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BIBI IN AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE POSITION

Netanyahu is not the leader he was

HELEN
SHARDEY



THE Jewish people's parliament, formally known as the World Zionist Congress with representatives from all over the Diaspora and Israel, has sent a strong message to the Netanyahu government in support of the huge number of Israelis opposed to its judicial overhaul policies and other legislation aimed at further discrimination against women, secular Israelis, the LGBTIQ community and Liberal/Reform/Conservative streams of Judaism in Israel today.

The resolutions presented to the Extraordinary World Zionist Congress that were supported by a majority of online voters were resolutions which:

- Called on the Netanyahu government not to amend the Law of Return,
- Sought the withdrawal of legislation against links between LGBTIQ communities in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora,
- Opposed Conservative and Reform conversions being revoked by Ultra-Orthodox authorities, and
- Called for the withdrawal of legislation to overhaul the judiciary.

The in-person Congress held in April attempted to vote on these anti-government resolutions but were stopped by the right-wing delegates using deliberate moves to delay the vote, which eventually did not take place.

The decision to offer all delegates, even those who were not in attendance in Jerusalem the opportunity to vote on these resolutions really backfired on the right-wing delegates who were trying to out-manoeuvre the non-Orthodox parties.

As a delegate representing ARZA Australia, I was not able to be in Israel at the time of the Congress but finished up voting online from Australia with the three other ARZA Australia delegates.



Israelis attend a protest against the government's judicial overhaul plans, in Tel Aviv, on June 17.

Photo: Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90

My later visit to Israel to attend the Connections conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism confirmed the sense of divisiveness in Israeli society resulting from the current government's threatened judicial overhaul and other legislation which would serve to destroy any sense of equality for Israeli society.

With each weekend I was in Jerusalem, the talk among so many was about attending the protest meetings on Saturday night after havdalah. There was a sense of real sadness, that Israel, the miracle of the Jewish people and Eretz Yisrael, had been reduced to so much fear. That the democratic state that had achieved so much and that Israelis are so proud of would dissolve into a theocracy and a nation of extremes.

I was pleased to be invited to the residence of the Israeli President Isaac Herzog during my stay with a group from the WUPJ and IMPJ. While it would be improper to quote the President, he did voice his concern over the tension in Israel and talked of his attempts to negotiate an agreement with all parties. One can only hope that he will be successful.

However, my own impression is that with the passing of the

budget the PM has felt empowered to move ahead with some of the Ultra-Orthodox policies, which at the end of the day could save him from facing legal proceedings. However, even this looks doubtful, as today it was reported that the Israeli prosecution is demanding that Netanyahu step down if he is wanting a plea deal.

He is really in an almost impossible position. Those ultra-right-wing parties Netanyahu has been forced into coalition with, and who support a judicial overhaul that he will benefit from, seem to think they can demand almost anything, even that which is abhorrent to the nation. How does he say "no"? And how does he put off the judicial overhaul while supposedly

negotiating with the President and Opposition parties?

It is my impression that this could all end up badly for a man who in his early days as the Prime Minister of Israel displayed so much strength and skill. He doesn't seem to be the leader he was. I don't think he now inspires. He may have to see the writing on the wall and do what is right for the sake of democracy and for the sake of Eretz Yisrael.

Am Yisrael Chai.

Helen Shardey is president of the Australian Reform Zionist Association, vice-president of the Union for Progressive Judaism, the World Union for Progressive Judaism representative to Executive Board and a former Victorian state MP.



Delegates at the WUPJ Connections conference visit the Knesset.

Photo: Facebook



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