Israel News   E'ton Israel   עיתון ישראל

Unofficial final election results: Likud with 36 seats, right-wing bloc still short of majority

With almost all 4,612,007 ballots cast in the March 2nd elections counted down, the Central Elections Committee (CEC) released on March 5th the near-final results showing **Likud is the country's biggest party with 36 seats and main rivals, Blue & White, trail behind with 33.**

The third-largest party is the Joint List with 15 seats; followed by Shas with 9 seats, United Torah Judaism with 7, Yisrael Beytenu with 7, Labor-Gesher-Meretz with 7 and Yamina with 6 seats.

The right-wing bloc; which consists of Likud, United Torah Judaism, Shas and Yamina; has only managed to muster 58 seats - 3 short of a majority in the 120-strong Knesset needed to form a viable majority government.
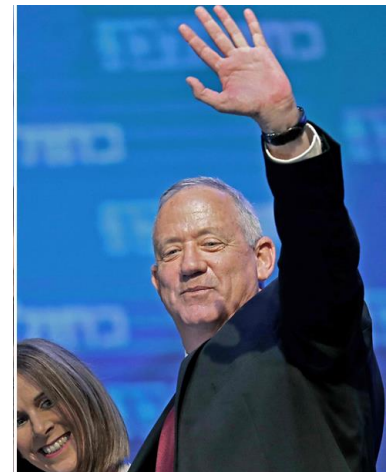
The CEC published the results after it completed tallying the 4,076 ballots cast at the colloquially called "corona polls" - 16 specially designated polling stations for Israelis who are in quarantine for exposure to the coronavirus.

Six ballot boxes containing over 4,000 votes will be recounted due to suspected errors, presumably not an intentional forgery.

The final voter turnout in the March 2020 election was 71.46% - an increase from the previous elections in September, in which 69.8% of those with voting rights arrived at the polls.

Out of the 6,453,255 citizens recorded in the voters' register, 4,612,007 people cast their votes.

Election officials have disqualified 25,053 invalid votes. The electoral threshold stands at 3.25%, which equals to 149,004 votes. Each seat equals to 37,897 votes.

Gantz accepts Liberman's coalition demands

Yisrael Beytenu chair refuses to back down from election promises regarding state-religion affairs, significantly diminishing chances of negotiation talks with religious parties. Blue & White Chairman Benny Gantz agreed to a set of prerequisites published by Yisrael Beytenu Chairman Avigdor Liberman for joining a center-left coalition government. Yisrael Beytenu's conditions for joining a coalition:

- Income support and pensions for the elderly from the state will be equaled to a minimum of 70% of the current minimum wage in the labor market.
- The operation of public transportation and businesses on the Sabbath will be delegated to the local authorities.
- The implantation of a draft bill for ultra-Orthodox men which was approved by first reading in the 20th Knesset.
- The introduction of civil marriage in Israel.
- The introduction of a more lenient conversion process to Judaism.

The Yisrael Beytenu chair and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are in the midst of an incandescent campaign against one another after Liberman announced he will back legislation offered by Blue & White and other parties on the center-left to ban any members of the Knesset who are criminally indicted from serving as prime minister.

With the Soviet-born politician's support; alongside Blue & White, Labor-Gesher-Meretz and the Joint List; the bill can muster a potential 62-lawmaker majority in the 120-strong Knesset who are in support of the bill.

Supreme Court rules same-sex couples be given access to surrogacy

In a unanimous verdict, the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples and single men be given access to domestic surrogacy services.

The ruling appears to be a criticism of the current surrogacy law that excludes same-sex couples and single men, who cannot use the services of a surrogate mother to become parents in Israel.

The five-justice panel declared that the current arrangements within the Embryo Carrying Agreements Law disproportionately "harm the right to equality" and the right of parenthood of these groups, and are therefore illegal.

Following a 4 to 1 vote, the court gave the state a maximum of 12 months to amend the current legislation.

Justice Uzi Vogelman wrote in his verdict the current Surrogacy Law inherently discriminates not only against LGBT community but against the concept of fatherhood as well.

"The current arrangement echoes the deep social construct that motherhood is preferable to fatherhood, and that a family made up of a male and female or only a female is much more 'preferred,' 'deserving' and 'accepted' than the more complicated forms [of family]," he wrote.

"This is a harmful message on the part of the administration, disregarding the basic duty of the state to respect all forms of life and all family units."

In July 2018, the Knesset plenum approved the current Surrogacy Law that allows single women and heterosexual couples to become parents via surrogacy using domestic services.

Approval of the law led to mass protests by the LGBT community, joined by many private sector companies.

On July 22, 2018, some 80,000 people came to the LGBT rally in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, which was a culmination of a series of protests against discriminatory policies targeting the gay community in Israel.

Israel to send its first ever Ethiopian contestant to Eurovision 2020

Israelis on Tuesday evening chose its first ever Ethiopian contestant to represent the nation at this year's Eurovision Song Contest.

Eden Alene, 19, won "The next star" reality show, claiming a ticket to the Netherlands in May - where the prestigious singing competition is set to take place.

"There was a time I did not like the fact that I was Ethiopian, I wanted to be white," said Alene following her win. "Today I am Israel's first Ethiopian representative in the Eurovision. I'm very proud," she added.

"Think about where we were when the Ehiopians first started making aaliyah and look at where we are now. It's a whole new world."

Listen to Israel's new song for the Eurovision – Feker Libi

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