

Netanyahu, unfazed by indictment, vows to be Prime Minister for years

Netanyahu on corruption charges: "This house of cards will collapse."



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a press conference, February 28th, 2019.
(photo credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST)

Only the voters will decide if I remain in office, not bureaucrats, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said after Attorney-General Avihai Mandelblit announced on Thursday his intention to indict the premier on multiple charges of fraud and breach of trust, and one bribery charge, pending a hearing.

Netanyahu gave a very political speech from the Prime Minister's Residence in Jerusalem, focusing on the timing of the charges and arguing that they are meant to bring down the Right, repeatedly using the phrase "witch hunt."

The prime minister opened by talking about his recent meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and comments US President Trump made overnight Wednesday, calling him tough and smart. He argued that he and the Likud have made Israel stronger than ever before.

"These connections are not to be taken for granted," Netanyahu said. "The Left knows they cannot compete with these achievements in the voting booth, so they put massive pressure on the attorney general to indict even though there is nothing, in order to influence the elections and put the Left in charge."

Netanyahu expressed confidence that most voters won't be influenced by the announcement, but said that even if it influences a few not to vote for him, it will bring the Left to power.

"I've never seen the Left so happy...They're sewing suits" to wear because they expect to become ministers, Netanyahu said.

As for the timing, 40 days before the April 9 election, Netanyahu said "every citizen knows this is outrageous and meant to bring down the Right."

"I am not being given the chance to disprove [the accusations] until after the election – and I will disprove them all," he added.

Netanyahu appeared to choke up with tears when he talked about the "seven circles of hell" his family has been through in recent years. He specifically referred to an accusation that he tried to have an article about his son dating a non-Jewish Norwegian woman removed from Walla, saying: "What father wouldn't defend his son?"

"It all began when they accused my wife and me of six cases of bribery. It's a house of cards that will collapse. Five of those six cases already fell apart, and the rest will too. They'll be like dust. They won't be remembered," he said.

The prime minister also referred to a letter from American jurist and Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz, arguing that the charges dealing with relations between politicians and the media are a danger to democracy and that there is no precedent in the world of positive media coverage being considered a bribe.

"There are 2.5 friendly articles on the Walla website in a sea of articles," Netanyahu said. "I am the most vilified person in the history of Israeli media."

"If positive media coverage is a bribe, why didn't they even consider investigating Yair Lapid?" he asked.

"There are rules for everyone, and other rules for Netanyahu and the Likud. This whole house of cards will fall," he said.

Netanyahu said he has "the strength to stand up to this witch hunt" thanks to his family, his knowledge that the accusations are baseless, and support from Israelis.

"I plan to continue serving you as prime minister for many more years, but it's up to you, not the bureaucrats or the commentators and reporters. Don't let the witch hunt confuse you," Netanyahu concluded.

Sources:

<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Benjamin-Netanyahu/Netanyahu-The-Left-knows-they-cant-defeat-me-calls-cases-fake-582085>

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