



# Benjamin Netanyahu

**Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu**<sup>[a]</sup> (born 21 October 1949) is an Israeli politician and diplomat who has served as Prime Minister of Israel since 2022. Having previously held office from 1996 to 1999 and from 2009 to 2021, Netanyahu is Israel's longest-serving prime minister.

Born in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu was raised in West Jerusalem and the United States. He returned to Israel in 1967 to join the Israel Defense Forces and served in the Sayeret Matkal special forces. In 1972, he returned to the US, and after graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Netanyahu worked for the Boston Consulting Group. He moved back to Israel in 1978 to found the Yonatan Netanyahu Anti-Terror Institute. Between 1984 and 1988 Netanyahu was Israel's ambassador to the United Nations. Netanyahu rose to prominence after election as chair of Likud in 1993, becoming leader of the opposition. In the 1996 general election, Netanyahu became the first Israeli prime minister elected directly by popular vote. Netanyahu was defeated in the 1999 election and entered the private sector. He returned and served as minister of foreign affairs and finance, initiating economic reforms, before resigning over the Gaza disengagement plan.

Netanyahu returned to lead Likud in 2005, leading the opposition between 2006 and 2009. After the 2009 legislative election, Netanyahu formed a coalition with other right-wing parties and became prime minister again. Netanyahu made his closeness to Donald Trump central to his appeal from 2016. During Trump's first presidency, the US recognized Jerusalem as capital of Israel, Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and brokered the Abraham Accords between Israel and the Arab world. Netanyahu received criticism over expanding Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, deemed illegal under international law. In 2019, Netanyahu was indicted on charges of breach of trust,

## Benjamin Netanyahu

בִּנְיָמִין נֶתַנְיָהוּ



Official portrait, 2023

**Prime Minister of Israel**

**Incumbent**

**Assumed office**

29 December 2022

**President** Isaac Herzog

**Deputy** Yariv Levin

**Preceded by** Yair Lapid

**In office**

31 March 2009 – 13 June 2021

**President** Shimon Peres

Reuven Rivlin

**Alternate** Benny Gantz (2020–2021)

**Preceded by** Ehud Olmert

**Succeeded by** Naftali Bennett

bribery and fraud, and relinquished all ministerial posts except prime minister. The 2018–2022 Israeli political crisis resulted in a rotation agreement between Netanyahu and Benny Gantz. This collapsed in 2020, leading to a 2021 election. In June 2021, Netanyahu was removed from the premiership, before returning after the 2022 election.

Netanyahu's premierships have been criticized for perceived democratic backsliding and an alleged shift towards authoritarianism. Netanyahu's coalition pursued judicial reform, which was met with large-scale protests in early 2023. The October 7 attacks by Hamas-led Palestinian groups in the same year triggered the Gaza war, with Netanyahu facing nationwide protests for the security lapse during the attack and failure to secure the return of Israeli hostages. In October 2024, he survived an assassination attempt and ordered an invasion of Lebanon with the stated goal of destroying the military capabilities of Hezbollah, a key ally of Hamas that helped them since the 7 October attack. After the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, Netanyahu directed an invasion of Syria against the current Syrian government. He also presided over the 2025 Israeli strikes on Iran, which escalated into the Iran–Israel war.<sup>[3]</sup>

Netanyahu's government has been accused of genocide in Gaza, culminating in the *South Africa v. Israel* case before the International Court of Justice in December 2023. The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant in November 2024 for Netanyahu for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity as part of the ICC investigation in Palestine.

## Early life, education, and military career

Netanyahu was born in 1949 in Tel Aviv<sup>[4][5]</sup> to Benzion Netanyahu (original name Mileikowsky) and Tzila (Cela; née Segal). His mother was born in 1912 in Petah Tikva in the Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem<sup>[6][7]</sup> and studied law at Gray's Inn, London.<sup>[8][9][10]</sup> Though all

**In office**

18 June 1996 – 6 July 1999

<b>President</b>	<u>Ezer Weizman</u>
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**Preceded by** Shimon Peres

**Succeeded by** Ehud Barak

### Leader of the Opposition

**In office**

28 June 2021<sup>[1]</sup> – 29 December 2022

**Prime Minister** Naftali Bennett

Yair Lapid

**Preceded by** Yair Lapid

**Succeeded by** Yair Lapid

**In office**

16 January 2006 – 31 March 2009

**Prime Minister** Ehud Olmert

**Preceded by** Amir Peretz

**Succeeded by** Tzipi Livni

## In office

3 February 1993 – 18 June 1996

**Prime Minister** Yitzhak Rabin

## Shimon Peres

**Preceded by** Yitzhak Shamir

**Succeeded by** Shimon Peres

**Chairman of Likud**

**Incumbent**

**Assumed office**

20 December 2005

**Preceded by** Ariel Sharon

**In office**

3 February 1993 – 6 July 1999

**Preceded by** Yitzhak Shamir

**Succeeded by** Ariel Sharon

**Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations**

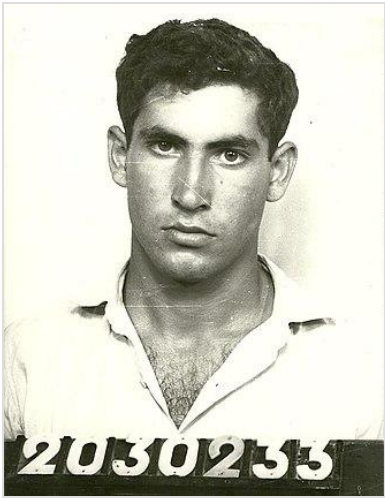
**In office**

1 September 1984 – 1 March 1988

**Prime Minister** Yitzhak Shamir

Shimon Peres

Yitzhak Shamir



1967 photograph of Netanyahu by the Israel Defense Forces

his grandparents were born in the Russian Empire (now Belarus, Lithuania and Poland), his mother's parents emigrated to Minneapolis in the United States.<sup>[11]</sup>

Netanyahu's paternal grandfather was Nathan Mileikowsky, a leading Zionist rabbi and JNF fundraiser.<sup>[12]</sup> His brother Iddo is a physician and

writer.<sup>[13][14]</sup>

Netanyahu was the second of three children. He was initially raised and educated in Jerusalem, where he attended Henrietta Szold Elementary School. A copy of his evaluation from his 6th grade teacher indicated that Netanyahu was courteous, polite, and helpful; that he was "responsible and punctual"; and that he was friendly, disciplined, cheerful, brave, active, and obedient.<sup>[15]</sup>

Between 1956 and 1958, and again from 1963 to 1967,<sup>[16]</sup> his family lived in the United States in Cheltenham Township, Pennsylvania. His father Benzion taught at Dropsie College<sup>[17]</sup> and was later a professor of Jewish history at Cornell University.<sup>[18]</sup> Benjamin attended and graduated from Cheltenham High School and was active in the debate club, chess club, and soccer.<sup>[17]</sup> He and his brother Yonatan grew dissatisfied with what they saw as the superficial way of life they encountered, including the prevalent youth counterculture movement and the liberal sensibilities of the Reform synagogue, Temple Judea of Philadelphia, that the family attended.<sup>[17]</sup>

After graduating from high school in 1967, Netanyahu returned to Israel to enlist in the Israel Defense Forces. He trained as a combat soldier and served for five years in a special forces unit of the IDF, Sayeret Matkal. He took part in numerous cross-border raids during the

<b>Preceded by</b>	<u>Yehuda Zvi Blum</u>
<b>Succeeded by</b>	<u>Yohanan Bein</u>
<b>Ministerial roles</b>	
1996–1997	<u>Science and Technology</u>
1996–1999	<u>Housing and Construction</u>
2002–2003	<u>Foreign Affairs</u>
2003–2005	<u>Finance</u>
2009–2013	<u>Economic Strategy</u> · <u>Health</u> · <u>Pensioner Affairs</u>
2012–2013	<u>Foreign Affairs</u>
2013	<u>Foreign Affairs</u> · <u>Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs</u>
<b>Personal details</b>	
<b>Born</b>	21 October 1949 <div>Tel Aviv, Israel</div>
<b>Political party</b>	<u>Likud</u> (since 1988)
<b>Other political affiliations</b>	<u>Herut</u> (until 1988)
<b>Spouses</b>	<div><u>Miriam Weizmann</u><div>(<span>m.</span> 1972; <span>div.</span> 1978)</div></div> <div><u>Fleur Cates</u><div>(<span>m.</span> 1981; <span>div.</span> 1988)</div></div> <div><u>Sara Ben-Artzi</u> (<span>m.</span> 1991)</div>
<b>Children</b>	3 (including <u>Yair</u> )
<b>Parents</b>	<u>Benzion Netanyahu</u> (father) <div><u>Tzila Segal</u> (mother)</div>
<b>Relatives</b>	<div><u>Nathan Mileikowsky</u> (grandfather)</div> <div><u>Yonatan Netanyahu</u> (brother)</div> <div><u>Iddo Netanyahu</u> (brother)</div> <div><u>Elisha Netanyahu</u> (uncle)</div> <div><u>Shoshana Netanyahu</u> (aunt)</div> <div><u>Nathan Netanyahu</u> (cousin)</div>
<b>Education</b>	<div><u>Massachusetts Institute of Technology</u> (BS, MS)</div> <div><u>Harvard University</u></div>
<b>Occupation</b>	<div>Diplomat · management consultant · marketing executive · politician · writer</div>

1967–70 War of Attrition, including the March 1968 Battle of Karameh, when the IDF attacked Jordan to capture PLO leader Yasser Arafat but were repulsed with heavy casualties.<sup>[19][20]</sup> He became a team-leader in the unit. He was wounded in combat several times.<sup>[21]</sup> He was involved in the 1968 Israeli raid on Lebanon and the rescue of the hijacked Sabena Flight 571 in May 1972, in which he was shot in the shoulder.<sup>[22][5]</sup> He was discharged from active service in 1972 but remained in the Sayeret Matkal reserves. Following his discharge, he left to study in the US but returned in October 1973 to serve in the Yom Kippur War.<sup>[23][24]</sup> He took part in special forces raids along the Suez Canal against Egyptian forces before leading a commando attack deep inside Syrian territory, the details of which remain classified today.<sup>[25]</sup>

Higher education


Netanyahu returned to the United States in late 1972 to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After returning to Israel to fight in the Yom Kippur War, he returned to the United States and, under the name **Ben Nitay**, completed a bachelor's degree<sup>[26]</sup> in architecture<sup>[27]</sup> in February 1975 and earned a master's degree<sup>[26]</sup> from the MIT Sloan School of Management in 1976.<sup>[28][29]</sup> Concurrently, he was studying towards a doctorate<sup>[24]</sup> in political science.<sup>[30][31]</sup> His studies were broken off by the death of his brother Yonatan who was leading the Entebbe raid.<sup>[24][32]</sup>

At MIT, Netanyahu studied a double-load while taking courses at Harvard University, completing his bachelor's degree in architecture in two and a half years, despite taking a break to fight in the Yom Kippur War. Professor Leon B. Groisser at MIT recalled: "He did superbly. He was very bright. Organized. Strong. Powerful. He knew what he wanted to do and how to get it done."<sup>[24]</sup>

At that time he changed his name to **Benjamin "Ben" Nitai** (Nitai, a reference to both Mount Nitai and to the eponymous Jewish sage Nittai of Arbela, was a pen name often used by his father for articles).<sup>[33]</sup> Years later, in an interview with the media, Netanyahu clarified that he decided to do so to make it easier for Americans to pronounce his name. This fact has been used by his political rivals to accuse him indirectly of a lack of Israeli national identity and loyalty.<sup>[34]</sup>

Early career

Netanyahu worked as an economic consultant<sup>[35]</sup> for the Boston Consulting Group in Boston, Massachusetts, working at the company between 1976 and 1978. At the Boston Consulting Group, he was a colleague of Mitt Romney, with whom he formed a lasting friendship. Romney described Netanyahu at the time as "a strong personality with a distinct point of view".<sup>[36]</sup> Netanyahu said that their "easy communication" was a result of "B.C.G.'s intellectually rigorous boot camp".<sup>[36]</sup>

Cabinet	27 · 32 · 33 · 34 · 35 · 37
Awards	<u>Jabotinsky Medal</u> (1980)
Signature	
Website	<u>www.netanyahu.org.il</u> ( <u>https://www.netanyahu.org.il</u> )
Nickname	Bibi
Military service	
Branch/service	<u>Israel Defense Forces</u>
Years of service	1967–1973
Rank	<u>Séren</u> (Captain)
Unit	<u>Sayeret Matkal</u>
Battles/wars	<u>War of Attrition</u> <div><u>Battle of Karameh</u></div> <div><u>1968 Israeli raid on Lebanon</u></div> <div><u>Yom Kippur War</u></div>



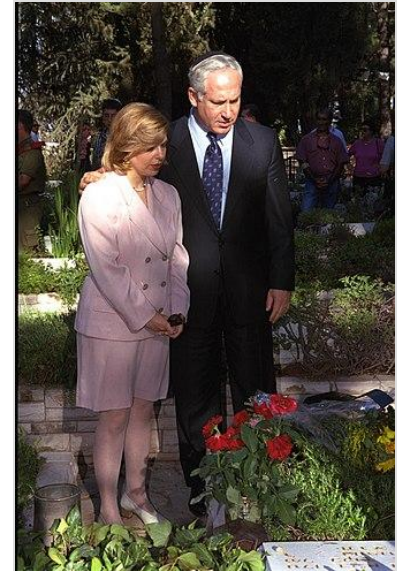
In 1978, Netanyahu appeared on Boston local television, under the name "Ben Nitai", where he argued: "The real core of the conflict is the unfortunate Arab refusal to accept the State of Israel ... For 20 years the Arabs had both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and if self-determination, as they now say, is the core of the conflict, they could have easily established a Palestinian state."<sup>[37]</sup>

In 1978, Netanyahu returned to Israel. Between 1978 and 1980, he ran the Jonathan Netanyahu Anti-Terror Institute,<sup>[16]</sup> a non-governmental organization devoted to the study of terrorism. From 1980 to 1982, he was director of marketing for Rim Industries in Jerusalem.<sup>[38]</sup>

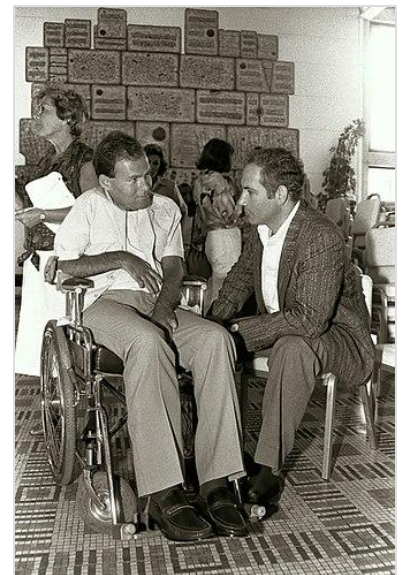
Moshe Arens appointed him as his Deputy Chief of Mission at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C., while Arens was ambassador to the United States, a position he held from 1982 until 1984.<sup>[39]</sup> During the 1982 Lebanon War, he was called up for reserve duty in Sayeret Matkal and requested to be released from service, preferring to remain in the US and serve as a spokesperson for Israel in the wake of harsh international criticism of the war. He presented Israel's case to the media during the war and established a highly efficient public relations system in the Israeli embassy.<sup>[40]</sup> Between 1984 and 1988, Netanyahu served as the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations.<sup>[39]</sup> Netanyahu was influenced by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, with whom he formed a relationship during the 1980s. He referred to Schneerson as "the most influential man of our time".<sup>[41][42][43]</sup> At this time Netanyahu became friends with Fred Trump, the father of future U.S. president Donald Trump.<sup>[44]</sup>

## Leader of the Opposition (1993–1996)

Prior to the 1988 Israeli legislative election, Netanyahu returned to Israel and joined the Likud party. In the Likud's internal elections, Netanyahu was placed fifth on the party list. Later on he was elected as a Knesset member of the 12th Knesset, and was appointed as a deputy of the foreign minister Moshe Arens, and later on David Levy. Netanyahu and Levy did not cooperate and the rivalry between the two only intensified afterwards. During the Gulf War in early 1991, the English-fluent Netanyahu emerged as the principal spokesman for Israel in media interviews on CNN and other news outlets. During the Madrid Conference of 1991 Netanyahu was a member of the Israeli delegation headed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. After the Madrid Conference Netanyahu was appointed as Deputy Minister in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office.<sup>[39]</sup>



Benjamin Netanyahu at the grave of his brother Yoni Netanyahu, who was killed leading a counter-terrorist operation in 1976



Netanyahu (right) with Sorin Hershko, a soldier wounded and permanently paralyzed in Operation Entebbe, 2 July 1986

Following the defeat of the Likud party in the 1992 Israeli legislative elections the Likud party held a party leadership election in 1993, and Netanyahu was victorious, defeating Benny Begin, son of the late prime minister Menachem Begin, and veteran politician David Levy<sup>[45]</sup> (Sharon initially sought Likud party leadership as well, but quickly withdrew when it was evident that he was attracting minimal support). Shamir retired from politics shortly after the Likud's defeat in the 1992 elections.<sup>[46]</sup>

Following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin at the end of a rally in support of the Oslo Accords, Rabin's temporary successor Shimon Peres decided to call early elections in order to give the government a mandate to advance the peace process.<sup>[47]</sup> Netanyahu was the Likud's candidate for prime minister in the 1996 Israeli legislative election which took place on 29 May 1996 and were the first Israeli elections in which Israelis elected their prime minister directly.<sup>[48]</sup> Netanyahu hired American political operative Arthur Finkelstein to run his campaign.<sup>[49]</sup> Netanyahu won the 1996 election, becoming the youngest person in the history of the position and the first Israeli prime minister to be born in the State of Israel (Yitzhak Rabin was born in Jerusalem, under the British Mandate of Palestine, prior to the 1948 founding of the Israeli state).<sup>[48]</sup>

Netanyahu's victory over the pre-election favorite Shimon Peres surprised many. The main catalyst in the downfall of the latter was a wave of suicide bombings shortly before the elections; on 3 and 4 March 1996, Palestinians carried out two suicide bombings, killing 32 Israelis, with Peres seemingly unable to stop the attacks. During the campaign, Netanyahu stressed that progress in the peace process would be based on the Palestinian National Authority fulfilling its obligations – mainly fighting terrorism – and the Likud campaign slogan was, "Netanyahu – making a safe peace". Although Netanyahu won the election for prime minister, Peres's Israeli Labor Party received more seats in the Knesset elections. Netanyahu had to rely on a coalition with the ultra-Orthodox parties, Shas and UTJ in order to form a government.<sup>[50]</sup>

## Prime minister (1996–1999)

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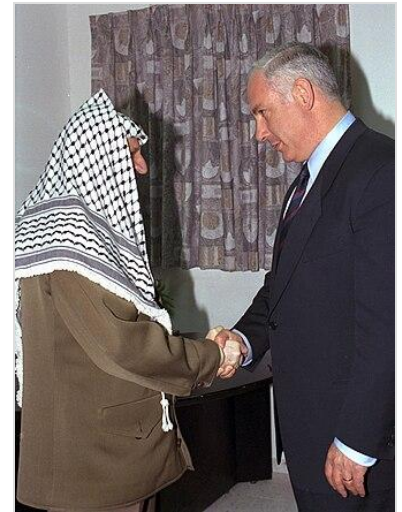
### First term

The months leading up to the 1996 Israeli election were marred by a series of Hamas terrorist attacks in Israel. After the Shin Bet assassinated Hamas military leader Yahya Ayyash on 5 January 1996, Mohammed Deif, now commander of the Qassam Brigades, organized a bombing campaign inside Israel as retaliation, including the Dizengoff Center suicide bombing and Jaffa Road bus bombings. It has been alleged that Syria and Iran had helped in their planning and financing. According to a report, Syrian defense minister Mustafa Tlass instructed Ghazi Kanaan to establish links between Hezbollah and Hamas fighters, who were then trained both in Lebanon and Iran and participated in the retaliatory operations for the murder of Ayyash.<sup>[51][52]</sup> According to Mike Kelly, Hamas operative Hassan Salameh, who planned three of the attacks, was trained in Iran.<sup>[53]</sup>

According to Ronen Bergman, Deif's bombing campaign and the Israeli intelligence services failure to prevent it, was a factor that led to the defeat of Prime Minister Shimon Peres and the Israeli Labor Party in the 1996 Israeli general election and the victory of the Likud party of Netanyahu, who opposed the Oslo Accords. Bergman writes that "after the election, the attacks stopped for almost a

year. Some said this was because of Arafat's campaign against Hamas, and the arrest of many members of its military wing. Others believed that Hamas no longer had any reason to carry out suicide attacks, because Netanyahu had already almost completely stopped the peace process, which was the short-term goal of the attacks anyway."<sup>[54]</sup>

Netanyahu first met Palestinian President Arafat on 4 September 1996. Prior to the meeting, the two leaders spoke by telephone.<sup>[55]</sup> The meetings would continue through Autumn 1996. On their first meeting, Netanyahu said: "I would like to emphasize that we have to take into account the needs and the requirements of both sides on the basis of reciprocity and the assurance of the security and well-being of both Israelis and Palestinian alike." Arafat said: "We are determined to work with Mr. Netanyahu and with his government."<sup>[56]</sup> The talks culminated on 14 January 1997, in the signing of the Hebron Protocol.<sup>[57]</sup>



Netanyahu's first meeting with Palestinian president Yasser Arafat at the Erez crossing, 4 September 1996

In 1996, Netanyahu and Jerusalem's mayor Ehud Olmert decided to open an exit in the Arab Quarter for the Western Wall Tunnel, which prior prime minister Shimon Peres had instructed to be put on hold for the sake of peace.<sup>[58]</sup> This sparked three days of rioting by Palestinians, resulting in dozens of both Israelis and Palestinians being killed.<sup>[59]</sup>

Eventually, the lack of progress of the peace process led to new negotiations which produced the Wye River Memorandum in 1998 which detailed the steps to be taken by the Israeli government and Palestinian Authority to implement the earlier Interim Agreement of 1995. It was signed by Netanyahu and PLO chairman Arafat, and on 17 November 1998, Israel's 120 member parliament, the Knesset, approved the Wye River Memorandum by a vote of 75–19. In a nod to the 1967 Khartoum conference, Netanyahu emphasized a policy of "three no(s)": no withdrawal from the Golan Heights, no discussion of the case of Jerusalem, no negotiations under any preconditions.<sup>[60]</sup>



Netanyahu sitting with U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright and Palestinian president Yasser Arafat at the Wye River Memorandum, 1998

In 1997 Ali Fallahian, the Iranian Intelligence Minister, authorized a new Hamas bombing campaign to further disrupt the peace process, and Hamas leader Khaled Meshal, then living in Amman, Jordan, picked Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, an expert bomb-maker in the West Bank, to construct the bombs, and sent five suicide bombers to detonate them simultaneously in Jerusalem in the July 30 Mahane Yehuda market bombings and September 4 Ben Yehuda street bombings, killing 21 Israelis.<sup>[61][62][63]</sup> In 1997, Netanyahu authorized a Mossad operation to assassinate Hamas leader Khaled Mashal in Jordan, just three years after the two countries had signed a peace treaty.<sup>[64]</sup> The Mossad team, covering as five Canadian tourists, entered Jordan on 27 September 1997 and injected poison into Mashal's ears in a street in Amman.<sup>[64]</sup> The plot was exposed and two agents were arrested by the Jordanian police while three others hid in the Israeli embassy which was then surrounded by troops.<sup>[64]</sup> An angry King Hussein demanded Israel to



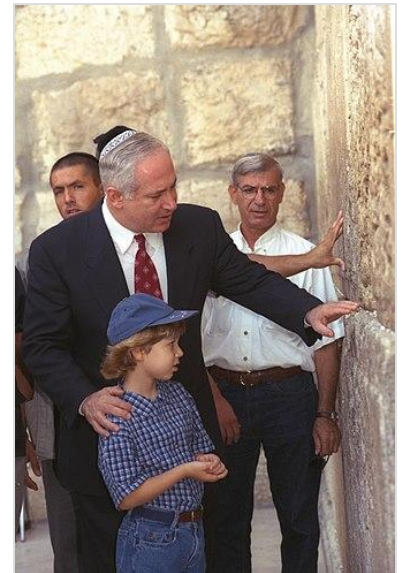
give out the antidote and threatened to annul the peace treaty.<sup>[65]</sup> Netanyahu relented to the demands after pressure by US President Bill Clinton and ordered the release of 61 Jordanian and Palestinian prisoners including Sheikh Ahmad Yassin.<sup>[64]</sup> The incident sent the nascent Israeli-Jordanian relations plummeting.<sup>[65]</sup>

According to Bergman based on internal IDF sources, Mashal's antidote only secured the release of the two Mossad Kidon agents that were carrying out the assassination attempt. At least six other Mossad agents involved in the operations were holed up in the Israeli embassy. King Hussein would only release them if Israel released Ahmed Yassin and a large number of other Palestinian prisoners. Hussein needed the demands to be "enough to enable the king to be able to publicly defend the release of the hit team."<sup>[66]</sup>

On the same day that Hamas bombed Ben Yehuda street, Hezbollah executed the Ansariya ambush on the IDF's naval special forces Shayetet 13, killing 12 Israeli commandos. On 25 May 1998, the remains and body parts of at least three soldiers who died in the Ansariya ambush were exchanged for 65 Lebanese prisoners and the bodies of 40 Hizbullah fighters and Lebanese soldiers captured by Israel.<sup>[67]</sup> Netanyahu called it "one of the worst tragedies that has ever occurred to us".<sup>[68]</sup>

During his term, Netanyahu also began a process of economic liberalization, taking steps towards a free-market economy. Under his watch, the government began selling its shares in banks and major state-run companies. Netanyahu also greatly eased Israel's strict foreign exchange controls, enabling Israelis to take an unrestricted amount of money out of the country, open foreign bank accounts, hold foreign currency, and invest freely in other countries.<sup>[69][70]</sup>

Throughout his term, Netanyahu was opposed by the political left wing in Israel and lost support from the right because of his concessions to the Palestinians in Hebron and elsewhere, and due to his negotiations with Arafat generally. Netanyahu lost favor with the Israeli public after a long chain of scandals involving his marriage and corruption charges. In 1997, police recommended that Netanyahu be indicted on corruption charges for influence-peddling. He was accused of appointing an attorney general who would reduce the charges but prosecutors ruled that there was insufficient evidence to go to trial.<sup>[71]</sup> In 1999, Netanyahu faced another scandal when the Israel Police recommended that he be tried for corruption for \$100,000 in free services from a government contractor; Israel's attorney general did not prosecute, citing difficulties with evidence.<sup>[72]</sup> The major Israeli failures against Hamas and Hezbollah under Netanyahu's first premiership and their results in the subsequent releases of imprisoned Palestinian and Lebanese leaders from Israeli jails are thought to have dealt a blow to Netanyahu's rhetoric of a "tough stance" towards enemies of Israel, and to have played a role in his defeat in the 1999 Israeli general election.<sup>[73]</sup>



Netanyahu with his son Yair at the Western Wall in 1998



## Political hiatus (1999–2003)

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After being defeated by Ehud Barak in the 1999 Israeli prime ministerial election, Netanyahu temporarily retired from politics.<sup>[74]</sup> He subsequently served as a senior consultant with Israeli communications equipment manufacturer BATM Advanced Communications for two years.<sup>[75][76]</sup>

With the fall of the Barak government in late 2000, Netanyahu expressed his desire to return to politics. By law, Barak's resignation was supposed to lead to elections for the prime minister position only. Netanyahu insisted that general elections should be held, claiming that otherwise it would be impossible to have a stable government. Netanyahu decided eventually not to run for the prime minister position, a move which facilitated the rise to power of Ariel Sharon, who at the time was considered less popular than Netanyahu. In 2002, after the Israeli Labor Party left the coalition and vacated the position of foreign minister, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon appointed Netanyahu as foreign minister.<sup>[39]</sup> Netanyahu challenged Sharon for the leadership of the Likud party in the 2002 Likud leadership election, but failed to oust him.<sup>[77]</sup>

On 9 September 2002, a scheduled speech by Netanyahu at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada was canceled after hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters overwhelmed security and smashed through a window. Netanyahu was not present at the protest, having remained at his hotel throughout the duration. He later accused the activists of supporting terrorism and "mad zealotry".<sup>[78]</sup> Weeks later in October around 200 protesters met Netanyahu outside his Heinz Hall appearance in Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh Police, Israeli security and a Pittsburgh SWAT unit allowed his speeches to continue downtown at the hall and the Duquesne Club as well as suburban Robert Morris University.<sup>[79]</sup>

On 12 September 2002, Netanyahu lobbied for the invasion of Iraq, testifying under oath as a private citizen before the U.S. House of Representatives Government Reform Committee regarding the alleged nuclear threat posed by the Iraqi régime: "There is no question whatsoever that Saddam is seeking and is working and is advancing towards the development of nuclear weapons..."<sup>[80][81]</sup> He also testified, "If you take out Saddam, Saddam's regime, I guarantee you that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region."<sup>[81]</sup>

## Minister of Finance (2003–2005)

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After the 2003 Israeli legislative election, in what many observers regarded as a surprise move, Sharon offered the Foreign Ministry to Silvan Shalom and offered Netanyahu the Finance Ministry. Some pundits speculated that Sharon made the move because he deemed Netanyahu a political threat given his demonstrated effectiveness as foreign minister, and that by placing him in the Finance Ministry during a time of economic uncertainty, he could diminish Netanyahu's popularity. Netanyahu accepted the new appointment. Sharon and Netanyahu came to an agreement that Netanyahu would have complete freedom as finance minister and have Sharon back all of his reforms, in exchange for Netanyahu's silence over Sharon's management of Israel's military and foreign affairs.<sup>[82]</sup>

As finance minister, Netanyahu undertook an economic plan in order to restore Israel's economy from its low point during the Second Intifada.<sup>[83][84]</sup> Netanyahu claimed that a bloated public sector and excessive regulations were largely responsible for stifling economic growth. His plan involved a move toward more liberalized markets, although it was not without its critics. He instituted a program to end welfare dependency by requiring people to apply for jobs or training, reduced the size of the public sector, froze government spending for three years, and capped the budget deficit at 1%. The taxation system was streamlined and taxes were cut, with the top individual tax rate reduced from 64% to 44% and the corporate tax rate from 36% to 18%. A host of state assets worth billions of dollars were privatized, including banks, oil refineries, the El Al national airline, and Zim Integrated Shipping Services. The retirement ages for both men and women were raised, and currency exchange laws were further liberalized. Commercial banks were forced to spin off their long-term savings. In addition, Netanyahu attacked monopolies and cartels to increase competition. As the Israeli economy started booming and unemployment fell significantly, Netanyahu was widely credited by commentators as having performed an 'economic miracle' by the end of his tenure.<sup>[82][85][86]</sup>

However, opponents in the Labor party (and even a few within his own Likud) viewed Netanyahu's policies as "Thatcherite" attacks on the venerated Israeli social safety net.<sup>[87]</sup> Ultimately, unemployment declined while economic growth soared, the debt-to-GDP ratio dropped to one of the lowest in the world, and foreign investment reached record highs.<sup>[82]</sup>

Netanyahu threatened to resign from office in 2004 unless the Gaza pullout plan was put to a referendum. He later modified the ultimatum and voted for the program in the Knesset, indicating immediately thereafter that he would resign unless a referendum was held within 14 days.<sup>[88]</sup> He submitted his resignation letter on 7 August 2005, shortly before the Israeli cabinet voted 17 to 5 to approve the initial phase of withdrawal from Gaza.<sup>[89]</sup>

## Leader of the Opposition (2006–2009)

Following the withdrawal of Sharon from the Likud, Netanyahu was one of several candidates who vied for the Likud leadership.<sup>[90]</sup> His most recent attempt prior to this was in September 2005 when he had tried to hold early primaries for the position of the head of the Likud party, while the party held the office of prime minister – thus effectively pushing Ariel Sharon out of office. The party rejected this initiative. Netanyahu retook the leadership on 20 December 2005, with 47% of the primary vote, to 32% for Silvan Shalom and 15% for Moshe Feiglin.<sup>[90]</sup> In the March 2006 Knesset elections, Likud took the third place behind Kadima and Labor and Netanyahu served as Leader of the Opposition.<sup>[91]</sup> On 14 August 2007, Netanyahu was reelected as chairman of the Likud and its candidate for the post of prime minister with 73% of the vote, against far-right candidate Moshe Feiglin and World Likud chairman Danny Danon.<sup>[92]</sup> He opposed the 2008 Israel– Hamas ceasefire, like others in the Knesset opposition. Specifically, Netanyahu said: "This is not a relaxation, it's an Israeli agreement to the rearming of Hamas ... What are we getting for this?"<sup>[93]</sup>

Following Tzipi Livni's election to head Kadima and Olmert's resignation from the post of prime minister, Netanyahu declined to join the coalition Livni was trying to form and supported new elections, which were held in February 2009.<sup>[94][95]</sup> Netanyahu was the Likud's candidate for prime minister in the 2009 Israeli legislative election which took place on 10 February 2009, as Livni, the

previous designated acting prime minister under the Olmert government, had been unable to form a viable governing coalition. Opinion polls showed Likud in the lead, but with as many as a third of Israeli voters undecided.<sup>[96]</sup>

In the election itself, Likud won the second highest number of seats, Livni's party having outnumbered the Likud by one seat. A possible explanation for Likud's relatively poor showing is that some Likud supporters defected to Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party. Netanyahu, however, claimed victory on the basis that right-wing parties won the majority of the vote, and on 20 February 2009, Netanyahu was designated by Israeli President Shimon Peres to succeed Ehud Olmert as prime minister, and began his negotiations to form a coalition government.<sup>[97]</sup>

Despite right wing parties winning a majority of 65 seats in the Knesset, Netanyahu preferred a broader centrist coalition and turned to his Kadima rivals, chaired by Tzipi Livni, to join his government. This time it was Livni's turn to decline to join, with a difference of opinion on how to pursue the peace process being the stumbling block. Netanyahu did manage to entice a smaller rival, the Labor Party, chaired by Ehud Barak, to join his government, giving him a certain amount of centrist tone. Netanyahu presented his cabinet for a Knesset "Vote of Confidence" on 31 March 2009. The 32nd Government was approved that day by a majority of 69 lawmakers to 45 (with five abstaining) and the members were sworn in.<sup>[98][99]</sup>

## Prime minister (2009–2021)

### Second term

In 2009, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton voiced support for the establishment of a Palestinian state – a solution not endorsed by prime minister-designate Netanyahu,<sup>[100]</sup> with whom she had earlier pledged the United States' cooperation.<sup>[101]</sup> Upon the arrival of President Obama administration's special envoy, George Mitchell, Netanyahu said that any furtherance of negotiations with the Palestinians would be conditioned on the Palestinians recognizing Israel as a Jewish state.<sup>[102]</sup>

During President Obama's Cairo speech on 4 June 2009 in which Obama addressed the Muslim world, Obama stated, among other things, "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements." Following Obama's Cairo speech Netanyahu immediately called a special government meeting.<sup>[103]</sup> On 14 June, ten days after Obama's Cairo speech, Netanyahu gave a speech at Bar-Ilan University in which he endorsed a "Demilitarized Palestinian State".<sup>[104]</sup> Netanyahu stated that he would accept a Palestinian state if Jerusalem were to remain the united capital of Israel, the Palestinians would have no army, and the Palestinians would give up their demand for a right of return. He also argued the right for a "natural growth" in the existing Jewish settlements in the West Bank while their permanent status is up to further negotiation.<sup>[103]</sup> The speech was broadcast live in Israel and across parts of the Arab world. He endorsed for the first time



Netanyahu in a meeting with President Dmitry Medvedev in Russia, 24 March 2011



the notion of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.<sup>[105]</sup> He stated that he would be willing to meet with any "Arab leader" for negotiations without preconditions, specifically mentioning Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon.<sup>[105]</sup> The address represented a new position for Netanyahu's government on the peace process.<sup>[106]</sup>

Right-wing members of Netanyahu's governing coalition criticized his remarks for the creation of a Palestinian State, believing all of the land should come under Israeli sovereignty. Likud MK Danny Danon said Netanyahu went "against the Likud platform",<sup>[107]</sup> MK Uri Orbach of Habayit Hayehudi said it had "dangerous implications".<sup>[108]</sup> Opposition party Kadima leader Tzipi Livni opined that Netanyahu did not really believe in the two-state solution and that his speech was a response to international pressure.<sup>[109]</sup>



Netanyahu with Yohanan Danino, appointed Israel's chief of police in 2011

Netanyahu's speech provoked mixed reaction internationally.<sup>[110]</sup> The Palestinian National Authority rejected the conditions on a Palestinian State.<sup>[111]</sup> Senior Palestinian official Saeb Erekat said that the speech had "closed the door to permanent status negotiations" due to Netanyahu's declarations on Jerusalem, refugees and settlements.<sup>[103]</sup> Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said it was "racist"<sup>[111]</sup> and called on Arab nations to "form stronger opposition".<sup>[106]</sup> The Arab League dismissed the speech, declaring that "Arabs would not make concessions regarding issues of Jerusalem and refugees".<sup>[112]</sup> The Czech Republic Foreign Minister Jan Kohout, whose country held the EU's presidency at the time, said "...this is a step in the right direction. The acceptance of a Palestinian state was present there".<sup>[113]</sup> President Obama's press secretary, Robert Gibbs, said the speech was an "important step forward".<sup>[112][114]</sup> Obama said "this solution can and must ensure both Israel's security and the Palestinians' legitimate aspirations for a viable state".<sup>[110]</sup> France praised the speech and called on Israel to cease building settlements in the West Bank.<sup>[110][113]</sup>

Three months after starting his term, Netanyahu remarked that his cabinet already had achieved several successes, such as the establishment of a working national unity government, and a broad consensus for a "two-state solution".<sup>[115]</sup> A July 2009 survey by Ha'aretz found that most Israelis supported the Netanyahu government, giving him a personal approval rating of about 49 percent.<sup>[116]</sup> Netanyahu has lifted checkpoints in the West Bank in order to allow freedom of movement and a flow of imports; a step that resulted in an economic boost in the West Bank.<sup>[117][118][119]</sup> In 2009, Netanyahu welcomed the Arab Peace initiative (also known as the "Saudi Peace Initiative") and lauded a call by Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to normalize relations with Israel.<sup>[120][121]</sup>

On 9 August 2009, speaking at the opening of a government meeting, Netanyahu said: "We want an agreement with two factors, the first of which is the recognition of Israel as the national state of the Jewish people and (the second of which is) a security settlement".<sup>[122]</sup> In August 2009, Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas declared that he would be willing to meet with Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly, where Netanyahu had accepted president Obama's invitation for a "triple summit", although he said it would not necessarily lead to negotiations.<sup>[123]</sup> Netanyahu was reported to be in a pivotal moment over these understandings, that were reported to include a compromise

over permission on continuing the already approved construction in the West Bank in exchange for freezing all settlements thereafter, as well as continuing building in East Jerusalem, and at the same time stopping the demolition of houses of Arab inhabitants there.<sup>[124]</sup> On 4 September 2009, it was reported that Netanyahu was to agree to settlers' political demands to approve more settlement constructions before a temporary settlement freeze agreement took place.<sup>[125]</sup> White House spokesman Robert Gibbs expressed "regret" over the move;<sup>[126]</sup> however, one U.S. official said the move will not "derail [the] train".<sup>[127]</sup>

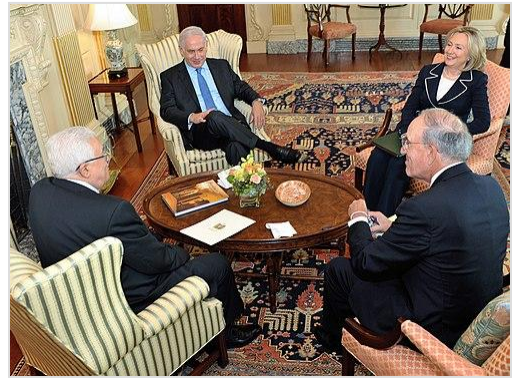
On 7 September 2009, Netanyahu left his office without reporting his destination. The prime minister's military secretary later reported Netanyahu had visited a security facility in Israel.<sup>[128]</sup> Various news agencies reported different stories about his whereabouts.<sup>[129]</sup> On 9 September 2009, *Yedioth Ahronoth* reported that the Israeli leader had made a secret flight to Moscow to try to persuade Russian officials not to sell S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems to Iran.<sup>[128][130][131]</sup> Headlines branded Netanyahu a "liar" and dubbed the affair a "fiasco".<sup>[132][133]</sup> The PM's military secretary was later reportedly dismissed due to the affair.<sup>[134]</sup> *The Sunday Times* reported that the trip was made to share the names of Russian scientists that Israel believes are abetting the alleged Iranian nuclear weapons program.<sup>[135]</sup>

On 24 September 2009, in an address to the UN General Assembly in New York, Netanyahu said Iran poses a threat to the peace of the world and that it is incumbent on the world body to prevent the Islamic Republic from obtaining nuclear weapons.<sup>[136][137]</sup> Waving the blueprints for Auschwitz and invoking the memory of his own family members murdered by the Nazis, Netanyahu delivered a passionate and public riposte to Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's questioning of the Holocaust, asking: "Have you no shame?"<sup>[138]</sup>

In response to pressure from the Obama administration urging the resumption of peace talks, on 25 November 2009 Netanyahu announced a partial 10-month settlement construction freeze plan. The announced partial freeze had no significant effect on actual settlement construction, according to an analysis by *Haaretz*.<sup>[139]</sup> U.S. special envoy George Mitchell said, "while the United States shares Arab concerns about the limitations of Israel's gesture, it is more than any Israeli government has ever done".<sup>[140]</sup> In his announcement Netanyahu called the move "a painful step that will encourage the peace process" and urged the Palestinians to respond.<sup>[141]</sup> The Palestinians rejected the call, stating the gesture was "insignificant" in that thousands of recently approved settlement buildings in the West Bank would continue to be built and there would be no freeze of settlement activity in East Jerusalem.<sup>[142]</sup>

In March 2010, Israel's government approved construction of an additional 1,600 apartments in a large Jewish housing development in northern East Jerusalem called Ramat Shlomo<sup>[143]</sup> despite the position of the current U.S. Government that acts such as this thwart the peace talks. The Israeli government's announcement occurred during a visit by U.S. Vice-president Joe Biden and the U.S. government issued a strongly worded condemnation of the plan.<sup>[144]</sup> Netanyahu issued a statement that all previous Israeli governments had continuously permitted construction in the neighborhood, and that certain neighborhoods such as Ramat Shlomo and Gilo have always been included as part of Israel in any final agreement plan that has been proposed by either side to date.<sup>[143]</sup> Netanyahu regretted the timing of the announcement but asserted that "our policy on Jerusalem is the same policy followed by all Israeli governments for the 42 years, and it has not changed."<sup>[145]</sup>

In September 2010, Netanyahu agreed to enter direct talks, mediated by the Obama administration, with the Palestinians.<sup>[146]</sup> The ultimate aim of these direct talks is to forge the framework of an official "final status settlement" to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by forming a two-state solution for the Jewish people and the Palestinian people. On 27 September, the 10-month settlement freeze ended, and the Israeli government approved new construction in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.<sup>[147]</sup> On retiring from office in July 2011, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said that Netanyahu was ungrateful to the United States and endangering Israel. Responding, the Likud party defended Netanyahu by saying that most Israelis supported the prime minister and that he had broad support in the United States.<sup>[148][149]</sup>



Netanyahu, Hillary Clinton, George J. Mitchell and Mahmoud Abbas at the start of the direct talks, 2 September 2010

Netanyahu unsuccessfully called for the early release of Jonathan Pollard, an American serving a life sentence for passing secret U.S. documents to Israel in 1987.<sup>[150]</sup> He has raised the issue at the Wye River Summit in 1998, where he claimed that U.S. president Bill Clinton had privately agreed to release Pollard.<sup>[151][152]</sup> In 2002, Netanyahu visited Pollard at his North Carolina prison.<sup>[153][154]</sup> The Israeli prime minister maintained contact with Pollard's wife, and was active in pressing the Obama administration to release Pollard.<sup>[155][156]</sup>

In 2011, social justice protests broke out across Israel. Hundreds of thousands of people protested Israel's high cost of living throughout the country. In response, Netanyahu appointed the Trajtenberg Committee, headed by professor Manuel Trajtenberg, to examine the problems and propose solutions. The committee submitted recommendations to lower the high cost of living in September 2011.<sup>[157]</sup> Although Netanyahu promised to push the proposed reforms through the cabinet in one piece, differences inside his coalition resulted in the reforms being gradually adopted.<sup>[158][159]</sup>

Netanyahu's cabinet also approved a plan to build a fiber-optic cable network across the country to bring cheap, high-speed fiber-optic Internet access to every home.<sup>[160][161]</sup>

In 2012, Netanyahu initially planned to call early elections, but subsequently oversaw the creation of a government of national unity to see Israel through until the national elections of 2013.<sup>[162]</sup> In May 2012, Netanyahu officially recognized for the first time the right for Palestinians to have their own state in an official document, a letter to Mahmoud Abbas, though as before<sup>[104]</sup> he declared it would have to be demilitarized.<sup>[163]</sup> On 25 October 2012, Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman announced that their respective political parties, Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu, had merged and would run together on a single ballot in Israel's 22 January 2013 general elections.<sup>[164]</sup>

### Third term

The 2013 election returned Netanyahu's Likud Beiteinu coalition with 11 fewer seats than the combined Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu parties had going into the vote.<sup>[165]</sup> Israeli president Shimon Peres charged Netanyahu with the task of forming the Thirty-third government of Israel.<sup>[166][98][99]</sup>



During Netanyahu's third term, he continued his policy of economic liberalization. In December 2013, the Knesset approved the Business Concentration Law, which intended to open Israel's highly concentrated economy to competition to lower consumer prices, reduce income inequality, and increase economic growth. Netanyahu had formed the Concentration Committee in 2010, and the bill, which was pushed forward by his government, implemented its recommendations. The new law banned multi-tiered corporate holding structures, in which a CEO's family members or other affiliated individuals held public companies which in turn owned other public companies, and who were thus able to engage in price gouging. Under the law, corporations were banned from owning more than two tiers of publicly listed companies and from holding both financial and non-financial enterprises. All conglomerates were given four to six years to sell excess holdings.<sup>[167][168]</sup> Netanyahu also began a campaign of port privatization to break what he viewed as the monopoly held by workers of the Israel Port Authority, so as to lower consumer prices and increase exports. In July 2013, he issued tenders for the construction of private ports in Haifa and Ashdod.<sup>[169]</sup> Netanyahu has also pledged to curb excess bureaucracy and regulations to ease the burden on industry.<sup>[170]</sup>

In April and June 2014, Netanyahu spoke of his deep concerns when Hamas and the Palestinian Authority agreed and then formed a unity government, and was severely critical of both the United States and European governments' decision to work with the Palestinian coalition government.<sup>[171]</sup> He blamed Hamas for the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in June 2014,<sup>[172]</sup> and launched a massive search and arrest operation on the West Bank, targeting members of Hamas in particular, and over the following weeks hit 60 targets in Gaza.<sup>[173]</sup> Missile and rocket exchanges between Gaza militants and the IDF escalated after the bodies of the teenagers, who had been killed almost immediately as the government had good reasons to suspect, were discovered on 30 June 2014.<sup>[174]</sup> After several Hamas operatives were killed, Hamas officially declared it would launch rockets from Gaza into Israel,<sup>[173][175]</sup> and Israel started Operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip, formally ending the November 2012 ceasefire agreement.<sup>[176]</sup> The prime minister did a round of television shows in the United States and described Hamas as "genocidal terrorists" in an interview on CNN.<sup>[177]</sup> When asked if Gazan casualties from the operation might spark "a third intifada", Netanyahu replied that Hamas was working towards that goal.<sup>[178]</sup>



Netanyahu, U.S. president Barack Obama and Israeli president Reuven Rivlin at the funeral of former Israeli president Shimon Peres, Jerusalem, 30 September 2016

In October 2014, Netanyahu's government approved a privatization plan to reduce corruption and politicization in government companies, and strengthen Israel's capital market. Under the plan, minority stakes of up to 49% in state-owned companies, including arms manufacturers, energy, postal, water, and railway companies, as well as the ports of Haifa and Ashdod.<sup>[179]</sup> That same month, Netanyahu called criticism of settlements "against the American values", which earned him rebuke from the White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, who said that American values had resulted in Israel receiving consistent funding and protective technology such as Iron Dome. Netanyahu explained that he does not accept residency restrictions for Jews, and said that Jerusalem's Arabs and Jews should be able to buy homes wherever they want. He said he was "baffled" by the American condemnation. "It's against the American values. And it doesn't bode well for peace. The idea that

we'd have this ethnic purification as a condition for peace, I think it's anti-peace."<sup>[180][181][182]</sup> Later, Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic* reported that the relationship between Netanyahu and the White House had reached a new low, with the U.S. administration angry over Israel's settlement policies, and Netanyahu expressing contempt for the American administration's grasp of the Middle East.<sup>[183]</sup>

On 2 December 2014, Netanyahu fired ministers Yair Lapid, head of *Yesh Atid*, and Tzipi Livni, head of *Hatnua*. The changes led to the dissolution of the government, with new elections on 17 March 2015.<sup>[184]</sup>

Benjamin Netanyahu's 2015 address to the United States Congress marked Netanyahu's third speech to a joint session of Congress.<sup>[185]</sup> The day before announcing he would address Congress, *Time* reported that he tried to derail a meeting between U.S. lawmakers and the head of Mossad, *Tamir Pardo*, who intended warning them against imposing further sanctions against Iran, a move that might derail nuclear talks.<sup>[186][187]</sup> Leading up to the speech, Israeli consuls general in the United States "expect[ed] fierce negative reaction from U.S. Jewish communities and Israel's allies". Objections included the arrangement of the speech without the support and engagement of the Obama administration and the timing of the speech before Israel's March 2015 election. Seven American Jewish lawmakers met with *Ron Dermer*, Israel's ambassador to the U.S. and recommended that Netanyahu instead meet with lawmakers privately to discuss Iran.<sup>[188]</sup> In making the speech, Netanyahu claimed to speak for all Jews worldwide, a claim disputed by others in the Jewish community.<sup>[189][190][191][192]</sup>

As election day approached in what was perceived to be a close race in the 2015 Israeli elections, Netanyahu answered 'indeed' when asked whether a Palestinian state would not be established in his term. He said that support of a Palestinian state is tantamount to yielding territory for radical Islamic terrorists to attack Israel.<sup>[193]</sup> However, Netanyahu reiterated "I don't want a one-state solution. I want a peaceful, sustainable two-state solution. I have not changed my policy."<sup>[194]</sup>

## Fourth term

In the 2015 election, Netanyahu returned with his party Likud leading the elections with 30 mandates, making it the single highest number of seats for the Knesset. President Rivlin granted Netanyahu an extension until 6 May 2015 to build a coalition when one had not been finalized in the first four weeks of negotiations.<sup>[195]</sup> He formed a coalition government within two hours of the midnight 6 May deadline.<sup>[196]</sup> His Likud party formed the coalition with *Jewish Home*, *United Torah Judaism*, *Kulanu*, and *Shas*.<sup>[196][197]</sup>

In August 2015, Netanyahu's government approved a two-year budget that would see agricultural reforms and lowering of import duties to reduce food prices, deregulation of the approval process in construction to lower housing costs and speed up infrastructure building, and reforms in the financial sector to boost competition and lower fees for financial services.<sup>[198][199]</sup> In the end, the government was forced to compromise by removing some key agricultural reforms.<sup>[200]</sup>



Netanyahu and US secretary of state Mike Pompeo



In October 2015, Netanyahu caused commotion for saying the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini gave Adolf Hitler the idea of exterminating Jews rather than expelling them during the Second World War.<sup>[201][202][203]</sup> This claim is dismissed by most historians,<sup>[204]</sup> who say that al-Husseini's meeting with Hitler took place approximately five months after the mass murder of Jews began.<sup>[205]</sup> Some of the strongest criticism came from Israeli academics: Yehuda Bauer said Netanyahu's claim was "completely idiotic".<sup>[205]</sup> Moshe Zimmermann stated that "any attempt to deflect the burden from Hitler to others is a form of Holocaust denial."<sup>[206]</sup>



Netanyahu, Joseph Dunford and Jewish veterans of the Red Army, Victory Day in Jerusalem, 9 May 2017

In March 2016, Netanyahu's coalition faced a potential crisis as ultra-Orthodox members threatened to withdraw over the government's proposed steps to create non-Orthodox prayer space at the Western Wall. They have stated they will leave the coalition if the government offers any further official state recognition of Conservative and Reform Judaism.<sup>[207]</sup>



Netanyahu meets with President Donald Trump in Jerusalem, May 2017.

On 23 December 2016, the United States, under the Obama Administration, abstained from United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, effectively allowing it to pass.<sup>[208]</sup> On 28 December, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry strongly criticized Israel and its settlement policies in a speech.<sup>[209]</sup> Netanyahu strongly criticized both the UN Resolution<sup>[210]</sup> and Kerry's speech<sup>[211]</sup> in response. On 6 January 2017, the Israeli government withdrew its annual dues from the organization, which totaled \$6 million in United States dollars.<sup>[212]</sup>



Netanyahu meets with Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko, 24 January 2018.

In February 2017, Netanyahu became the first serving prime minister of Israel to visit Australia. He was accompanied by his wife, Sara. The three-day official visit included a delegation of business representatives, and Netanyahu and Prime Minister of Australia Malcolm Turnbull were scheduled to sign several bilateral agreements. Netanyahu recalled that it was the Australian Light Horse regiments that liberated Beersheba during World War I, and this began what has been a relationship of 100 years between the countries.<sup>[213]</sup>

In October 2017, shortly after the US announced the same action, Netanyahu's government announced it was leaving UNESCO due to what it saw as anti-Israel actions by the agency,<sup>[214][215]</sup> and it made that decision official in December 2017.<sup>[216][217]</sup> The Israeli government officially notified UNESCO of the withdrawal in late December 2017.<sup>[218][219][220][221]</sup>



In April 2018, Netanyahu accused Iran of not holding up its end of the Iran nuclear deal after presenting a cache of over 100,000 documents detailing the extent of Iran's nuclear program. Iran denounced Netanyahu's presentation as "propaganda".<sup>[222]</sup>

Netanyahu praised the 2018 North Korea–United States summit. He said in a statement, "I commend US President Donald Trump on the historic summit in Singapore. This is an important step in the effort to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons."<sup>[223]</sup>

In July 2018, the Knesset passed the Nation-State Bill, a Basic Law supported by Netanyahu's coalition government.<sup>[224][225][226]</sup> Analysts saw the bill as a sign of Netanyahu's coalition advancing a right-wing agenda.<sup>[227]</sup>

Prior to the April 2019 Israeli legislative election, Netanyahu helped broker a deal that united the Jewish Home party<sup>[228]</sup> with the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, in order to form the Union of the Right-Wing Parties. The motivation of the deal was to overcome the electoral threshold for smaller parties. The deal was criticized in the media, as Otzma is widely characterized as racist and traces its origins to the extremist Kahanist movement.<sup>[229][230]</sup>

### Criminal investigations and indictment

Since January 2017, Netanyahu has been investigated by Israeli police in two connected cases, "Case 1000" and "Case 2000". In Case 1000, Netanyahu is suspected of having obtained inappropriate favors from businessmen, including James Packer and Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan.<sup>[231][232]</sup> Case 2000 involves alleged attempts to strike a deal with the publisher of the *Yedioth Ahronot* newspaper group, Arnon Mozes, to promote legislation to weaken *Yedioth's* main competitor in exchange for more favorable political coverage.

In August 2017, Israeli police confirmed that Netanyahu was suspected of crimes involving fraud, breach of trust, and bribes in the two cases.<sup>[233]</sup> The next day, it was reported that the prime minister's former chief of staff, Ari Harow, had signed a deal with prosecutors to testify against Netanyahu.<sup>[234]</sup>

In February 2018, Israeli police recommended that Netanyahu be charged with corruption. According to a police statement, sufficient evidence exists to indict the prime minister on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in the two cases. Netanyahu responded that the allegations were baseless and that he would continue as prime minister.<sup>[235]</sup> In November 2018, it was reported that Economic Crimes Division Director Liat Ben-Ari recommended indictment for both cases.<sup>[236]</sup>

In February 2019, the Israeli attorney general announced his intent to file indictments against Netanyahu on bribe and fraud charges in three different cases.<sup>[237][238]</sup> Netanyahu was formally indicted on 21 November 2019.<sup>[239][240][241]</sup> If convicted, he could face up to 10 years in prison for bribery and a maximum of three years for fraud and breach of trust.<sup>[242][243]</sup> He is the first sitting



President Trump, joined by Netanyahu behind, signs the proclamation recognizing Israel's 1981 annexation of the Golan Heights, March 2019.

prime minister in Israel's history to be charged with a crime.<sup>[238][244][245]</sup> On 23 November 2019, it was announced that Netanyahu, in compliance with legal precedent set by the Israeli Supreme Court in 1993,<sup>[244]</sup> would relinquish his agriculture, health, social affairs and diaspora affairs portfolios.<sup>[244][245]</sup> The matter of forcing a prime minister to resign due to an indictment has yet to be tested in court.<sup>[244][245]</sup> He was officially charged on 28 January 2020.<sup>[246]</sup>



Israelis protest against Netanyahu outside his official residence in Jerusalem on 30 July 2020

Netanyahu's criminal trial was set to begin on 24 May 2020, having been initially scheduled for March of that year but delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[247]</sup> As of April 2023, the criminal trial was still ongoing.<sup>[248]</sup>

## Fifth term

On 17 May 2020, Netanyahu was sworn in for a fifth term as prime minister in a coalition with Benny Gantz. Against a background of the COVID-19 pandemic in Israel and Netanyahu's criminal trial, protests broke out against him in front of the prime minister's residence. Following this, Netanyahu ordered to disperse the demonstrations using COVID-19 special regulations, limiting them to 20 people and at a distance of 1,000 meters from their homes.<sup>[249]</sup> However, the exact opposite was achieved; the demonstrations were enlarged and dispersed to over 1,000 centers.<sup>[250]</sup> By March 2021, Israel became the country with the highest vaccinated population per capita in the world against COVID-19.<sup>[251]</sup>

After tensions escalated in Jerusalem in May 2021, Hamas fired rockets on Israel from Gaza, which prompted Netanyahu to initiate Operation Guardian of the Walls, lasting eleven days.<sup>[252]</sup> After the operation, Israeli politician and leader of the Yamina alliance Naftali Bennett announced that he had agreed to a deal with Leader of the Opposition Yair Lapid to form a rotation government that would oust Netanyahu from his position as prime minister.<sup>[253][254]</sup> On 13 June 2021, Bennett and Lapid formed a coalition government,<sup>[255]</sup> and Netanyahu was ousted as prime minister, ending his 12-year tenure.<sup>[256][257]</sup>

## Leader of the Opposition (2021–2022)

After the end of his second premiership, Netanyahu began his third stint as the leader of the opposition. Likud remained the largest party in the twenty-fourth Knesset.<sup>[258]</sup> He led the opposition into the 2022 Israeli legislative election.

## Prime minister (2022–present)

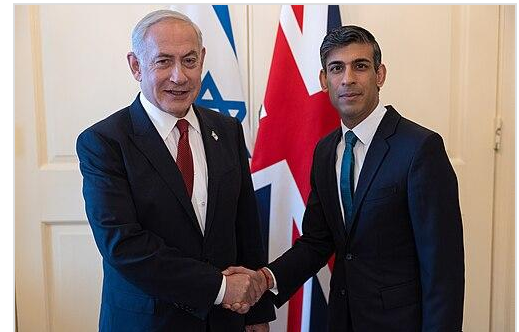
### Sixth term

After the 2022 election, Netanyahu was sworn in as prime minister again as the leader of a hardline coalition.<sup>[259]</sup> He officially started his sixth term on 29 December 2022.<sup>[257]</sup>

The first months of Netanyahu's sixth term were centered around a proposed reform package in the judicial branch. Critics highlighted the negative effects it would have on the separation of powers,<sup>[260][261][262]</sup> the office of the Attorney General,<sup>[263][264][265]</sup> the economy,<sup>[266][267][268]</sup> public health,<sup>[269][270]</sup> women and minorities,<sup>[269][270][271]</sup> workers' rights,<sup>[272]</sup> scientific research,<sup>[270][273]</sup> the overall strength of Israel's democracy<sup>[274][275]</sup> and its foreign relations.<sup>[276]</sup> After weeks of public protests on Israel's streets, joined by a growing number of military reservists, Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant spoke against the reform on 25 March, calling for a halt of the legislative process "for the sake of Israel's security".<sup>[277]</sup> Netanyahu announced his intention to remove Gallant from his post the following day, sparking further protests across Israel and leading to Netanyahu agreeing to delay the legislation for a month.<sup>[278][279]</sup>



Protest against the judicial reform in March 2023



Netanyahu with British prime minister Rishi Sunak in London, 24 March 2023

In February 2023, the new government under Netanyahu approved the legalization of nine settler outposts in the occupied West Bank.<sup>[280]</sup> Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich took charge of most of the Civil Administration, obtaining broad authority over civilian issues in the West Bank. Israeli peace groups condemned the move as *de jure* annexation of the occupied territories.<sup>[281][282][283]</sup> In March 2023, Netanyahu's government repealed a 2005 law whereby four Israeli settlements, Homesh, Sa-Nur, Ganim and Kadim, were dismantled as part of the Israeli disengagement from Gaza.<sup>[284]</sup> In June 2023, Netanyahu's coalition shortened the procedure of approving settlement construction and gave Finance Minister Smotrich the authority to approve one of the stages, changing the system operating for the last 27 years.<sup>[285]</sup> In its first six months, construction of 13,000 housing units in settlements, almost triple the amount advanced in the whole of 2022.<sup>[286]</sup>

Israel refused to send lethal weapons to Ukraine. In June 2023, Netanyahu said that Israel is concerned "with the possibility that systems that we would give to Ukraine would fall into Iranian hands and could be reverse engineered, and we would find ourselves facing Israeli systems used against Israel."<sup>[287]</sup>



On 7 October 2023, after Palestinian militants from Gaza launched a major surprise attack, Netanyahu announced that Israel would enter in a state of war against Hamas.<sup>[288]</sup> He threatened to "turn all the places where Hamas is organized and hiding into cities of ruins", called Gaza "the city of evil", and urged its residents to "leave now".<sup>[289]</sup> He later proposed that opposition parties Yesh Atid and National Unity enter an emergency unity government amid the conflict,<sup>[290]</sup> after Leader of the Opposition Lapid urged Netanyahu put "aside our differences and form an emergency, narrow, professional government."<sup>[291]</sup>



Netanyahu with U.S. president [Joe Biden](#) in New York City, 20 September 2023

Netanyahu was criticized for presiding over Israel's biggest intelligence failure in 50 years, and has faced protests calling for his removal. The outbreak of war led to increased opposition to Netanyahu and the government from Israeli citizens due to a perceived failure to anticipate the Hamas-led attack, with increased calls for Netanyahu's resignation.<sup>[292][293][294]</sup> A poll in 2023 showed that 56% of Israelis believed that Netanyahu must resign after the war, with 86% of respondents holding the country's leadership responsible for the security failings that led to the attack.<sup>[295][296][297][298][299]</sup> On 28 October 2023, Netanyahu was accused of using "dangerous rhetoric" when comparing Hamas to Amalek, stating: "You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible. And we do remember."<sup>[300]</sup> On 29 October, Netanyahu blamed Israel's security chiefs for Hamas's attack in a post on X (formerly Twitter); this was later deleted following criticism.<sup>[301]</sup> A subsequent investigation carried out by Shin Bet acknowledged the agency's failures but also found that Shin Bet warned the prime minister that Hamas was not deterred and objected to the divide-and-rule policy vis-a-vis Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.<sup>[302]</sup>

In November 2023, he rejected calls for a ceasefire in the war and warned that Israel will "stand firm against the world if necessary." He said the Israel Defense Forces would remain in Gaza "as long as necessary" and Israel would prevent the Palestinian Authority from returning to Gaza.<sup>[303]</sup> Netanyahu called allegations that Israel is breaking international law "hogwash" and described Palestinian civilian casualties as "collateral damage."<sup>[304]</sup> In December 2023, he faced criticism during a meeting with released Israeli hostages. One of the hostages accused him of putting politics "above the return of the kidnapped."<sup>[305]</sup> In December 2023, Netanyahu said that Israel should support the "voluntary migration" of Palestinians from Gaza.<sup>[306]</sup> Netanyahu has been accused of genocide by non-governmental organizations,<sup>[307][308][309]</sup> culminating in the *South Africa v. Israel* case before the International Court of Justice in December 2023.<sup>[310][311]</sup>



Netanyahu addresses a joint session of Congress in Washington, D.C. with House Speaker [Mike Johnson](#) and Senator [Ben Cardin](#), 24 July 2024.

In May 2024, [Karim Khan](#), the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, announced his intention to apply for an arrest warrant for Netanyahu on several counts of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>[312][313]</sup>

In July 2024, Netanyahu addressed another joint session of the United States Congress, amidst widespread protest, to solicit support for the Gaza war.<sup>[314]</sup> He called protesters "useful idiots" and pledged a "total victory" in Gaza.<sup>[315]</sup> He met with 2024 Republican nominee for president Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago residence where he criticized presumptive Democratic nominee for President Kamala Harris for vowing that she "will not be silent" about atrocities in Gaza.<sup>[316]</sup>

In October 2024, a drone attack believed to have originated from Lebanon was made on Netanyahu's residence in Caesarea. Netanyahu was not in the residence at the time, and no casualties were reported.<sup>[317]</sup> Netanyahu accused Hezbollah of trying to assassinate him in the attack.<sup>[318]</sup>

On 5 November 2024, Netanyahu fired defense minister Gallant, who had advocated for a short-term diplomatic deal. The firing triggered protests throughout Israel.<sup>[319]</sup> On 21 November 2024, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant and Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif for alleged war crimes committed during the Gaza war.<sup>[320]</sup> Netanyahu described the ruling as "absurd and false lies" and said the decision is "antisemitic".<sup>[321]</sup>



Netanyahu and US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth at the Pentagon on 5 February 2025

On the night of 18 March 2025, Israel launched a surprise attack on the Gaza Strip, effectively ending the 2025 Gaza war ceasefire.<sup>[322]</sup> Netanyahu was scheduled on 18 March to testify in his corruption trial, but as a result of the attacks, the legal proceedings were postponed.<sup>[323]</sup> In March 2025, Netanyahu fired Ronen Bar, chief of Shin Bet, citing a loss of confidence.<sup>[324]</sup> Bar accused the government of firing him for investigating Qatar's involvement and influence in the Prime Minister's Office, in a case known as the Qatari connection affair.<sup>[325]</sup>

In May 2025, Netanyahu stated that the destruction of homes in Gaza would lead to the forced emigration of Palestinians.<sup>[326]</sup>

On 13 June, Netanyahu authorized airstrikes against Iran, marking the beginning of the Iran–Israel war.<sup>[3]</sup> Within a week, Netanyahu publicly commented on the effects of the war: "Each of us bears a personal cost, and my family has not been exempt", as he cited that it was "the second time that my son Avner has cancelled a wedding due to missile threats."<sup>[327]</sup> In July, Netanyahu was criticized for deciding to increase Gaza aid distribution by some members of his cabinet who rejected the US ceasefire proposal.<sup>[328]</sup>

## Political positions

### Authoritarianism

In the years under Netanyahu's rule, Israel experienced authoritarianism, democratic backsliding, corruption,<sup>[329][330][331][332]</sup> and expansionism.<sup>[333]</sup> During the Gaza war, Israel underwent protest and news media censorship.<sup>[334][335][336]</sup> Netanyahu's repeated attempts to revamp judicial systems

have been accused of being efforts to elevate authoritarianism and protect the prime minister from corruption charges;<sup>[330][331]</sup> he in turn accused the "leftist Deep state" of attempting to weaponize the justice system against him and the people of Israel.<sup>[337]</sup> He additionally has spoken populist statements regarding Anti-Arab racism involving narratives of conflict with Jews, in particular of Anti-Palestinianism.<sup>[332]</sup> Netanyahu's administration in recent years has been tailored towards far-right politics and has been described as the most far-right government in Israeli history. He has also allied his nation with other illiberal, authoritarian leaders from Hungary, Russia, and the United States.<sup>[338]</sup>

## Israeli–Palestinian conflict

Netanyahu opposed the Oslo Accords from their inception. In 1993, he dedicated a chapter, entitled "Trojan Horse", of his book *A Place Among the Nations* to argue against the Oslo peace process. He asserted that Amin al-Husseini had been one of the masterminds of the Holocaust, and that Yasser Arafat was heir to the former's "alleged exterminationist Nazism".<sup>[339]</sup> During his term as prime minister in the late 1990s, Netanyahu consistently reneged on commitments made by previous Israeli governments as part of the Oslo peace process, leading American peace envoy Dennis Ross to note that "neither President Clinton nor Secretary [of State Madeleine] Albright believed that Bibi had any real interest in pursuing peace."<sup>[340]</sup> In a 2001 video, Netanyahu, reportedly unaware he was being recorded, said:

They asked me before the election if I'd honor [the Oslo Accords] [...] I said I would, but ... I'm going to interpret the accords in such a way that would allow me to put an end to this galloping forward to the '67 borders. How did we do it? Nobody said what defined military zones were. Defined military zones are security zones; as far as I'm concerned, the entire Jordan Valley is a defined military zone. Go argue.<sup>[341]</sup>

On 9 August 2009, speaking at the opening of his weekly cabinet meeting, Netanyahu promised not to repeat the "mistake" of the Gaza pullout, adding that "the unilateral evacuation brought neither peace nor security. On the contrary". He also said, "Should we achieve a turn toward peace with the more moderate partners, we will insist on the recognition of the State of Israel and the demilitarization of the future Palestinian state".<sup>[122][342]</sup> In 2014, Netanyahu said:

We don't just hand over territory, close our eyes and hope for the best. We did that in Lebanon and we got thousands of rockets. We did that in Gaza, we got Hamas and 15,000 rockets. So we're not gonna just replicate that. We want to see genuine recognition of the Jewish state and rock solid security arrangements on the ground. That's the position I've held, and it's only become firmer.<sup>[343]</sup>

Netanyahu had previously called U.S.-backed peace talks a waste of time<sup>[344]</sup> and refused to commit to the same two-state solution as had other Israeli leaders<sup>[345]</sup> until a speech in June 2009. He repeatedly made public statements which advocated an "economic peace" approach, meaning an approach based on economic cooperation and joint effort rather than continuous contention over political and diplomatic issues. This is in line with many significant ideas from the Peace Valley



plan.<sup>[346]</sup> He raised these ideas during discussions with former U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice.<sup>[347]</sup> Netanyahu continued to advocate these ideas as the Israeli elections approached.<sup>[348]</sup> Netanyahu has said:

Right now, the peace talks are based on only one thing, only on peace talks. It makes no sense at this point to talk about the most contractible issue. It's Jerusalem or bust, or right of return or bust. That has led to failure and is likely to lead to failure again ... We must weave an economic peace alongside a political process. That means that we have to strengthen the moderate parts of the Palestinian economy by handing rapid growth in those areas, rapid economic growth that gives a stake for peace for the ordinary Palestinians."<sup>[346]</sup>

In January 2009, Netanyahu informed Middle East envoy Tony Blair that he would continue the policy of the Israeli governments of Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert by expanding West Bank settlements, in contravention of the Road Map, but not building new ones.<sup>[349]</sup>

In 2013, Netanyahu denied reports that his government would agree to peace talks on the basis of the green line.<sup>[352]</sup> In 2014 he agreed to the American framework based on the green line and said that Jewish settlers must be allowed the option of staying in their settlements under Palestinian rule.<sup>[353][354]</sup>

In 2014, Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat criticized Netanyahu, calling him "ideologically corrupt" and a war criminal.<sup>[355]</sup>

Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas. This is part of our strategy – to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank.

Benjamin Netanyahu, 2019<sup>[350][351]</sup>

For years, Netanyahu backed Qatari transfers of hundreds of millions of dollars to Gaza, in the hope that it would pacify Gaza, turn Hamas into an effective counterweight to the Palestinian Authority and prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.<sup>[356][357]</sup> In 2019, Netanyahu said at a private Likud party meeting, "Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas. This is part of our strategy – to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank."<sup>[350][358][359]</sup> Often, cash was delivered in suitcases by a Qatari official who was escorted by Israeli intelligence officers.<sup>[360]</sup> According to the *New York Times*, Netanyahu continued backing the payments in response to Qatari questions as late as September 2023.<sup>[360]</sup> In 2025, Shin Beth started an investigation into the alleged ties between Netanyahu's advisors and Qatar.<sup>[361]</sup>

In January 2020, Netanyahu publicly supported Trump's Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.<sup>[362][363]</sup> After the peace proposal failed, Trump said Netanyahu "never wanted peace" with the Palestinians.<sup>[364][365][366][367]</sup>

Former United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated that on 22 May 2017, Netanyahu showed Trump a fake and altered video of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas calling for the killing of children. This was at a time when Trump was considering if Israel was the obstacle to peace.



Netanyahu publicly supported the Trump peace plan for the creation of a Palestinian state.

to do so as part of the Trump administration-brokered Abraham Accords.<sup>[371][372]</sup> Sudan fought in wars against Israel in 1948 and 1967.<sup>[373]</sup> Netanyahu thanked "President Trump and his team above all", saying that "together with him we are changing history ... despite all the experts and commentators who said it was impossible. Israel was completely isolated and they told us we were heading into a political tsunami. What's happening is the absolute opposite."<sup>[374]</sup> This was followed by Morocco establishing relations with Israel in December.<sup>[375]</sup> In July 2024, Pakistan officially designated him a "terrorist", calling him responsible for the atrocities in Gaza.<sup>[376]</sup>

## Economic views

By 1998, Netanyahu had acquired a reputation as "the advocate of the free-market" and in 1999 told the *Jerusalem Post*: "Peace is an end of itself [...] peace, without free markets, will not produce growth. But free markets without peace do produce growth."<sup>[378]</sup> As prime minister in his first term, he significantly reformed the banking sector, removing barriers to investment abroad, mandatory purchases of government securities and direct credit. As Minister of Finance (2003–2005), Netanyahu introduced a major overhaul of the Israeli economy. He introduced a welfare to work program, he led a program of privatization, reduced the size of the public sector, reformed and streamlined the taxation system and passed laws against monopolies and cartels with the aim of increasing competition.<sup>[85]</sup> Netanyahu extended capital gains taxes from companies to individuals, which allowed him to enlarge the tax base while

Netanyahu had showed Trump the fake video to change his position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>[368]</sup>

The U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords agreed to the full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (the Israel–United Arab Emirates normalization agreement) and Bahrain, respectively (the Bahrain–Israel normalization agreement).<sup>[369]</sup> This was the first time any Arab country had normalized relations with Israel since Jordan in 1994. The accords were signed by Bahrain's foreign minister, UAE's foreign minister and Netanyahu on 15 September 2020 at the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, D.C.<sup>[370]</sup>

On 23 October 2020, U.S. president Trump announced that Sudan will start to normalize ties with Israel, making it the third Arab state



White House Abraham Accords signing ceremony on 15 September 2020

You want to have a meritocracy. You want to have initiative, risk, talent, the ability to create new products, new services to be rewarded ... It's always been about competition. That's what human progress is about. You want to siphon it into productive ways.

Benjamin Netanyahu, *The Marker*, 2014<sup>[377]</sup>

reducing taxes on incomes.<sup>[379]</sup> As the Israeli economy started booming and unemployment fell significantly, Netanyahu was widely credited by commentators as having performed an 'economic miracle' by the end of his tenure.<sup>[85]</sup> Direct investment in the Israeli economy had increased by an annualized 380%.<sup>[380]</sup> On the other hand, his critics have labelled his economic views as Margaret Thatcher-inspired "popular capitalism".<sup>[381]</sup>

Netanyahu defines capitalism as "the ability to have individual initiative and competition to produce goods and services with profit, but not to shut out somebody else from trying to do the same".<sup>[377]</sup> He says that his views developed while he was working as an economic consult for Boston Consulting Group: "It was the first time that the Boston Consulting Group looked at governments and worked for governments. They wanted to do a strategic plan for the government of Sweden. I was on that case and looked at other governments. So I went around to other governments in Europe in 1976 and I was looking at Britain. I was looking at France. I was looking at other countries, and I could see that they were stymied by concentrations of power that prevented competition. And I thought, hmm, as bad as they are, ours was worse because we had very little room for private sector competition to the extent that we had government-controlled or union-controlled companies, and so you really didn't get the competition or the growth ... And I said, well, if I ever have a chance, I'll change that."<sup>[377]</sup>

## Views on counter-terrorism

Netanyahu has said his own "hard line against all terrorists" came as a result of his brother's death. Yoni Netanyahu had been killed while leading the hostage-rescue mission at Operation Entebbe.<sup>[383]</sup>

In addition to having taken part in counter-terrorist operations during his service in the military, Netanyahu has published three books on the subject of fighting terrorism. He identifies terrorism as a form of totalitarianism, writing:

The more far removed the target of the attack from any connection to the grievance enunciated by the terrorists, the greater the terror ... Yet for terrorism to have any impact, it is precisely the lack of connection, the lack of any possible involvement or "complicity" of the chosen victims in the cause the terrorists seek to attack, that produces the desired fear. For terrorism's underlying message is that every member of society is "guilty", that anyone can be a victim, and that therefore no one is safe... In fact, the methods reveal the totalitarian strain that runs through all terrorist groups... It is not only that the ends of the terrorists do not succeed in justifying the

The essence of democratic societies, and that which distinguishes them from dictatorships, is the commitment to resolve conflict in a nonviolent fashion by settling issues through argument and debate ... The salient point that has to be underlined again and again is that nothing justifies terrorism, that it is evil per se – that the various real or imagined reasons proffered by the terrorists to justify their actions are meaningless.

Benjamin Netanyahu, 1995<sup>[382]</sup>



means they choose; their choice of means indicate w  
fighters for freedom, terrorists are the forerun  
techniques of violent coercion in order to achieve a re

Netanyahu cautions that:

The trouble with active anti-terror activities... is that they do constitute a substantial intrusion on the lives of those being monitored.

He believes there is a balance between civil liberties and security, which should depend on the level of sustained terrorist attacks in a country. During periods of sustained attack, there should be shift towards security, due to "the monstrous violation of personal rights which is the lot of the victims of terror and their families".<sup>[385]</sup> But this should be regularly reviewed, with an emphasis on guarding civil liberties and individual privacy wherever and whenever security considerations allow.<sup>[385]</sup> "The concern of civil libertarians over possible infringements of the rights of innocent citizens is well placed, and all additional powers granted the security services should require annual renewal by the legislature, this in addition to judicial oversight of actions as they are taken in the field."<sup>[386]</sup>

He advises tighter immigration laws as an essential tool to preemptively combat terrorism: "This era of immigration free-for-all should be brought to an end. An important aspect of taking control of the immigration situation is stricter background checks of potential immigrants, coupled with the real possibility of deportation."<sup>[386]</sup>

He also cautions that it is essential that governments do not conflate terrorists with those legitimate political groups that may or may not hold extremist views, but which advance their positions by means of debate and argument.<sup>[382]</sup> Ronald Reagan was an admirer of Netanyahu's work on counter-terrorism, and Reagan recommended Netanyahu's book *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* to all senior figures in his administration.<sup>[387]</sup>

## Death penalty

In 2017, Netanyahu called for the death penalty to be imposed on the perpetrator of the 2017 Halamish stabbing attack.<sup>[388]</sup> Representatives in his government introduced a bill which would allow the death penalty for terrorism to the Knesset.<sup>[389][390]</sup> In a preliminary vote in January 2018, 52 of 120 members of the Israeli parliament voted in favor while 49 opposed, to make it easier for judges to hand down the death penalty. The amendment to the penal code would still require three more readings if it is to become law.<sup>[391]</sup>

## LGBT rights

Netanyahu supports equal rights for LGBT persons. He said: "The struggle for every person to be recognized as equal before the law is a long struggle, and there is still a long way to go ... I am proud that Israel is among the most open countries in the world in relation to the LGBT community discourse."<sup>[392][393]</sup> During an event held for the annual community rights day at the Knesset, Netanyahu said that he was "asked to come here in the middle of my busy schedule to say one thing to

the male and female members of the LGBT community: We must be guided by the conviction that every person is created in the image of God."<sup>[394]</sup> However, some of his coalition government's party members opposed same-sex marriage.<sup>[395]</sup>

## Ethiopian Jewish integration

In 2015, after Ethiopian Jewish protests against police brutality, Netanyahu said: "We will bring a comprehensive plan to the government to assist you in every way. There is no room for racism and discrimination in our society, none ... We will turn racism into something contemptible and despicable."<sup>[396]</sup>

## African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem

Netanyahu supports the integration of the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem into Israeli society, and takes part in celebrations in honor of this community's "exodus" from America to Israel, which occurred in 1967. In 2012, Netanyahu expressed appreciation towards "the cooperative society that is working towards the inclusion of the Hebrew Israelite community in Israeli society at large," and declared that the experience of the community in the land of Israel is "an integral part of the Israeli experience."<sup>[397]</sup>

## Iran

In a March 2007 CNN interview, Netanyahu said that "there is only one difference between Nazi Germany and the Islamic Republic of Iran, namely that the first entered a worldwide conflict and then sought atomic weapons, while the latter is first seeking atomic weapons and, once it has them, will then start a world war." Netanyahu repeated these remarks at a news conference in April 2008.<sup>[398]</sup> This was similar to earlier remarks that "it's 1938, and Iran is Germany, and Iran is racing to arm itself with atomic bombs".<sup>[399]</sup>

In February 2009, after being asked to be the prime minister of Israel, Netanyahu described Iran as the greatest threat that Israel has ever faced: "Iran is seeking to obtain a nuclear weapon and constitutes the gravest threat to our existence since the war of independence."<sup>[400]</sup> Speaking before the UN General Assembly in New York on 24 September 2009, Netanyahu expressed a different opinion than Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech at the forum, saying those who believe Tehran is a threat only to Israel are wrong. "The Iranian regime", he said, "is motivated by fanaticism ... They want to see us go back to medieval times. The struggle against Iran pits civilization against barbarism. This Iranian regime is fueled by extreme fundamentalism."<sup>[136][137]</sup> "By focusing solely on Iran", columnist Yossi Melman speculated that Netanyahu's foreign policy, "... took the Palestinian issue off the world agenda." After four days of shelling from the Iranian-funded Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Melman asked, "Is it worth initiating a crisis with Iran? Will the Israeli public be able to cope with Iran's response?"<sup>[401]</sup>



Netanyahu at a memorial service of Ethiopian Israeli immigrants, in honor of their friends who died on their way to Israel

According to Uzi Eilam, Netanyahu is using the threat of atomic Iran as a means of reaching his own goals. He said: "Netanyahu is using the Iranian threat to achieve a variety of political objectives." He also said: "These declarations are unnecessarily scaring Israel's citizens, given Israel is not party to the negotiations to determine whether Iran will or will not dismantle its nuclear program."<sup>[402]</sup>



Standing with Israeli Minister of Defense Ehud Barak, Netanyahu holds an Iranian instruction manual for the anti-ship missile captured in Victoria Affair, March 2011.

By 2012, Netanyahu is reported to have formed a close, confidential relationship with Defense Minister Ehud Barak as the two men considered possible Israeli military action against Iran's nuclear facilities,<sup>[403][404]</sup> following Israel's established Begin Doctrine. The pair were accused of acting on "messianic" impulses by Yuval Diskin, former head of the Shin Bet, who added that their warmongering rhetoric appealed to "the idiots within the Israeli public".<sup>[405]</sup> Diskin's remarks were supported by former Mossad chief Meir Dagan,<sup>[406]</sup> who himself had previously said that an attack on Iran was "the stupidest thing I have ever heard".<sup>[407]</sup> A few weeks later, the RAND Corporation also openly disagreed with Netanyahu's belligerent stance.<sup>[408]</sup>

Early in 2012, he used the opening ceremony for Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day to warn against the dangers of an Iranian nuclear bomb, saying he was following the example of Jewish leaders during World War II who struggled to raise the alarm about the Nazis' genocidal intentions.<sup>[409]</sup> Israeli academic Avner Cohen accused Netanyahu of showing "contempt" for the Holocaust by putting it to "political use",<sup>[410]</sup> and former Israeli foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami similarly condemned Netanyahu's "vulgar manipulation of the memory of the Holocaust".<sup>[411]</sup> Immediately after the 2012 Burgas bus bombing, Netanyahu confirmed that the attack had been undertaken in coordination with Iran.<sup>[412]</sup>

Netanyahu opined during a July meeting that "all the sanctions and diplomacy so far have not set back the Iranian programme by one iota".<sup>[413]</sup> In August he stated that the United States only might respond to a massive attack against Israel.<sup>[414]</sup> On 28 September 2012, Netanyahu gave a speech to the UN General Assembly in which he set forward a "red line" of 90% uranium enrichment, stating that if Iran were to reach this level, it would become an intolerable risk for Israel.<sup>[415]</sup> Netanyahu used a cartoon graphic of a bomb to illustrate his point, indicating three stages of uranium enrichment, saying that Iran had already completed the first stage, and stating that "By next spring, at most by next summer at current enrichment rates, [Iran] will have finished the medium enrichment and move on to the final stage. From there, it's only a few months, possibly a few weeks before they get enough enriched uranium for the first bomb."<sup>[416]</sup> At the time, according to cables leaked in 2015, Mossad's assessment was that Iran did not appear ready to enrich uranium to levels required for a nuclear bomb.<sup>[417]</sup>



Protest against U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel, Tehran, 11 December 2017



In an October 2013 interview with BBC Persian Service, Netanyahu praised the history of Persia and said: "If the Iranian regime has nuclear weapons, the Iranian people will never be free of dictatorship and will live in eternal servitude."<sup>[418]</sup>

The U.S. military's 2020 Baghdad International Airport airstrike, which killed the high-level Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, brought strong reactions from around the world. Netanyahu praised the air strike, saying that Trump had acted "swiftly, forcefully and decisively".<sup>[419]</sup>

On 13 June 2025, Netanyahu authorized airstrikes against Iran, marking the beginning of the Iran–Israel war.<sup>[3]</sup> Netanyahu stated the goal of the operation was to dismantle Iran's nuclear capabilities, which he described as a "clear and present danger to Israel's very survival."<sup>[420][421][422][423]</sup> He additionally framed the campaign as an opportunity for regime change, aligning with exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's call for a national uprising.<sup>[424][425][426]</sup>

## Bank of China terror financing case

In 2013, Netanyahu found himself caught between conflicting commitments made to the family of American terror victim Daniel Wultz and the Chinese government. Although Netanyahu was reported to have previously promised U.S. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen that Israel would fully cooperate in the terror-financing case against Bank of China in U.S. District Court, the prime minister reportedly made a conflicting promise to the Government of China prior to a state visit to China in May 2013.<sup>[427]</sup> Attorney David Boies, lead counsel for the Wultz family, told *The Wall Street Journal*, "While we are respectful of China's interests, and of the diplomatic pressure to which Israel has been subjected, those interests and that pressure cannot be permitted to obstruct the ability of American courts to hear critical evidence."<sup>[428][429]</sup>

In August 2013, Ros-Lehtinen, chair of the House Middle East and South Asia subcommittee, told the *Miami Herald* she raised the issue while leading a congressional delegation to Israel, stressing to Israeli officials the importance of them providing the Wultz family what they need for their lawsuit.<sup>[430]</sup> "I am hopeful that we can bring this case to a conclusion that is satisfactory to the family, but we need community support to not waver at this critical time," Ros-Lehtinen said.<sup>[430]</sup>

U.S. Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz, chair of the Democratic National Committee, also spoke out on the issue with the *Miami Herald*: "In South Florida, we all know too well of the tragic circumstances surrounding the cowardly terrorist attack that took Daniel Wultz's innocent life. I have been working, hand in hand with the Wultz family and the state of Israel to ensure any and all of those involved in this terrorist activity, including the Bank of China, pay for their crimes so that justice can be served."<sup>[430]</sup>

## Defense and security

In 2011, Netanyahu arranged for 1000 Hamas and Fatah prisoners to be swapped for Gilad Shalit, including terrorists with "blood on their hands".<sup>[431]</sup> Israeli officials estimate that 60% of those who are released "resume terrorism attacks".<sup>[432]</sup>

In 2011, Israeli General Staff concluded that the armed forces cannot maintain their battle readiness under Netanyahu's proposed cuts.<sup>[433]</sup> Netanyahu decided to cut social programs instead and promised to increase the defense budget by about six percent.<sup>[434][435]</sup> The Israeli military still fell NIS 3.7 million short from its projected budget, which could damage their war capabilities.<sup>[436]</sup> According to a U.S. State Department representative in November 2011, under the leadership of Netanyahu and Obama, Israel and the United States have enjoyed unprecedented security cooperation.<sup>[437]</sup>

Under Netanyahu's leadership, the Israeli National Security Council has seen an expanded role in foreign policy planning and decision-making.<sup>[438]</sup>

During the Gaza war he called for Israel to assume "overall security responsibility" over the Gaza Strip, saying "we've seen what happens when we don't have it [...] what we have is the eruption of Hamas terror on a scale that we couldn't imagine".<sup>[439][440]</sup>



Israelis in Ashkelon run for shelter following a missile alert during Operation Protective Edge

## Illegal immigration

In his 1995 book *Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies Can Defeat Domestic and International Terrorism*, Netanyahu strongly argued that tightening immigration laws in the West is the most effective method to combat terrorism. "This era of immigration free-for-all should be brought to an end", he wrote in 1995.<sup>[386]</sup>

In 2012, the Netanyahu government passed the "Prevention of Infiltration Law", which mandated automatic detention of all people, including asylum-seekers, who enter Israel without permission. Amnesty International called it "an affront to international law".<sup>[441][442]</sup> Between 2009 and 2013, approximately 60,000 people crossed into Israel from various African countries.<sup>[443]</sup> Netanyahu said that "this phenomenon is very grave and threatens the social fabric of society, our national security and our national identity."<sup>[444]</sup> Many of these migrants are held in detention camps in the Negev desert.<sup>[445]</sup> When the Supreme Court of Israel declared the "Prevention of Infiltration Law" illegal for permitting immediate and indefinite detention of asylum seekers from Africa, Netanyahu requested new legislation to work around the Supreme Court ruling.<sup>[446]</sup>

Netanyahu is critical of what he sees as the overly open immigration policy of EU nations. Netanyahu has urged the leaders of Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland to close their borders to illegal immigration.<sup>[447]</sup>

## Relations with foreign leaders

Serving as prime minister in three nonconsecutive periods since the 1990s,<sup>[448][449]</sup> he developed close relationships with foreign leaders. Netanyahu has a close relationship with Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, their having known each other for decades due to the privileged relationship

between the Likud Party and the EPP, the European People's Party. Orban particularly admired Netanyahu while he was working as finance minister, and received advice from him while Netanyahu was Finance Minister of Israel.<sup>[450]</sup>

Netanyahu has been noted for his close and friendly relationship with former-late Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.<sup>[451]</sup> Netanyahu has said of Berlusconi: "We are lucky that there is a leader such as yourself."<sup>[452]</sup> Netanyahu has described Berlusconi as "one of the greatest friends".<sup>[451][453]</sup>

Netanyahu and Indian prime minister Narendra Modi developed a close relationship and ties between India and Israel increased during their rule.<sup>[454][455][456]</sup>

Netanyahu had a warm relationship and "personal friendship" with Russian President Vladimir Putin.<sup>[457][458]</sup> In his 2022 book, Netanyahu wrote positively about Putin and describes him as "smart, sophisticated and focused on one goal – returning Russia to its historical greatness".<sup>[459]</sup> Their relationship has been strained since the start of the Gaza war.<sup>[460]</sup>

In early 2018, the Polish parliament adopted a new Polish law criminalizing suggestions that Poles were collectively complicit in Holocaust-related or other war crimes that had been committed during World War II by the Axis powers.<sup>[462][463]</sup> Later that year at the Munich Security Conference, Polish prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki said "it is not going to be seen as criminal to say that there were Polish perpetrators, as there were Jewish perpetrators ... not only German perpetrators" implicated in the Jewish Holocaust.<sup>[464]</sup> Netanyahu called his Polish counterpart's comment "outrageous" for saying that Jews had been among the Holocaust's perpetrators.<sup>[465]</sup> The resulting crisis in Israel–Poland relations was resolved in late June that year when the two prime ministers issued a joint communiqué endorsing research into the Jewish Holocaust and condemning the misnomer "Polish concentration camps".<sup>[466]</sup>

According to Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, during the visit of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in Jerusalem, Netanyahu failed to publicly address Ukraine's official policy of rehabilitating local Nazi collaborators like UPA leader Roman Shukhevych, who had participated in the murder of Jews.<sup>[467]</sup>

Netanyahu has developed a close relationship with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro following Bolsonaro's 2018 election.<sup>[468][469]</sup> Netanyahu has also developed a good relationship with Argentinian president Javier Milei, having called him a "great friend of the Jewish State", shortly after Milei started his presidential tenure.<sup>[470]</sup>



Netanyahu with Russian president Vladimir Putin at the 2018 Moscow Victory Day Parade. The two leaders have had a close relationship.



Netanyahu with Viktor Orbán and other V4 leaders at the V4-Israel summit in Budapest, Hungary on 19 July 2017



Since 2023, Netanyahu and Chinese President Xi Jinping have been engaged in diplomacy, arising due to strained ties between the US and Israel.<sup>[471]</sup> The diplomatic situation has been made complicated due to the Gaza war, where China has remained neutral.<sup>[472]</sup>

Netanyahu and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have tense relations.<sup>[473]</sup> In March 2019, after being denounced by Turkey as a racist for saying that Israel was the nation-state of the Jewish people only, Netanyahu called Erdoğan a dictator and mocked him for imprisoning journalists in a tweet.<sup>[474]</sup> In response, Erdoğan called Netanyahu as "the thief who heads Israel", referencing the ongoing corruption scandals against Netanyahu. In the same speech, Erdoğan further escalated the spat by addressing to Netanyahu directly, saying, "you are a tyrant. You are a tyrant who slaughters 7-year-old Palestinian kids",<sup>[474]</sup> and further in April 2018, calling Israel "terror state" and Netanyahu "terrorist".<sup>[475]</sup> Netanyahu tweeted that "Erdoğan is among Hamas's biggest supporters and there is no doubt that he well understands terrorism and slaughter."<sup>[476]</sup> Netanyahu condemned the 2019 Turkish offensive into north-eastern Syria and warned against ethnic cleansing of Kurds by Turkey and its proxies.<sup>[477]</sup>

## US leaders

Netanyahu has close ties with the congressional leadership of the U.S. Republican Party and with its 2012 presidential candidate, Mitt Romney. He and Romney first became acquainted when both worked at the Boston Consulting Group in the mid-1970s.<sup>[478]</sup>

During the 2011 G-20 Cannes summit, then-French president Nicolas Sarkozy was overheard saying to then-U.S. president Barack Obama, "I cannot bear Netanyahu, he's a liar", and Obama reportedly responded, "You're fed up with him, but I have to deal with him every day."<sup>[479][480]</sup>

In October 2014, author Jeffrey Goldberg related a conversation in which Goldberg said that a senior official of the Obama administration called Netanyahu a "chickenshit" after Netanyahu accused U.S. president Barack Obama of "acting contrary to American values". Goldberg went on to say that Netanyahu and his cabinet were largely to blame for the tensions between the Netanyahu and Obama governments.<sup>[183]</sup> Secretary of State John Kerry phoned Netanyahu to clarify that "such statements are disgraceful, unacceptable and damaging" and "do not reflect the position of the United States".<sup>[481]</sup> Netanyahu responded by saying



Netanyahu and Indian prime minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, India on 14 January 2018. The two leaders have had a close relationship.<sup>[461]</sup>



Netanyahu with Argentine president Javier Milei in Jerusalem, June 2025



Netanyahu with Joe Biden and Isaac Herzog, 18 October 2023

"I'm being attacked because of my determination to defend Israel's interests. The safety of Israel is not important to those who attack me anonymously and personally."<sup>[482]</sup> Because of evident rifts between Netanyahu and members of the Obama administration, observers have characterized the relationship as having reached a crisis level by October 2014.<sup>[483][183]</sup> The relationship between Netanyahu and the Obama administration had become problematic enough that Goldberg reported that his conversations with Netanyahu and other Israeli officials indicated that Israel would wait until after the 2016 presidential election before attempting to repair the relationship with the White House. According to Alon Pinkas, "Netanyahu's self-righteousness that this resolution is going to be changed or reversed by Trump is totally unfounded."<sup>[484]</sup>

On 23 December 2016, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution calling for an end to Israeli settlements.<sup>[485]</sup> In a departure from longstanding American policy, the U.S., under the Obama administration, abstained from the vote and did not exercise its veto power. At the behest of the Netanyahu government, President-elect Trump attempted to intercede by publicly advocating for the resolution to be vetoed, as well as successfully persuading Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to temporarily withdraw it from consideration.<sup>[486]</sup> The resolution was then "proposed again by Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela" – and passed 14 to 0. Netanyahu's office alleged that "the Obama administration not only failed to protect Israel against this gang-up at the UN, it colluded with it behind the scenes", adding: "Israel looks forward to working with President-elect Trump and with all our friends in Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to negate the harmful effects of this absurd resolution."<sup>[487][488][489]</sup>



Netanyahu and Donald Trump during the signing of the Abraham Accords on 15 September 2020

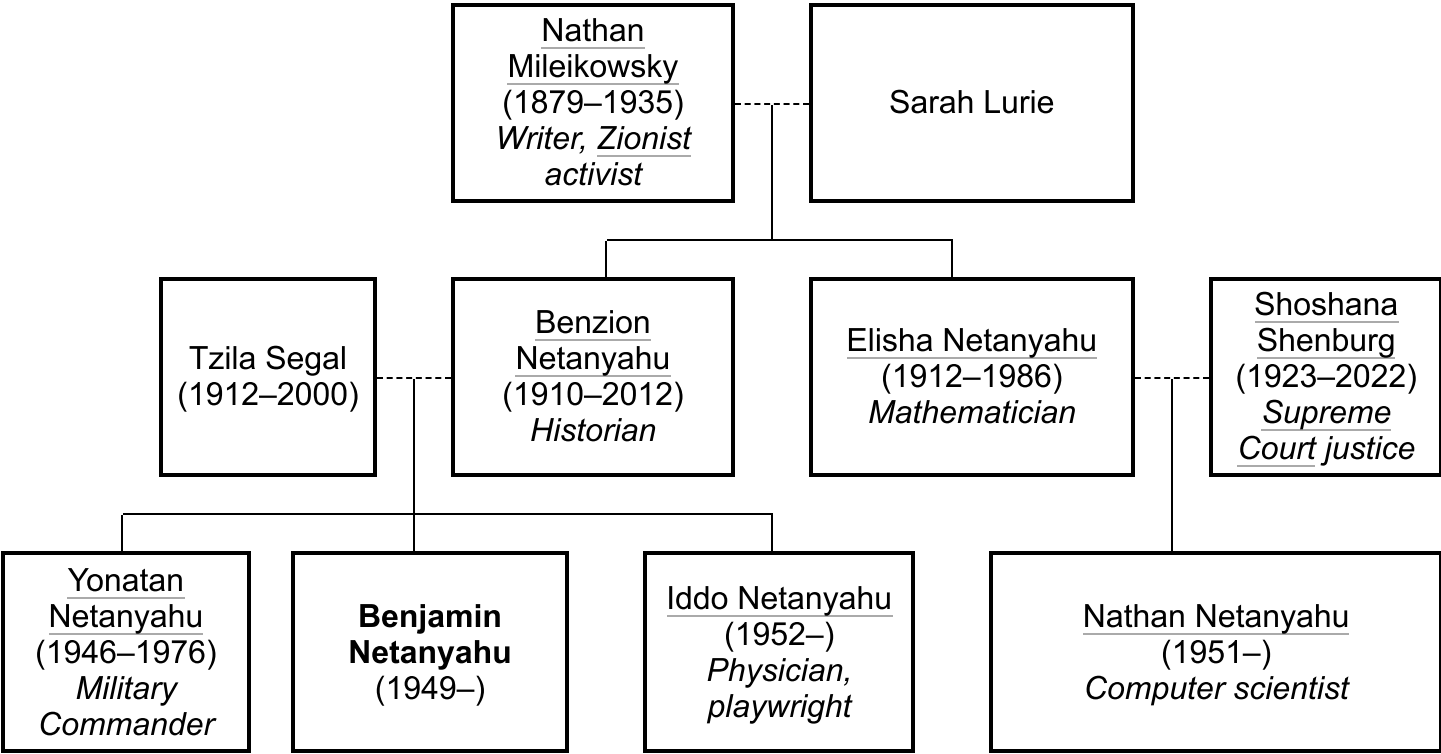
Netanyahu and U.S. president Donald Trump have known each other for many years.<sup>[490]</sup> Netanyahu had been a friend of Donald Trump's father, Fred, when Netanyahu lived in New York during the 1980s, serving as UN ambassador.<sup>[44]</sup> In 2013, Trump made a video endorsing Netanyahu during the Israeli elections saying, "vote for Benjamin – terrific guy, terrific leader, great for Israel". In June 2019, Netanyahu officially renamed a settlement in the disputed Golan Heights after Donald Trump.<sup>[491][492]</sup> However, Trump aide Jared Kushner has claimed that in January 2020, Trump became frustrated with Netanyahu's rhetoric regarding annexation of the Jordan Valley, and considered endorsing his political opponent, Benny Gantz.<sup>[493]</sup> Following Netanyahu's

congratulations for Joe Biden after the 2020 U.S. presidential election, the relationship deteriorated, with Trump accusing him of disloyalty and stating Netanyahu had "made a terrible mistake".<sup>[494]</sup>

U.S. president Joe Biden, a Democrat, has been friendly with Netanyahu for many years. In November 2011<sup>[495]</sup> and in the 2012 U.S. vice presidential debate,<sup>[496]</sup> Biden stated that the relationship has lasted for 39 years. In March 2010, Netanyahu remarked during a joint statement with Biden during his visit Israel that their friendship had started almost three decades prior.<sup>[497]</sup> During Spring 2024, the relationship between the two leaders had become strained over Israel's Rafah offensive.<sup>[498]</sup>

# Personal life

## Family tree



## Marriages and relationships

Netanyahu has been married three times and has been involved in multiple extramarital affairs. Netanyahu's first marriage was to Miriam Weizmann, whom he met in Israel. Weizmann lived near Yonatan Netanyahu's apartment in Jerusalem, where Netanyahu was based during his military service. By the time Netanyahu's service was finished, Weizmann had completed her own military service as well as a degree in chemistry from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1972, they both left to study in the United States, where she enrolled in Brandeis University, while Netanyahu studied at MIT. They married soon afterward. The couple had one daughter, Noa (born 29 April 1978).<sup>[499][500]</sup>

In 1978, while Weizmann was pregnant, Netanyahu met a non-Jewish British student named Fleur Cates at the university library, and began an affair. His marriage ended in divorce soon after Miriam discovered the affair. In 1981, Netanyahu married Cates, and she converted to Judaism.<sup>[387]</sup> After moving with Netanyahu to Israel, Cates sued for divorce in 1988.<sup>[387]</sup>



Netanyahu lighting Hanukkah candles on the first night in the prime minister's office in Jerusalem with his wife, Sara and their sons, Yair and Avner, 1996



His third wife, Sara Ben-Artzi, was working as a flight attendant on an El Al flight from New York to Israel when they met.<sup>[74]</sup> She was in the process of completing a master's degree in psychology.<sup>[501]</sup> The couple married in 1991. They have two sons: Yair (born 26 July 1991), a former soldier in the IDF Spokesperson's Unit,<sup>[502]</sup> and Avner (born 10 October 1994), a national Bible champion, winner of the National Bible Quiz for Youth in Kiryat Shmona, and former soldier in the IDF Combat Intelligence Collection Corps.<sup>[503][504]</sup>

In 1993, Netanyahu confessed on live television to having an affair with Ruth Bar, his public relations adviser. He said that a political rival had planted a secret video camera that had recorded him in a sexually compromising position with Bar, and that he had been threatened with the release of the tape to the press unless he quit the Likud leadership race. Netanyahu and Sara repaired their marriage, and he was elected to the leadership of Likud.<sup>[505]</sup> In 1996, the media reported that he had a 20-year friendship with Katherine Price-Mondadori, an Italian-American woman.<sup>[506]</sup>

## Health

Netanyahu has been suffering from right bundle branch block (RBBB) since around 2003.<sup>[507]</sup> In the first half of 2008, doctors removed a small colon polyp that proved to be benign.<sup>[508]</sup> On 22 July 2023, a pacemaker was implanted in his body.<sup>[509][510]</sup> A hernia was discovered on him in March 2024.<sup>[511]</sup> In December 2024, his prostate was removed following a urinary tract infection caused by an enlargement.<sup>[512]</sup>

His personal physician and close friend is the Romanian-born pediatricist Herman Berkovits.<sup>[513]</sup>

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Video clip about Benjamin Netanyahu by Israel News Company

## See also

- Trial of Benjamin Netanyahu
- Forbes* list of The World's Most Powerful People
- List of international prime ministerial trips made by Benjamin Netanyahu

- [List of Israeli politicians](#)

## Notes

- a. Pronounced /ˌnɛtənˈjɑːhuː/ *NET-ən-YAH-hoo*,<sup>[2]</sup> Hebrew: בִּנְיָמִין בִּיבִי, *romanized:* *Binyamin "Bibi" Netanyahu*, pronounced [bɪnjaˈmin nɛtanˈjaɦu] <sup>ⓘ</sup>

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512. Goldenberg, Tia (29 December 2024). "Israeli hospital says Netanyahu has undergone successful prostate surgery" (<https://apnews.com/article/netanyahu-israel-health-prostate-war-ffa0430d621307d34a673a0428ece945>). *Associated Press*. Retrieved 28 April 2025.
513. "Sănătatea premierului israelian stă în mâinile unui medic român" (<https://m.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/sanatatea-premierului-israelian-sta-in-mainile-unui-medic-roman-325112>). 23 November 2014.

## Further reading

- Caspit, Ben. *The Netanyahu Years* (2017) excerpt (<https://www.amazon.com/Netanyahu-Years-Ben-Caspit/dp/1250087058/>)
- Medzini, Meron. "Rabin and Hussein: From Enemies at War to Partners in Peace." in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) pp. 435–446.
- Anshel Pfeffer (2018). *Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu*, Basic Books. ISBN 978-0-465-09782-1
  - Jonathan Freedland, "Trump's Chaver in Jerusalem" (review of Anshel Pfeffer, *Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu*, Basic Books, 2018), *New York Review of Books*, vol. LXV, no 13 (16 August 2018), pp. 32–34.
  - Adam Shatz, "The sea is the same sea" (review of Anshel Pfeffer, *Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu*, Hurst, May 2018, ISBN 978-1-84904-988-7), *London Review of Books*, vol. 40, no. 16 (30 August 2018), pp. 24, 26–28.
- Remnick, David, "Hostages: As Benjamin Netanyahu clings to power, his country pays a price", *The New Yorker*, 22 January 2024, pp. 26–39. "[Netanyahu's] highest priority... appeared [to be] to shake free of a series of criminal corruption indictments; he had been charged with everything from accepting illegal gifts... to making a shady deal with a media baron to win favorable coverage.... Netanyahu reclaimed the one position that provided refuge from prosecution... At the end of 2022, he forged a hard-right coalition that allowed him to return as Prime Minister. He brought into the fold... reactionaries [who] endorse the full annexation of the West Bank and have recently called for the expulsion of Gaza's [Palestinian] population. Netanyahu also pushed a wildly contentious 'judicial reform' law [which] perhaps more than half the country... feared... would undermine the Supreme Court, the balance of powers, and democracy itself." (pp. 32–33.)

## External links

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- Official website (<https://www.netanyahu.org.il>) 
- Benjamin Netanyahu (<https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/MK/APPS/mk/mk-personal-details/90>) on the Knesset website
- Benjamin Netanyahu (<https://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/409922>) at the *Encyclopædia Britannica*
- Benjamin Netanyahu (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1386592/>) at IMDb
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?19242>) on C-SPAN
- Benjamin Netanyahu (<https://www.jpost.com/tags/benjamin-netanyahu>) collected news and commentary at *The Jerusalem Post*
- Benjamin Netanyahu (<https://www.haaretz.com/ty-tag/benjamin-netanyahu-0000017f-da33-d938-a17f-fe3ba7590000>) collected news and commentary at *Haaretz*
- "Shattered Dreams of Peace: The Road From Oslo" (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/shattered-dreams-of-peace/>). *Frontline*. Season 20. Episode 16. 27 June 2002. PBS. WGBH. Retrieved 13 March 2025.
- "Netanyahu at War" (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/netanyahu-at-war/>). *Frontline*. Season 34. Episode 1. 5 January 2016. PBS. WGBH. Retrieved 14 March 2025.
- "Netanyahu, America & the Road to Gaza" (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/netanyahu-america-the-road-to-war-in-gaza/>). *Frontline*. Season 42. Episode 9. 19 December 2023. PBS. WGBH. Retrieved 13 March 2025.

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