

# Israel faces political realignment

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will quit the ruling far-right Likud Party he helped found in 1973 and run separately in early elections triggered by Labour's vote to withdraw from the ruling coalition



## "Arik" Party

Leader: **Ariel Sharon**

- Up to 14 of Likud's 40 lawmakers, including five cabinet ministers, are said to have agreed to join 77-year-old Sharon's new centrist party

- Veteran peacemaker and coalition ally **Shimon Peres** may join party

## Likud Party

Leader: *At least five Cabinet ministers will compete for leadership*

- Long champion of Jewish settlement on Arab lands captured in 1967 Middle East war

- Pullout from Gaza and part of West Bank earned Sharon many enemies in Likud Central Committee

## Labour Party

Leader: **Amir Peretz**

- Born in Morocco, 53-year-old Peretz wants to rebuild Labour into party appealing to young and immigrant voters

- Member of **Peace Now** – Israeli pacifist group that campaigns against settlement in Occupied Territories