



לשכת המזכיר הכללי
Office of the Secretary
General

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Dear Comrades,

In those days, in which the world is facing new challenges and a very different reality, we wish you, your relatives and your people good health and a fast recovery.

In light of this global crisis, and due to many requests we have gotten from different comrades - in particular regarding our intention to join an emergency unity government - We would like to share with you the political implications on the Israeli Labor Party derived both from the COVID crisis and the ongoing challenging political arena of Israel.

Here is some background information:

- Israel faced three subsequent general elections (April 2019, September 2019, March 2020).
 - April 2019 - With the establishment of B&W party, they become the solid alternative to the Likud party with Benjamin Gantz as its chairman and the clear candidate for prime minister. At this point we have lost (hopefully only temporarily) our historical position of a party with its leader as a candidate for prime minister.
 - September 2019 - After an internal primaries, MK Amir Peretz got elected as the party leader and set a clear social democratic agenda. He cooperated with MK Orly Levy in the purpose of transferring votes from the “light right” - a partially successful attempt that brought us about 2 mandates. With this act, 2 mandates which were originally “ours” went to the left, securing passing the threshold of Meretz party (as Democratic Camp). **Overall, the center-left camp has grown bigger.**
 - March 2020 - We have announced that Gantz is our candidate for prime minister. We were under a constant pressure from both B&W and Meretz parties to form a union (Labor-Gesher-Meretz). Even though every possible internal and external poll showed that the sum would be smaller than its parts - we acted responsibly, and formed a union with Meretz, in order to secure their pass of threshold, and not risking the possibility of forming a center-left government headed by Gantz. As expected, we have lost the 2 mandates of the “light right” voters from September elections, and ended up where we are today.

- The political debate during those three rounds of elections was focused primarily on the personal legal case of Benjamin Netanyahu, which did not allow any room for real ideological debate.
- As the Labor party, all of our campaigns were focused on social democratic agenda. We approached every possible matter as housing, education, health system, social insurance etc. Furthermore, we presented in-depth plans and real solutions in the spirit of Social Democracy (i.e governmental public housing for long term rent or sell with a leasing contract).
- We re-affirmed our commitment to the two state solution and our strive for peace.
- We announced just a few days before the elections that we will work towards the formation of a government headed by Gantz with the support of the Arab list, including appointing an Arab minister.
- We were the only party not only to put this suggestion on the table, but also to advance it actively in the days after the elections. Unfortunately, despite many genuine efforts including of Gantz himself, this did not materialise.
- During all 3 rounds of elections we have received unprecedented offers from Netanyahu, to join his government, with promises for major portfolios (such as ministry of finance) and even a rotation for Prime Minister. We did not even negotiated about it - standing in our promise that we will not be the ones rescuing Netanyahu, nor the ones who will allow a right wing only government.
- The COVID safety measures created a reality in which around 1 million Israelis are unemployed and the implications on the Israeli market and society are expected to be significant.

Based on those facts our alternatives were:

1. **To push for a forth elections**, taking into consideration that:
 1. We are decreasing from one election to another. Polls are predicting a huge success to the right wing with the possibility of the formation of a majority right-wing government.
 2. People are tired of over a year of political chaos - and will punish whoever actively pushing towards another elections.
 3. Elections have direct and indirect costs, which are hard to justify during a global health crisis.
 4. During the election period Netanyahu stays the “temporary” Prime Minister.

2. To be part of the opposition:

1. **The expected opposition would not be coherent or Homogeneous:** It will be lead by Yair Lapid who is a tacherist (actively opposing worker unions and worker's rights) combined with Moshe Yaalon, a true right-winger and a supporter of the "Greater Israel agenda", Avigdor Liberman who already stated that his party will support any annexation plan, 'Yamina' which is the extreme right party, the Arab list which are mostly not cooperative (based on historical experience) and Meretz. **Based on those facts it is hard to believe that we will be able to bring any achievements from the opposition, definitely not the prevention of emerging annexation plans.**
2. In this case we would be a **tiny, un-heard, un-effective and un-seen party** within the parliament and will have to financially struggle to survive.
3. We need to remember that **every portfolio that goes to the hands of the right wing is another field of influence against our values ideology.** Instead of leaving every possible office for our opponents, being part of the government will allow us to fight from within the government and to do our best to block undemocratic actions. In previous cases, for example when Tzipi Livni and Amir Peretz were ministers, we haven't seen such an excessive attack on rule of law, judicial system and such.

3. To join an emergency unity government with strict objectives and guidelines:

1. **"Paritetic" government** - meaning an equal distribution of ministers between Gantz block and Netanyahu's block. This means each block has a veto power to eliminate the other's actions when needed.
2. **We never negotiated with Netanyahu** - our only commitment and agreement is with Gantz, with the intention of cooperating closely in the future with his party (which is mostly formed out of ex-Labor active members and representatives). Including the formation of a joint fraction operating within the parliament, and a joint list running in future elections. An act that will allow us to re-gain our position as an alternative to the right wing and perhaps becoming a rolling party again.
3. **We put an expiration date on Netanyahu's head**, backed by a basic law, that will take him down from his position as PM in a year and a half, and to be replaced by Gantz.
4. **We will receive two major portfolios**, highly relevant for the execution of our Social Democratic agenda: MK Amir Peretz - Minister of Economy, Labor and Industry, and MK Itzik Shmuli - Minister of Social Welfare. Having those portfolios in the days after the

COVID crisis will allow us to be relevant, impactful and seen, in a way that will allow us to recover as a party for the future.

As you might have heard, we did choose option number 3 - to join an **emergency unity government**. In accordance to our party's constitution we have brought the agreement between our party and B&W to a vote on our party's congress - resulting the majority (64.2%) in favour of it. Participation level in this vote was in a pick of all times: 91% of the 3842 congress members have voted.

Here are some key points of the agreement between The Israeli Labor Party and Blue & White party:

- Both parties will cooperate in order to protect existing peace agreements, and to preserve security and diplomatic interests.
- Both parties will set a goal of raising the minimum wage to 6000NIS.
- Every decision of the government regarding organised labor, right to strike and right to cooperate will be made under the agreement of both parties.
- The government will reduce the amount of contract workers in the state's institutions, and work towards improving their social rights.
- Both parties will work towards a legislation securing free education from birth.
- Both parties will work towards raising the elderly pension to 3000NIS.
- Both parties will work to stop privatisation of welfare services.

About President Trump deal:

First, I would like to emphasize that the Israeli labor party has never abandoned its belief in the two state solution - based on negotiated peace agreement with the Palestinians. We believe such a peace is primarily an Israeli interest that will preserve the Jewish and Democratic characteristics of the state of Israel.

Second, here are some facts:

1. **Opposition vs Coalition** - today there is a majority in the Knesset for the execution of unilateral steps (such as annexation). Liberman's party, and 'Yamina' (the extreme right) will be part of the next opposition, and already stated that will support any annexation plan whatsoever.
2. **Fight from within** - Being part of the government, our voice against unilateral steps will be louder, and more effective. We would also be able to vote against annexation from within the government, and possibly breaking it apart when needed. Chairman Peretz will be a member

of the security cabinet, and with Gantz as minister of defence and MK Gabi Ashkenazi as minister of foreign affairs, they will be able to oppose unilateral steps.

3. **Eliminating private extremists plans** - both our agreement with B&W and B&W agreement with the Likud party mention the following terms:

1. The two prime ministers will promote peace agreements with all neighbouring countries, and advance regional cooperation.
2. The two prime ministers will work only with the full agreement of the US administration, including in mapping issues, and with international cooperation, for the purpose of preserving the strategical and security interests of Israel. Included in this: the need to preserve the regional stability, the previously signed peace treaties and the strive for future peace agreements.

In the government's basic lines, as published yesterday by Prime Minister Netanyahu, there is no mention to an annexation or execution of the trump's deal whatsoever. Following this publication of the basic lines document - the members of 'Yamina' (the party supported largely by the settlers) issued a letter calling members of other right wing parties to vote against the formation of the new government, calling it "a left-wing government headed by Netanyahu".

To summarise, we would like to express again our commitment to values of Peace, Equality and Freedom, to Itzhak Rabin's heritage, to the two state solution and to the preservation of the regional stability. We believe that our ability to raise those flags and advancing those issues from within a paritethic emergency unity government is greater than any alternative option, based on the forecasts and information we have today.

For many years we are part of international progressive alliances and organizations. During good and bad times we have been faithful and trusted partners. During those difficult and challenging times for our party, we need your solidarity, friendship and support. We sincerely hope that this letter shed some light on our current situation and decisions and we are personally available for further questions and clarifications.


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