Main contenders facing off in Israeli election

The election could reshape the country's political landscape, but neither Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's allies nor the opposition has a clear path to a governing majority, most polls suggest



Benjamin Netanyahu

- Israel's longest-serving prime minister; leads ***Likud*** party
- Has held power by allying with ultra-Orthodox and far-right parties
- Faces ICC arrest warrant over alleged war crimes
- Also faces trial on corruption charges, which he denies



Gadi Eisenkot

- Former IDF chief of staff (2015-19); founded ***Yashar*** in 2025, leads most polls
- Quit Netanyahu's war cabinet in 2024, citing lack of Gaza strategy
- Hawkish on security; campaigns for state inquiry into Oct 7 failures
- Eisenkot lost his soldier son in first months of Gaza war



Bezalel Smotrich

- Ultranationalist finance minister; leads ***Religious Zionist*** party, which is running on joint ticket with far-right ***Zehut***, led by ***Moshe Feiglin***



Itamar Ben-Gvir

- National security minister, convicted in 2007 of incitement to racism against Arabs; leads ultranationalist ***Jewish Power*** party; influential figure in Netanyahu's coalition



Naftali Bennett

- Former prime minister (2021-22); co-leads centre-right ***Together*** list with fellow former prime minister ***Yair Lapid***



Mansour Abbas

- Knesset member; leads Islamist ***Ra'am*** party, which hopes to win enough seats to hold balance of power



Yair Golan

- Former IDF deputy chief; leads left-wing ***Democrats***; unlike Jewish opposition allies, openly backs Arab parties joining coalition to oust Netanyahu

Sources: CFR, AP, FT Pictures: Getty Images, Yahav Studio, Knesset Archives © GRAPHIC NEWS