

'The Netanyahu Era is Over'

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's legal woes amplified on Wednesday after a powerful close confidant turned state's witness in the escalating corruption investigations.

The Israel Police had already recommended Netanyahu's indictment in the two investigations known as Case 1000 and Case 2000, which respectively accuse the prime minister of accepting bribes in return for political favors, and of making an underhanded deal for more favorable media coverage.

Earlier this week, Police officials surprised the nation by unveiling Case 4000, in which Netanyahu is suspected, among other things, of doing political favors for Israel's Bezeq telecommunications company in exchange for favorable coverage on the popular Walla! online news portal, which is owned by Bezeq's controlling shareholder.

The situation for Netanyahu turned grim overnight when Communications Ministry director-general Shlomo Filber turned state's witness in the case.

Filber was reportedly Netanyahu's deal-making man in the Bezeq scandal, and his testimony could land the prime minister in jail.

That being the case, Israel's opposition on Wednesday started ramping up for early elections.

"The events of the last two days and recent hours make very clear: The Netanyahu era is over," wrote Zionist Union (Labor) party chief Avi Gabbay. "We must prepare for an election soon."

However, the most recent public opinion polls still show that the left wouldn't necessarily benefit from new elections at this time.

A survey conducted on behalf of The Jerusalem Post revealed that if elections were held today, Likud would remain the largest party in the Knesset, followed by the centrist Yesh Atid, with Labor coming in third with just over half the seats of Likud.

The mix of smaller parties would remain more or less as it is today, meaning it

would still be easier to forge a right-wing coalition than a left-wing one.

Source: <http://www.israeltoday.co.il/Default.aspx?tabid=178&nid=33434>

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