

Netanyahu to be mandated to form new Israeli government

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Likud party leader Benjamin Netanyahu waves to his supporters after first exit poll results for the Israeli parliamentary election at his party's headquarters in Jerusalem, November 2, 2022
[File: Maya Alleruzzo/AP Photo]

Tel Aviv, November 12 (RHC)-- Israeli President Isaac Herzog has said he is set to give former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the mandate to form a new Israeli government on Sunday. Herzog made the announcement on Friday, after consultations with representatives of all parties entering the 25th Israeli parliament (Knesset). A statement by the president's office said 64 members of Israel's 120-seat

parliament recommended that Netanyahu assemble the new coalition.

Netanyahu's right-wing coalition came in first in last week's election. If he can form a government with his coalition allies, as is expected, it may end an unprecedented Israeli political crisis that has led to five elections since 2019. The four previous elections had been mostly referendums on Netanyahu's ability to serve while facing charges of accepting bribes, fraud and breach of trust. Netanyahu has denied any wrongdoing.

Israel's longest-serving premier, he will have 28 days from Sunday to form what is expected to be the most right-wing Israeli government in history. He is likely to ally with far-right controversial figures and religious parties to achieve a stable parliamentary majority. His coalition partner, the Religious Zionism alliance, won 14 seats.

The party's leaders will now attempt to translate that strong showing into senior government posts for its members, including positions responsible for security. That is despite the far-right nature of the party's leadership – one figure, Itamar Ben-Gvir, has called for Palestinians "disloyal" to Israel to be expelled and is a former member of the banned Kach party, which is considered a "terrorist" organisation in Israel.

On Wednesday, Herzog was caught saying "the whole world is worried" about the far-right positions of newly elected lawmaker Ben-Gvir, an ultranationalist set to become a minister in Netanyahu's new cabinet. The president was holding a consultation with other parties about the election when his comment about Ben-Gvir was caught by a microphone he apparently thought was off.

"You have a partner who the entire world around us is worried about. I have also said this to him," Herzog was heard saying at the end of a meeting on Wednesday. "You are going to have a problem with the Temple Mount. That is a critical issue," Herzog said, referring to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which Israelis, including settler groups, have repeatedly entered over the last few years under protection by Israeli forces in violation of long-agreed norms over access.

Meeting Ben-Gvir on Thursday, Herzog repeated his concerns, according to Israeli media. "I said that your party has a certain image that raises concerns in many places, regarding the treatment of Arabs in our state and region," Herzog told Ben-Gvir. "World leaders are asking me." "I am asked in the Muslim world about the Temple Mount. This subject is sensitive," he added.

If Netanyahu requires an extension, he is entitled to an additional 14 days to form the government. If he fails, another party leader will be chosen for the task.

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