

HAARETZ, 21.2.23: **Majority of Israelis Opposed to Netanyahu Government's Judicial Overhaul.**

Poll Shows New survey reveals 66 percent of Israelis believe the High Court should retain the power to strike down legislation incompatible with the country's quasi-constitutional Basic Laws. Despite Likud politicians' assertion that their wide-ranging and unprecedented judicial overhaul is an expression of the popular will, a majority of Israelis – including significant minorities of voters for the current coalition – are opposed to efforts to undermine the independence of the courts.

A full 66 percent of Israelis believe that the High Court should retain the power to strike down legislation incompatible with the country's quasi-constitutional Basic Laws, while 63 percent believe that the current method of choosing judges should be maintained, according to a new poll conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute, a think tank, earlier this month.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition has said that it intends to enact legislation that would permit the Knesset to override Supreme Court decisions by a very slim majority of 61 votes in the 120-seat parliament, as well as legislation to tip the balance on the Judicial Appointments Committee in favor of politicians.

These numbers are a clear sign of growing opposition to the reforms. A previous survey, also conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute in the wake of last November's election, found that only 54 percent of those surveyed held such a view. Breaking news and analyses delivered to your inbox Click Here Last month, Justice Minister Yariv Levin declared these reforms a "clear expression of the people's democratic choice" while Netanyahu contended on Monday that those protesting the controversial legislation were "trampling democracy" and had failed to accept the results of November's election.

However, many who cast votes for the current coalition are actually against its judicial agenda, with 47 percent of Likud voters, 38 percent of Religious Zionism voters, 42 percent of Shas voters and 38 percent of United Torah Judaism voters indicating that they oppose passing an override law. Similarly, 40 percent of Likud voters, 37 percent of Religious Zionism voters, 57 percent of Shas voters and 23 percent of United Torah Judaism voters are against changing the composition of the Judicial Selection Committee in order to give the coalition a majority. The right has long opposed the current method of selecting judges, which is controlled by a Judicial Appointments Committee composed of nine members, with representation from the Supreme Court, the Knesset, the cabinet and the Israel Bar Association.

The support of seven members of the committee, which is headed by the justice minister, is required to confirm a candidate for the Supreme Court. Israel's second upheaval There can be no dialogue on democracy with far-right hitmen Judaism and democracy are not enemies: Why religious Zionists are joining the protests In addition, 58 percent of Israelis indicated that they oppose the Likud's proposal to make the legal advisors to ministries political appointments while 53 percent agreed that "a politically-dependent judicial system would harm Israel's economy."

Moreover, despite the failure of the government and opposition parties to sit down and hammer out a compromise, 60 percent of coalition voters, and 72 percent of Israelis overall, support holding such a dialogue. Warning that "we are moments from a crash, perhaps even a violent one," President Isaac Herzog last Sunday outlined a compromise plan and called on both sides to sit and discuss their differences.

However, leaders of Israel's opposition parties, citing their opponents' unwillingness to temporarily stop pushing its legislation through the Knesset in order to sit down and talk, rejected compromise or dialogue with the government on Monday. „The government is putting up for a first vote two bills to abolish democracy in Israel," opposition leader Yair Lapid said on Monday, accusing the coalition of "blocking any attempt at dialogue while they continue to run amok with hasty and irresponsible legislation."