needed to form an administration.

With over 92 percent of the votes counted, Likud Party and Blue and White Party have respectively secured 31 and 32 parliamentary seats. Both parties say they have already started negotiations to form a coalition while they're waiting for the official results.

For a governing coalition of 61 legislators, each party would have to form a coalition with other parties, including the far-right party of former minister of military affairs Avigdor Lieberman, Yisrael Beiteinu, which, according to early results, has nine seats in the assembly.

Tuesday's election was Israel's second vote in five months. Netanyahu called the snap vote after he failed to win a majority in April's elections.

Netanyahu, a close ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, was expected to address the General Assembly on September 26 as the 12th speaker, just three slots after Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. According to the Israeli media, Foreign Minister Israel Katz will attend the event in his place.

Over the past decade, Netanyahu has made nine speeches at the annual UN gathering, most of them focused on Iran, including in 2012, when he showed a cartoon of a bomb in an attempt to portray the Islamic Republic as a threat.

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