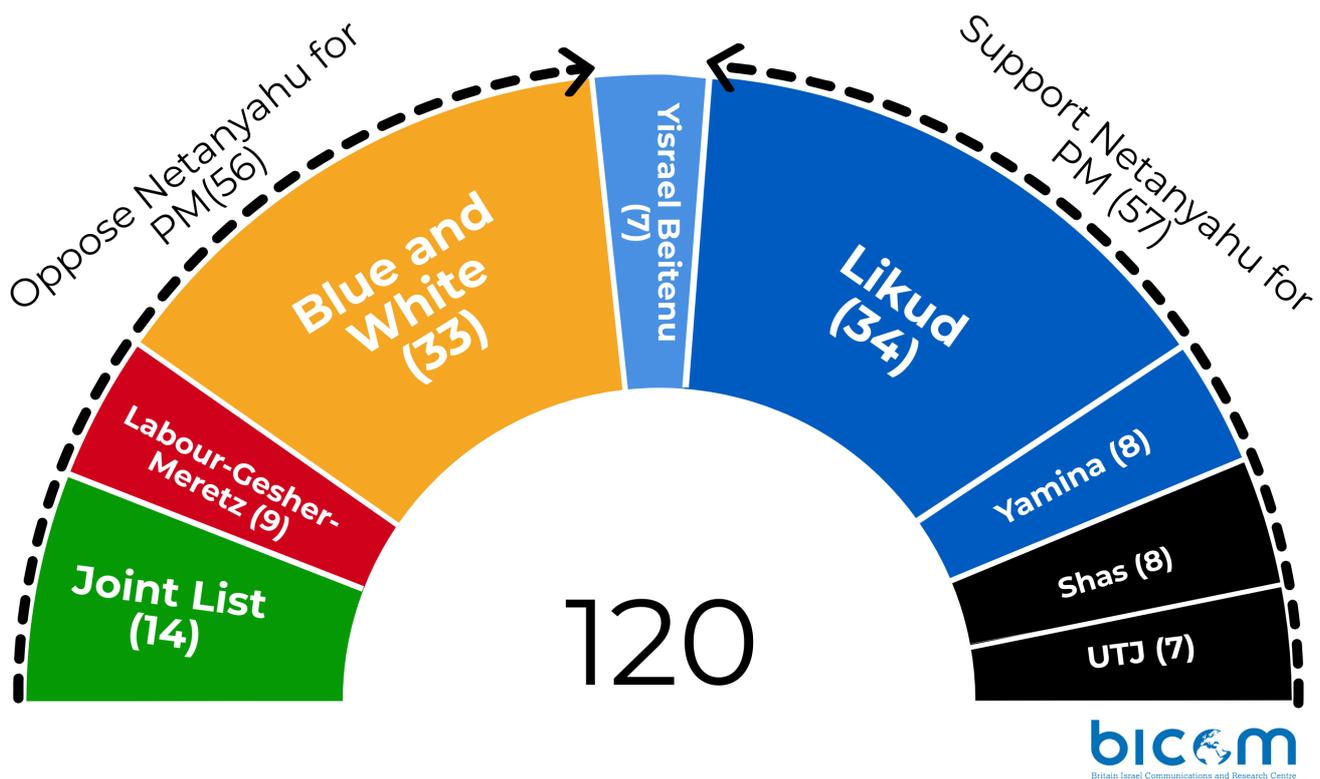


Israeli Elections Bulletin | February 28

Next Monday, 2 March, Israelis will vote for the third time in less than a year. Our last bulletin before next week's election has everything you need to know. Be sure to listen to our [weekly podcast](#) and to follow our [election page](#) featuring our regularly updated poll of polls, campaign updates and analysis of the parties and politicians.

BICOM's poll of polls

Aggregate polling, February 20 - 28



Polls predict another deadlock

The third Israeli election in less than a year is now just days away – 2 March – and seemingly nothing has changed. According to the last polls of the campaign, neither Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing/religious “bloc” of parties, nor Benny Gantz and his centre-left “bloc,” are likely to win enough seats to form a 61-seat governing coalition. Similar to the two previous elections, pundits expect the most likely outcome to be continued deadlock after election day.

However, the dominant trend of the past two weeks has been the growing strength of Netanyahu's Likud party. Defying political gravity and three indictments for bribery, fraud and breach of trust, Likud has made up ground on Gantz's Blue and White and in some polls has actually taken a slim lead. Overall the right-wing bloc has increased its strength, too, relative to last September's election – although it may not be enough for a parliamentary majority.

Netanyahu has dominated the campaign agenda on a daily basis, issuing promises to multiple constituencies – settlers, Ethiopian-Israelis, Arab-Israelis, cannabis users, and more – in an effort to find every last vote and make up what he has described as a gap of 300,000 right-wing voters lost in last September's election relative to the April 2019 election. More insidiously, Netanyahu and his supporters have launched a scorched-earth campaign against Gantz's integrity and mental health. The Likud campaign has emphasised one message above all: "Gantz has no government without Tibi," referring to prominent Arab-Israeli Knesset member Ahmed Tibi and his Joint List party.

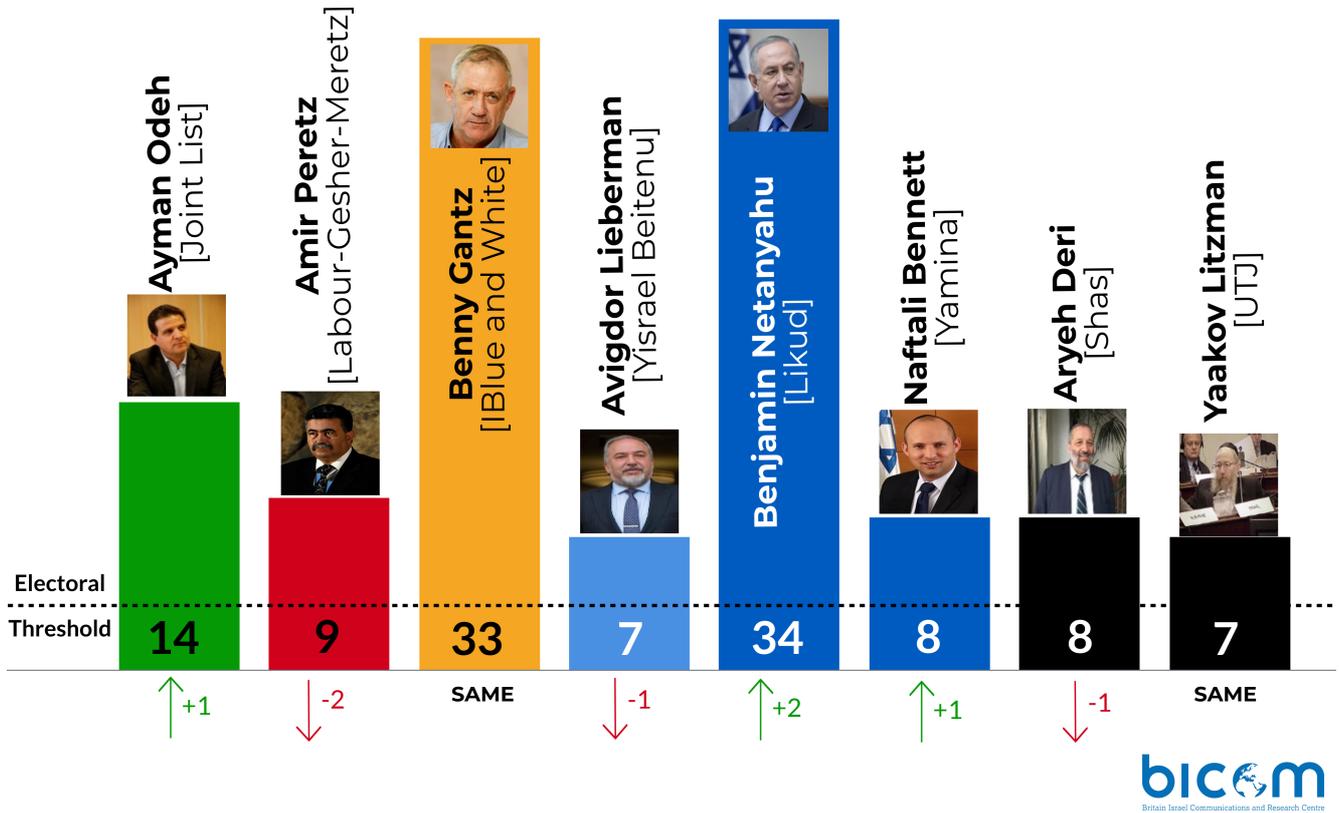
For their part, Blue and White have run a defensive and at times incoherent campaign. Attempts to woo "soft" right-wing voters have muddied their overall message, with the main beneficiaries likely to be the left-wing Labor-Gesher-Meretz alliance. Only in the last week, once poll numbers confirmed Likud's growing momentum, did Blue and White double down on their core message attacking Netanyahu directly. "It's either Blue and White or Erdogan," they now emphasise, alluding to Turkish President Erdogan and his destruction of Turkish democracy (something they claim Netanyahu will do if victorious).

The key question is whether any of these messages will sway enough voters to shift sides or, at the very least, motivate their base of supporters to go to the polls – many of whom have grown disenchanted with the continued stalemate. With the ultra-Orthodox Shas and United Torah Judaism parties pledging continued loyalty to Netanyahu regardless of the outcome, even at the risk of a fourth election, Blue and White's best hope may lie with increased Arab-Israeli turnout.

As in the previous two elections, the potential "kingmaker" for any coalition government will likely remain Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party. Lieberman has come out bluntly against Netanyahu, saying the long-serving premier has "reached the end of his road" and cannot remain in office. Yet Lieberman has also said he will refuse to serve in any government with the ultra-Orthodox or a government dependent on Arab-Israeli support, further limiting any possible clear result for either side – including a temporary minority government helmed by Gantz.

For good measure Lieberman has also promised that there will not be a fourth election. Is a surprise in the offing, or will the deadlock continue? After 2 March most Israelis are hoping for the former while fully expecting the latter.

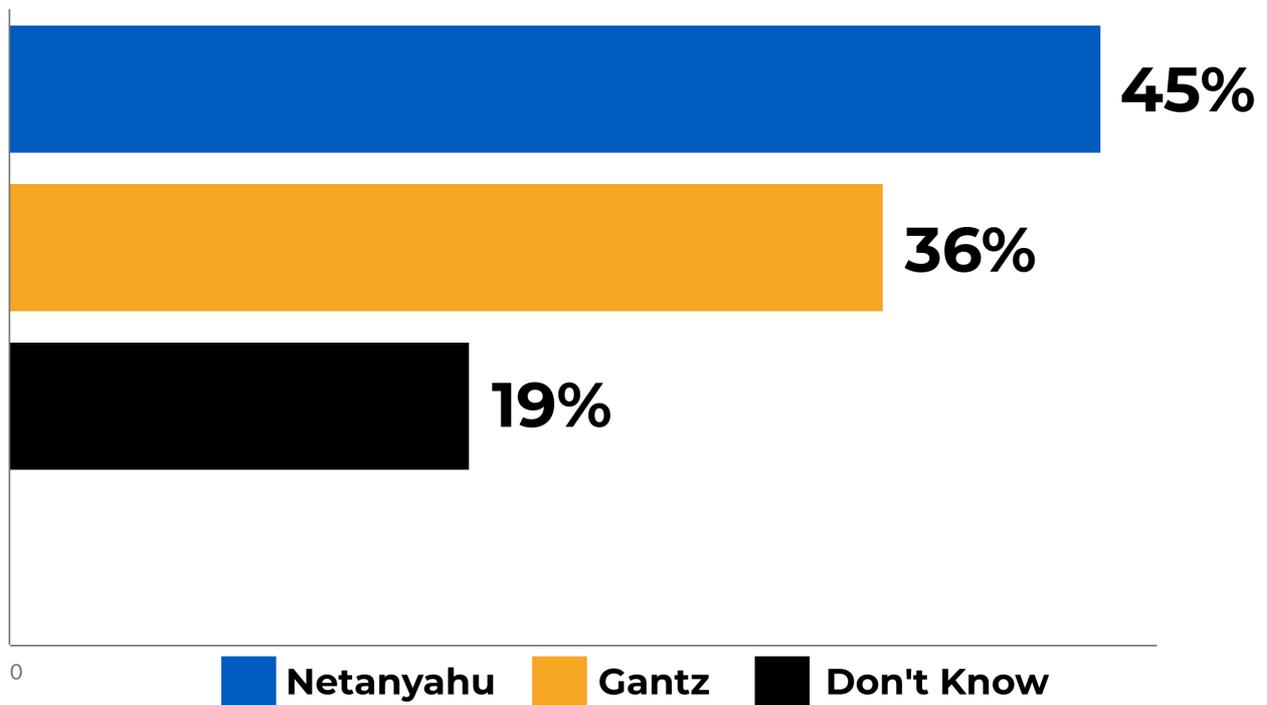
How the parties are shaping up



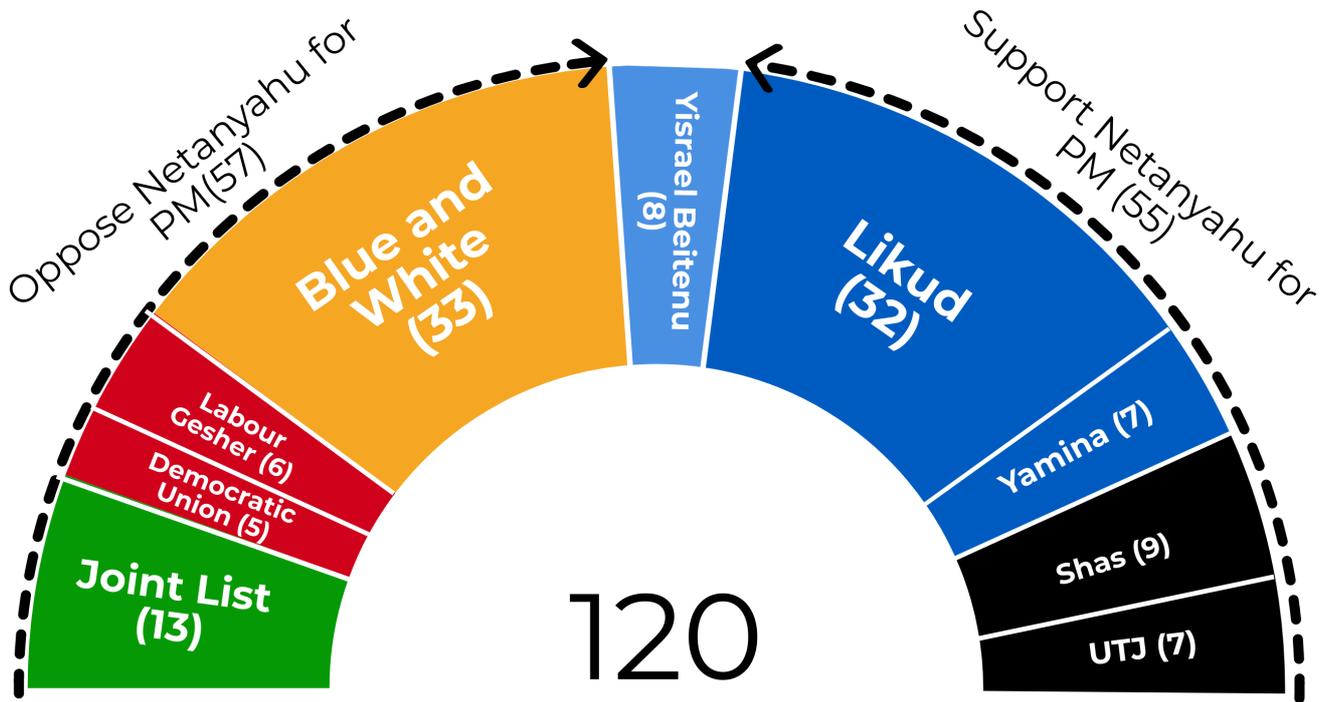
Aggregate polling, February 20 - 28 | compared to September 2019 election results

Netanyahu's vs Gantz

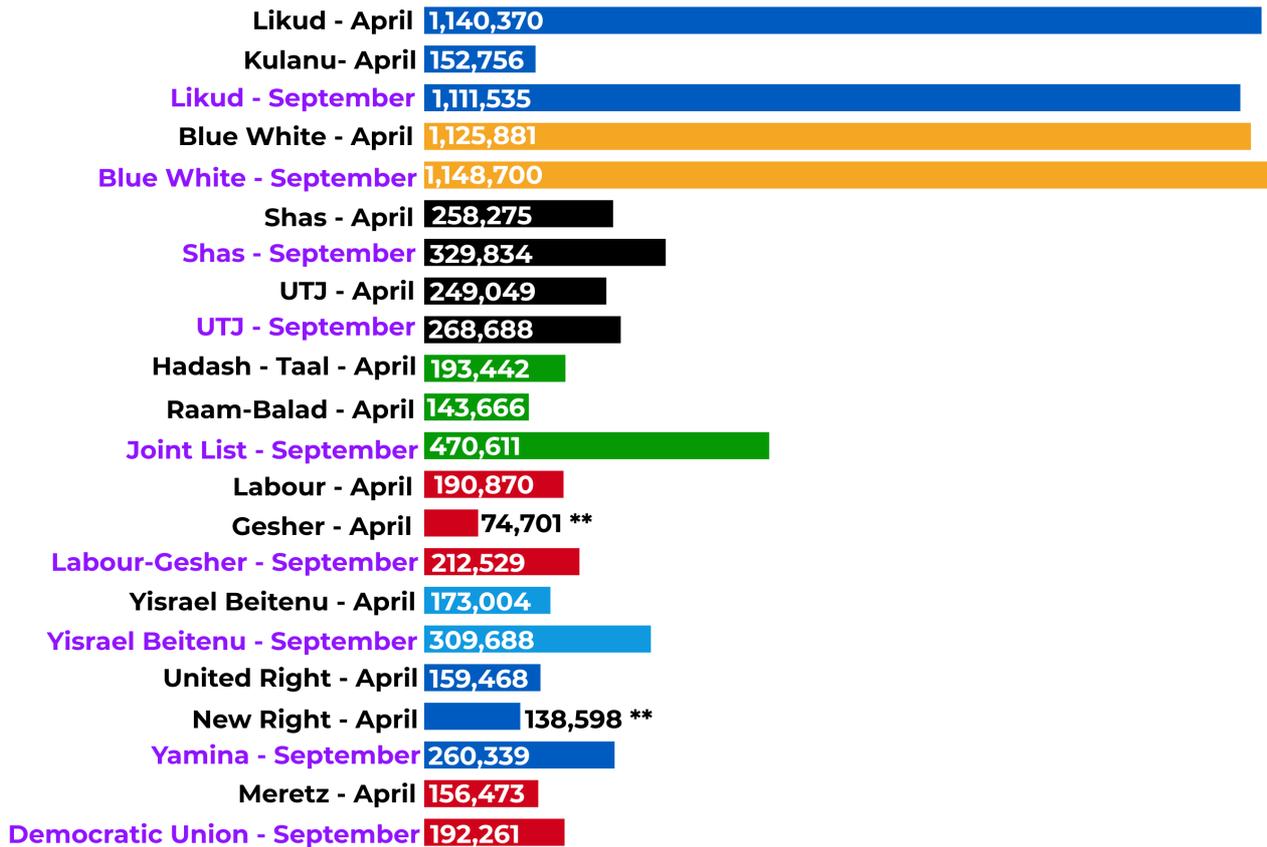
Result of poll asking "who is most suited for Prime Minister?" | Aggregate polling, February 19-28



Final September 2019 Election Results



Total votes per party - April 2019 vs September 2019



**New Right and Gesher did not pass the electoral threshold in April

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[Our latest podcast](#)

[Episode 92 | Ballots and rockets](#)

Richard Pater talks to Eli Hazan, the Likud's Foreign Affairs Director to discuss the latest polls, the Trump plan and rockets from Gaza. Richard also spoke to Blue and White MK Izhar Shay to talk about the party's campaign and its plan for after the election.

Listen on [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#) and our [website](#)



bicom's podcast

Political cartoons



With fatigue and apathy the dominant themes of Israel's third election in 11 months, **Maariv** depicts a voter in solitary confinement, trapped in the election cycle.

Netanyahu challenged Gantz to a TV debate which the Blue and White leader refused. **Maariv** suggests a debate would be a trap for Gantz, who is generally considered less articulate and media savvy than Netanyahu.



The latest polls predict Gantz won't get close to forming a Government without support from the Joint List. The pro-Netanyahu newspaper, **Israel Hayom** (L) shows the Blue and White leaders saying 'we need to move forward' with senior Joint List politician Ahmed Tibi holding a wheel that could help them. **Makor Rishon** (R) has a cartoon – retweeted by Netanyahu himself – which argues that Gantz, posing with a washing machine with Tibi inside, is relying on the support of the Joint List and whitewashing their controversial positions on national security.





Blue and White has tried to distance itself from the Arab majority Joint List, and tried to attract 'soft-right' voters from Likud. **Calcalist** shows leaders of the anti-Netanyahu bloc (Gantz, Lieberman and Amir Peretz) rejecting Joint List leader Ayman Odeh, even though it results in them sawing off the branch they are sitting on.

Netanyahu has been on a charm offensive in the Arab community, being interviewed by Arab media, and posting in Arabic on his Facebook page. A **Haaretz** cartoon shows Netanyahu driving Arab passengers to the voting booths, in a sarcastic play on his 2015 comments on election day that Arabs were 'going in droves' to the polls.



Fathoming the Israeli Election

[Etan Nechin](#) argues in this overview of the history of the Israeli Left that it will only have a future if it stops aping the Right and offers a radical reimagining of the Israeli economy and society alongside a new peace plan. [Ephraim Sneh](#), examines the current state of Israeli politics, opportunities for engagement with the Palestinian Authority and the geostrategic challenges Israel faces throughout the region. [Joshua Krasna](#), a former Israeli diplomat in Jordan and Canada, argues that Israel's year of elections has had some bad consequences for Israeli foreign and security policymaking, including the loss of ambiguity concerning Israeli operations, foreign policy by 'red meat' announcements, and the further erosion of bipartisanship as the foundation of the Israel-US relationship. [Assaf Shapira](#) argues that the Israelis should embrace a minority government reliant on outside support as a way to break the political deadlock and avoid a third round of elections.

How we got here | news and analysis from BICOM

Israeli polls predict another stalemate | [28 February, 2020](#)
 Former Mossad chief says Elector app 'like Coronavirus' | [27 February, 2020](#)
 Israel election campaign turns nasty | [26 February, 2020](#)
 Likud ahead in election polls | [25 February, 2020](#)
 Israeli police to investigate Gantz's former cybersecurity firm | [21 February, 2020](#)
 Netanyahu trial to open on 17 March | [19 February, 2020](#)
 Gantz edges ahead in Israeli election | [18 February, 2020](#)
 Gantz to put Trump plan to Knesset vote | [30 January, 2020](#)
 US publishes Israeli-Palestinian plan | [29 January, 2020](#)
 Gantz pledges to apply sovereignty to Jordan Valley | [22 January, 2020](#)
 Israeli right wing parties in new merger | [16 January, 2020](#)
 Israeli right wing parties to merge for March election | [14 January, 2020](#)
 Israeli Left merges as Knesset debates Netanyahu immunity | [13 January, 2020](#)
 Likud leadership battle heats up | [16 December, 2019](#)

Israel heads to third election as Knesset dissolves | [12 December, 2019](#)
Israeli Parliament to dissolve | [11 December, 2019](#)
Israel heading for third election in 12 months | [6 December, 2019](#)
Israeli coalition talks stumble again | [3 December, 2019](#)
New polls shows strength of post-Netanyahu Likud | [29 November, 2019](#)
Saar challenges Netanyahu as Likud plan primary | [25 November, 2019](#)
Israeli Attorney General indicts Netanyahu | [22 November, 2019](#)
Gantz fails to form a Government | [21 November, 2019](#)
Bennett becomes defence minister, Lieberman issues ultimatum | [11 November, 2019](#)
Justice minister accuses police of extortion in Netanyahu corruption case | [7 November, 2019](#)
Lieberman denies rumours of joining right wing ultra-Orthodox Government | [5 November, 2019](#)
Israeli Coalition talks deadlocked | [31 October, 2019](#)
Israeli TV airs secret Netanyahu-Mozes call at centre of corruption case | [28 October, 2019](#)
Gantz asked to form a Government | [23 October, 2019](#)
Gantz rejects Netanyahu's latest unity offer | [18 October, 2019](#)
Lieberman announces plan for unity government | [10 October, 2019](#)
Lieberman rejects narrow coalition with Netanyahu | [8 October, 2019](#)
Netanyahu floats Likud leadership primary | [4 October, 2019](#)
Netanyahu starts pre-trial hearing | [2 October, 2019](#)
Israeli President asks Netanyahu to form a government | [26 September, 2019](#)
National unity talks continue as election results finalised | [25 September, 2019](#)
Arab parties recommend Gantz for Prime Minister | [23 September, 2019](#)
Gantz refuses Netanyahu meeting | [20 September, 2019](#)
Netanyahu calls for unity government with Gantz | [19 September, 2019](#)
Netanyahu fails to win 61 seat majority | [18 September, 2019](#)

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