

Netanyahu Government Dangerously Close to Collapse

The big news of the day in Israel on Sunday was how dangerously close Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is to collapse.

According to some sources within the coalition, Israel might have early elections as soon as June of this year.

The issue at hand is passing the national budget, which the ultra-Orthodox parties in Netanyahu's coalition are refusing to support unless the prime minister first pushes through legislation exempting Jewish seminary students from serving in the IDF.

"Secular" Israelis have long balked at the status quo that enables the religious sector to skirt the obligations and responsibilities carried by every other Israeli Jew.

The heads of the other parties in Netanyahu's coalition have vowed to never allow such "exemption" legislation to pass.

If the ultra-Orthodox parties were to revolt, the Opposition would presumably call for a vote of no-confidence in Netanyahu, which would pass with the backing of the religious factions, necessitating either the formation of a new government coalition, or early elections.

Complicating matters further is that Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon is threatening to pull his Kulanu Party out of the coalition if Netanyahu gives in to ultra-Orthodox "blackmail" and postpones the budget.

Netanyahu bemoaned that "there is no reason for us to go to early elections" over the question of ultra-Orthodox Jews doing military service.

But, Israel has gone to early elections over less in the past, and that appears to be where she's headed now.

"Israel will be headed to the polls within the coming months," announced Hadashot news (formerly Channel 2 News), estimating that the vote would take

place in June.

Netanyahu officially still has another year-and-a-half on his current term.

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