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**Israel's Controversial Bill to Overhaul  
Judicial System**



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**Introduction**

Israel is witnessing mass protests against the judicial reforms that Benjamin Netanyahu's government proposed in all major cities, including Tel Aviv. Israelis headed to the streets to protest against limiting the judiciary's power. The protest came after the recently solved Israeli Political crisis from 2018 to 2022. Netanyahu and his right-wing allies formed a majority government in December 2022. This government includes many controversial ministers, such as the Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben- Kivir. This is one of the most rightist governments in Israeli history. During the election, many right-wing politicians proposed many controversial legislations and policies. Judicial reform is one of the controversial legislations proposed by Netanyahu during the election.

**Background**

The current anti-judicial reform protests are one of the crucial political events after solving the political crisis between 2018 and 2022. The 2022 Israeli crisis was a time of political instability in Israel, which saw five consecutive snap elections in four years. The main reason for the political

crisis was the opposition of opposition parties towards Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu

was facing several corruption charges against him. The opposition parties were against forming a government, including Benjamin Netanyahu. The political crisis was solved after the 2022 Israeli legislative election, in which Netanyahu and his right-wing allies finally got a majority in four years. The new Israeli government was formed on 29 December 2022.

Likud party leader Yariv Levin was appointed as Justice Minister in January 2023; he announced a plan to reform the Israeli judiciary. The major reform was to reduce the power of the Supreme Court and the government's legal councillors. The reform plan also included granting the governing coalition a majority on the committee that appoints the judges.

The main reason for the judicial reform is to save Benjamin Netanyahu from indictment and disqualification, who is facing many corruption charges against him.

### **Processes and operations that the proposed modifications will influence**

**Judiciary selection:** The proposed amendments aim to alter the committee's makeup, giving the government a majority of votes and influencing the appointment and removal of all judges, including those on the Supreme Court. A full bench of Supreme Court justices must preside over any case in which the legality of routine legislation passed by the Knesset is considered, and 80% of them must rule for the invalidation of such legislation. These and other measures are part of the proposed efforts to limit judicial review over legislation.

**Knesset Override:** The measures being considered would give the Knesset the power to overturn a Supreme Court ruling on a piece of legislation's validity if 61 of the 120 Knesset members vote against it. **Legal advisors to government ministries** - The proposed changes aim to reclassify ministry legal advisers from independent authorities, subject to the professional oversight of the Justice Ministry, to politically selected counsel whose opinions are explicitly non-binding upon the government and its ministers, allowing ministers to individually choose and fire their legal advisers and choose whether or not to abide by legal advice.

By legislating against the idea of "reasonability," the proposed revisions aim to restrict the scope of judicial review of governmental and administrative actions. As a result, the courts would not be allowed to entertain petitions or appeals challenging governmental and administrative decisions because they are "unreasonable."

### **The protest**

Following the announcement of judicial reforms, many organisations, including the Crime Minister, announced their intention to organise protests on January 7. Tel Aviv, Habima square, witnessed a mass protest attended by more than twenty thousand people. Smaller protests also took place. The protestors view the changes in the judicial system as a threat to democratic checks and balances on the ministers and court. The protestors believe that the future of Israeli democracy is at stake if the government succeeds in implementing judicial reforms. These changes would tighten the political control over the judiciary and judicial appointments—the Supreme court's powers to overturn government decisions.

The protest has been going on for two months now. During his visit to London, Netanyahu was greeted by protestors shouting and whistling outside Downing street, as opposed to judicial reform plans.

### **The Risk of the Judicial Reforms**

The reform would weaken the Israeli Judiciary and could pave the way for Knesset's controlled judicial appointments. The independence of the Israeli Judiciary is seriously threatened, and the Judiciary will be put under the effective control of the Knesset. Opposition fears that Israel would be pushed towards a system where the leader veils control over all significant levels of power. Opposition fears that Netanyahu and their allies want to weaken the Supreme Court and establish more settlements on the occupied Palestinian territories. This will also help Netanyahu and his nationalist allies to pass discriminatory laws against Palestinians and minorities in Israel.

### **Conclusion**

Israel is witnessing one of the significant protests directly against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his judicial reforms. His judicial reforms include plans to curtail the powers of the Israeli judiciary over government decisions and laws passed by the Knesset. Accordingly, the Judicial reforms Knesset can overturn Supreme Court verdicts by a simple majority. According to the opposition and protestors, this judicial reform is a serious attempt to weaken the Supreme court and reduce the independence of the Israeli judiciary. The protest has been ongoing for almost two months. There is criticism against these reforms in Israel and the rest of the world. Critics believe that it is a direct attack on the democratic setup.