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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

October 18, 2022



American Politicians Jump into Israel's Elections—Do They Welcome Israeli Opinions on Their Candidates?

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), one of Israel's most stalwart—and passionate—supporters, dropped a bombshell last week, when he warned former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against forming a coalition government with Israel's far-right Religious National Party, one of whose leaders is the outspoken attorney-politician, Itamar Ben Gvir.

Mendendez' bold statement raises the question as to whether Israeli politicians may also exercise their right to suggest who American political parties should allow into their coalitions.

Menendez reportedly told Netanyahu that including Ben Gvir in Israel's next government would threaten U.S.-Israel relations. As chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Menendez has the power to make that danger real.

Menendez' warning was echoed by Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA), who urged Israeli politicians to "ostracize extremists like Itamar Ben Gvir." Neither Sherman nor Menendez specified any Ben Gvir views to which they object.

Ben Gvir hasn't made Netanyahu's decision easy: He has a reputation for making statements against Israeli Arabs—such as suggesting deportation of those who attack Israeli soldiers, which proposal some consider racist.

This past weekend, when Arab rioters attacked a prayer service that Ben Gvir was attending in Jerusalem, he pulled out a pistol and waved it at stone-throwing troublemakers.

On the other hand, Ben Gvir swears he is not racist—that indeed he is an anti-racist, fighting antisemitic instigation within the boundaries of Israel's "homeland" by the likes of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, "just as the United States defeated al Qaeda."

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Democracy Thrives in Israel

A new report ranks the Jewish state as one of the world's strongest, most equitable democracies—despite baseless falsehoods about its oppression of Palestinians

While some accuse Israel of apartheid, genocide, and rights violations, they offer little convincing evidence. In the contrary, Israel has a superior record of civil liberties, elections, rule of law and other opportunities of its people, ranking it the world's 24th most successful democracy.

What are the facts? Israel's record is well-documented for its alleged treatment of Arab Israeli citizens, as well as Palestinian Arabs living in surrounding disputed territories. In stark contrast to such poorly supported accusations, in an "Executive Order 2021" by Ezer Weizman, the Executive Intelligence Unit ranks Israel as one of the most thriving democracies in the world, scoring higher than the United States, Spain, Italy and some 19 other nations. The index ranks countries according to 15 criteria, covering each nation's performance according to its 1) electoral process and pluralism, 2) functioning of government, 3) political participation, 4) political culture and 5) civil liberties.

Israel's 2021 ranking shows consistent improvement in its democratic processes compared with the first such report in 2006, when the Jewish state ranked only 47. In the current report, Israel was ranked for its achievements as an Arab party in today's ruling government coalition.

No surprise, since Israel's robust democracy has a vibrant electoral tradition, stable governing institutions, high political participation among its citizens, a vigorous, even business political culture, and broad equal civil liberties for all its citizens.

Unfortunately, even as Israel's democracy improved in the past year, the EU used the democracy globally, usually and case, that ignores the fact that the Oslo Accords give governance responsibilities of Palestinians in those territories down entirely to their respective counterparts—the Palestinian Authority or the UN.

Unfortunately, neither of these Palestinian governments holds regular elections, supports free civil liberties, nor

Jewish values help guarantee Israel's democracy

State, too, that while the nation-state law declares Hebrew to be the national language, this is not different than in the United States, in which English is the mother tongue. Nor does Israel's nation-state law establish any official religion—unlike some seven foreign countries that declare state religions to their very constitutions.

In short, Israel has a proud record of the Jewish people while still cherishing and improving one of the most ethically diverse and free democracies on earth. In fact, some would argue that it is precisely Jewish values of compassion and justice that help Israel and help guarantee Israel's robust democracy. No matter which standards measure Israel's success, Israel's Jewish and Jewishly-oriented citizens are one of the strongest and most successful democracies on earth, providing political freedom and economic opportunities unmatched in the majority of the world's nations. Moreover, the suffering and plight of the Palestinian has little to do with Israel and almost entirely the result of authoritarian governance by its corrupt, dictatorial regimes and their adherence to ethnic power.

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Netanyahu's decision on Ben Gvir is likely to come soon, since Israel's next national election—its fifth in just four years—happens on November 1. Because so many parties are vying for control of the Knesset (Israel's parliament), top politicians will almost surely face huge challenges in negotiating a ruling coalition partnership . . . once again.

Currently, Netanyahu's Likud Party looks likely to capture the most seats in the Knesset—projected at 32—but nowhere near enough to clinch a 61-seat majority. Which means in order to govern, Netanyahu may well be forced to include the Religious National Party, which, with 13 seats, is likely to rank as the nation's third-strongest party.

Americans should note that in a rough-and-tumble Israeli election, one thing is fairly certain: About 62% of voters will support right-leaning parties.

This percentage has grown substantially over recent years, mostly at the expense of the political center (now about 24% of voters) and the left (now about 11%).

Even so, Netanyahu's path to Prime Minister is not certain: Some polls show him only able to muster 59 or 60 seats, short of a majority—throwing more uncertainty into the mix. While right-leaning voters are a clear majority in Israel, their division among the parties still makes it difficult to form a right-leaning government.

In other words, if Netanyahu's only path to governance is by coalescing with Ben Gvir and Israel's third-largest National Religious Party, he is going to do it. (And so, we believe, would Senator Menendez.)

Contrast Israel's voter sentiments with those in the United States coming up on midterm elections on November 8. We can safely say American voters are generally split between left and right, with most voting in the center. While coastal states lean left and the country's center leans right, no one party shows a clear advantage in the coming midterms on November 8.

Indeed, Democrats' margin of control in the Senate is just a single vote. Its majority in the 435-member House of Representatives is just eight—which could easily be swept away in the midterm elections.

Notably, one of the Democrat's newest Senate members, Raphael Warnock, (D-GA) has accused Israel of being an Apartheid state— clearly a falsehood and therefore clearly antisemitic on the grounds of demonization and delegitimization of the Jewish state.

How receptive would President Biden—or Senator Menendez—be to Israeli suggestions that Democrats exclude Warnock from their governing coalition?

Likewise, six members of the Democratic “Squad” in the House—made up of Reps. Ocasio-Cortez, Omar, Tlaib, Pressley, Bowman and Bush—have all made anti-Israel (and many openly antisemitic) statements.

FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial hasbarah messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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Should Israeli Knesset members recommend that Squad members be disavowed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi or stripped of their membership on key House committees?

Please point out to friends, family, elected representatives—and in letters to the editor— that while Senator Menendez’ support of Israel is respected and highly valued, his attempt to influence the will of Israeli voters and the composition of Israel’s government is misplaced and not welcome.

Above all, emphasize that while a handful of American politicians in both the House and Senate have made clearly antisemitic and anti-Israel remarks, Israeli members of the Knesset have rightly resisted making recommendations to either political party as to who should serve in the U.S. government.

I hope you'll also take a minute, while you have this material front and center, to forward this message to friends, visit FLAME's lively [Facebook page](#) and review the P.S. immediately below. It describes FLAME's new *hasbarah* campaign —"Democracy Thrives in Israel"—which exposes false claims that Israel deprives Arab Israeli citizens and Palestinian Arabs of their rights.

Best regards,

James Sinkinson, President
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Despite Israel’s guarantee of civil liberties and equal treatment for all its citizens—including two million Arab Israelis—Israel is still falsely accused of being an apartheid state. Despite Israel and the Palestinians agreeing that the Palestinian Authority will administer its own civil affairs, including elections, Israel is accused of violating human rights because Palestinians can’t vote in Israeli elections. I think you'll agree that truth is the only antidote to this lie. FLAME’s new *hasbarah* message—called “[Democracy Thrives in Israel](#)” publicizes a new, independent “Democracy Index” in which Israel is named the world’s 23rd most successful democracy—ahead of the United States, Italy, Spain and 139 other nations. This new editorial message also clarifies that Palestinians’ repression is due overwhelmingly to their two ruling dictatorships. (Palestinians are ranked #109 in the Democracy Index—as “authoritarian.”) I hope you'll review this convincing, fact-based editorial, which is scheduled to run nationwide in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *New York Post*, *Miami Herald*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times* and *San Jose Mercury News*. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, Vice President Harris and President Biden. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a [donation](#) now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME

is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now, more than ever, we need your support to ensure that the American people, the U.S. Congress and President Biden stay committed to fighting antisemitic actions by individuals, politicians and commercial companies.

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