# Netanyahu faces coalition collapse over ultra-Orthodox military exemptions amid Gaza war



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is at a critical juncture, facing a vote to dissolve parliament that could signify a dramatic shift in his coalition government. As tensions mount within his ruling alliance, particularly concerning the contentious issue of military service exemptions for the ultra-Orthodox community, Netanyahu must navigate an increasingly fragile political landscape. Key partners in his coalition have threatened to withdraw their support if new legislation exempting them from military service is not enacted, a challenge that has escalated amidst the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

The dynamics of Israeli society complicate the situation significantly. Currently, about 13% of Israelis are ultra-Orthodox, who have historically received exemptions from compulsory military service, enabling many to pursue religious studies instead. This exemption was originally designed to support a small number of scholars following the devastation of Jewish communities during the Holocaust. However, its expansion has led to growing resentment among the secular population, especially during the current war, which has seen the Israeli military mobilising reservists in unprecedented numbers since the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Following the Hamas-led attack on October 7, 2023, the Israeli Defence Forces activated around 360,000 reservists, stretching military resources to their limits.

Recent reports indicate that the ultra-Orthodox community’s enlistment rates remain low, with less than 10% of eligible individuals joining the military, despite significant social pressure since the onset of the war. Observers note a lack of motivation for many in this demographic to serve, as concerns about their religious upbringing outweigh national duty. Rabbi Ephraim Luft from Bnei Barak articulated this sentiment, suggesting that enforcing military service threatens the essence of their identity. The socio-political implications of this exemption issue are profound, as it underlines a fracture in Israeli society regarding the expectations of civic duty versus religious observance.

The backdrop of the proposed parliamentary dissolution is further complicated by Netanyahu's handling of the ongoing conflict and public opinion surrounding his government. Discontent among voters has grown, with polls suggesting that his right-wing coalition would struggle to secure a majority in fresh elections. Netanyahu's silence amid coalition turmoil has raised speculation about his strategic manoeuvring; many analysts believe he might negotiate a last-minute agreement to stave off the dissolution vote. However, given that multiple factions within the coalition have expressed readiness to abandon the government unless their demands are met, the likelihood of survival appears slim.

Should parliament be dissolved, the subsequent process would likely prove cumbersome, dragging on through numerous bureaucratic hurdles. Political scientists predict this could lead to months of uncertainty, during which the existing coalition might continue to govern in a state of limbo. Netanyahu’s leadership, though tested, is characterised by a history of resilience amidst crises, yet the current state of affairs reveals a coalition at risk of fracturing under internal pressures and public scrutiny.

The implications of these tensions extend beyond the legislative chambers of the Knesset; they have the potential to impact Israel's military strategy and its handling of the Gaza conflict. As Netanyahu continues to advocate for unity among Israelis during this time of war, the threat of coalition collapse looms large. Observers note that if ultra-Orthodox parties withdraw from the coalition, the government's ability to effectively respond to security challenges could be severely compromised.

The challenges facing Netanyahu and his government echo broader themes within Israeli society about the balance between military service and religious exemption. As discussions around the military draft continue, both the demands of an ongoing war and the socio-political realities are now more intertwined than ever, threatening to reshape the fabric of Israel’s governance and society.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/benjamin-netanyahu-israel-jewish-israelis-hamas-b2767456.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/5bb3b23b3a85ac94e4a095d77106db48)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/benjamin-netanyahu-israel-jewish-israelis-hamas-b2767456.html), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/pressure-mounts-netanyahu-opposition-moves-dissolve-parliament-2025-06-04/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/f916f22c-9b51-42ae-8ccd-1fbc886c104c)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://apnews.com/article/21b03570632662cce175e47097665c66), [[6]](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2024/06/netanyahu-government-coalition-israel-war/678785/?utm_source=apple_news)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/06/10/israel-netanyahu-and-his-extremist-allies-alone-in-power-after-benny-gantz-leaves-government_6674345_4.html)
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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/benjamin-netanyahu-israel-jewish-israelis-hamas-b2767456.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/5bb3b23b3a85ac94e4a095d77106db48> - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces a critical vote on dissolving parliament, spurred by conflicts within his ruling coalition over the contentious military draft exemption for the ultra-Orthodox community. The exemption, a long-standing and divisive issue, has gained urgency amid Israel’s prolonged war in Gaza and a significant drop in military reserve enlistments. Ultra-Orthodox parties, pivotal to Netanyahu’s coalition, are threatening to break ranks if a new exemption law is not passed. Despite the threats, many analysts expect Netanyahu to negotiate a last-minute deal to prevent the vote from passing. The ultra-Orthodox community, constituting approximately 13% of the population, has historically avoided military service through religious study exemptions—originally limited to a few scholars but now numbering in the tens of thousands. With the Supreme Court deeming these exemptions illegal in 2017 and no replacement law enacted, internal pressure is mounting. The dissolution vote, if passed, initiates a prolonged bureaucratic process and could destabilize the coalition, potentially impacting both the war in Gaza and efforts to resolve the ongoing hostage crisis. The situation underscores growing tensions between national security demands and religious political interests in Israel.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/pressure-mounts-netanyahu-opposition-moves-dissolve-parliament-2025-06-04/> - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces mounting political pressure as an opposition movement, spearheaded by Yesh Atid and its leader Yair Lapid, seeks to dissolve parliament next week. This motion, requiring 61 votes in the 120-member Knesset, threatens Netanyahu's grip on power, especially as recent polls indicate his right-wing coalition would likely lose an election. Internal coalition tensions have surged, particularly over demands by United Torah Judaism, an ultra-Orthodox party with seven seats, for formal exemptions from military service for yeshiva students. Without these concessions, the party threatens to back the dissolution motion. Netanyahu's coalition, composed of secular and ultra-Orthodox factions, holds an eight-seat majority, but the military exemption issue has long been a point of contention. Critics argue that blanket exemptions are no longer acceptable, and any decision risks alienating either secular or religious supporters. Netanyahu has remained silent amid the political turmoil. He also faces public criticism over his handling of the October 2023 Hamas attack and the ongoing Gaza war. Even if ultra-Orthodox members resign in protest, analysts say the government might still survive. Nonetheless, with political instability growing, Netanyahu’s leadership is increasingly under threat.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/f916f22c-9b51-42ae-8ccd-1fbc886c104c> - Israel's opposition has introduced a motion to dissolve the Knesset and trigger early elections amidst a rift in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition. The conflict centers on a controversial proposal to conscript ultra-Orthodox Jewish men, or haredis, into the military, ending their long-standing exemption. The opposition’s move comes as key ultra-Orthodox parties, which provide 18 of the coalition’s 68 seats, have boycotted parliamentary votes in protest, impairing the government’s ability to govern effectively. These tensions have prompted threats from Haredi leaders to withdraw support, which could collapse the coalition. Netanyahu faces pressure both from within his right-wing base and the Israeli public, who largely support mandatory military service for all. A Supreme Court ruling deemed the exemption unconstitutional, especially amid ongoing military engagements in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria. Despite ongoing negotiations to resolve the issue, political analysts are skeptical the coalition can maintain unity. Polls indicate the ruling coalition would perform poorly in new elections, potentially enabling the opposition to form a new government without Haredi support. The initial vote on the dissolution motion is set for next week, but could be withdrawn if the opposition lacks sufficient backing.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/21b03570632662cce175e47097665c66> - Hundreds of ultra-Orthodox men blocked a major intersection in Jerusalem, causing significant disruptions to traffic and public transportation. The protest stemmed from attempts to enforce mandatory military draft compliance on a community member. The demonstrators halted light rail service and backed up traffic for blocks by forming a large circle, singing, dancing, and praying. This demonstration highlights the ongoing conflict over Israel’s compulsory military service policy. Ultra-Orthodox parties, influential in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, have historically secured exemptions for their communities to allow men to study in religious seminaries, causing resentment among the secular majority. As the government works on a new draft law, ultra-Orthodox parties seek to reinforce these exemptions, while opponents argue they are unfair and should be abolished. The immediate trigger for the protest was the arrest of a young ultra-Orthodox man for refusing to register with the army, a requirement even for those exempted from service.
6. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2024/06/netanyahu-government-coalition-israel-war/678785/?utm_source=apple_news> - Benjamin Netanyahu's government in Israel appears to be heading towards an early election amid rising political tension and public dissatisfaction. The coalition is fragmenting, with senior military and civil-service figures openly clashing with Netanyahu, who is dealing with renewed scandal over a submarine-procurement deal. Compounding his troubles, Israel's supreme court has declared the long-held draft exemption for ultra-Orthodox men illegal, straining Netanyahu's coalition. Netanyahu's unpopular handling of the war has also led to Benny Gantz's departure, further destabilizing the government. Although general support for the war exists, Netanyahu's continued leadership is in jeopardy due to increasing internal and external pressures. Various potential successors, such as Naftali Bennett and Avigdor Lieberman, are seeing their popularity rise as Netanyahu's government edges closer to collapse.
7. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/06/10/israel-netanyahu-and-his-extremist-allies-alone-in-power-after-benny-gantz-leaves-government_6674345_4.html> - General Benny Gantz left Israel's unity government on June 9, 2024, frustrated by his diminishing influence and the government's paralysis. Gantz had joined the government post-Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, supporting war efforts in Gaza and on the Lebanese border. His departure leaves Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing and religious coalition, which holds 64 out of 120 parliamentary seats, firmly in power. Gantz now plans to pressure the government from the streets, criticizing Netanyahu for prolonging the conflict for personal political gain. The War Cabinet, created to exclude extremists, now faces dissolution, allowing Netanyahu to make military decisions with fewer checks. Gantz's exit is a blow to US expectations for moderating Israel's approach, potentially leading to a more hardline government less open to ceasefires with Hamas. Despite calls for elections, Netanyahu remains politically resilient, though public and political dissatisfaction persist.