# Netanyahu and Shin Bet chief clash intensifies as democratic checks face challenge



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accused Ronen Bar, head of the Shin Bet domestic security agency, of outright falsehoods in a sworn affidavit submitted to Israel’s supreme court. The affidavit, filed on Sunday, came as a response to serious but politically charged allegations by Bar concerning Netanyahu’s conduct with the powerful spy agency—a situation that should alarm those wary of unchecked government power.

Last week, Bar claimed that Netanyahu demanded personal loyalty amid a looming constitutional crisis over judicial independence. Bar further alleged that the prime minister sought to weaponize the Shin Bet’s extensive authorities to monitor anti-government protesters and to interfere in his ongoing corruption trial under the guise of security concerns. Such claims, if true, raise deep questions about the abuse of security services to stifle political dissent—a tactic often endorsed by those clinging to power.

Netanyahu’s affidavit vehemently rejected these accusations, dismissing them as “lies and contradictions.” He portrayed Bar as trying to cast himself as a champion of the rule of law while, in reality, justifying his own misconduct. Netanyahu insisted he never ordered the Shin Bet to monitor peaceful protesters but only to act against extremists inciting violence. On the surface, this distinction seems convenient, dodging accusations of suppressing lawful dissent—a tactic increasingly common in authoritarian-leaning administrations.

Regarding the claim that he sought Shin Bet assistance to halt his corruption trial, Netanyahu denied it outright, instead framing security measures as a response to a Hizbollah drone attack on his residence in October 2023. The trial was subsequently moved underground, where the prime minister testified. However, critics should bear in mind that convenient reinterpretations of security threats have often been exploited by governments to advance their political agendas unchallenged.

While Netanyahu did not flatly deny asking for loyalty pledges ahead of a confrontation with the supreme court, his affidavit insisted the evidence provided by Bar showed “no trace” of such demands. This kind of equivocation further fuels concerns over the blurring of security and political interests—something the government controlling power often does to undermine democratic checks.

This legal battle unfolds amid heightened tensions between Netanyahu’s government and Israel’s judicial institutions. When the government dismissed Bar last month citing a “loss of confidence,” it triggered a supreme court injunction halting the removal pending legal scrutiny. This is a classic example of a government attempting to consolidate control over security apparatuses while diminishing judicial oversight—a dangerous trend seen in many democracies under threat.

Netanyahu also openly criticized the court, questioning why he should “engage in an affidavit competition” with a dismissed civil servant. This dismissive attitude toward judicial processes reflects a broader governmental disrespect for independent institutions that should alarm observers committed to democratic integrity.

Most strikingly, Netanyahu’s affidavit sought to shift blame onto Bar for the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack, calling it “the largest intelligence failure in Israeli history.” Netanyahu accused Bar of bearing “direct and enormous responsibility” for not preventing the massacre—the deadliest in recent memory. Yet Netanyahu himself, who has been in power for much of the last sixteen years, has steadfastly refused to accept his own role in the failure and has resisted calls for a national inquiry. This attempt to scapegoat intelligence leadership while deflecting personal accountability typifies political self-preservation tactics over genuine leadership.

The supreme court now faces a seminal decision: whether the prime minister has the authority to dismiss the Shin Bet chief. This case is emblematic of the ongoing struggle between autocratic tendencies within the government and the need for robust, impartial checks and balances.

In nations where government overreach has become routine, voices have arisen demanding restoration of lawful governance and protection of freedoms—calling for a clear stand against the use of security agencies as political tools. These are the very principles being undermined in Israel’s current showdown, echoing concerns raised by conservative opposition figures who warn that unchecked political power leads to erosion of democratic freedoms and justice.

The unfolding saga is a stark reminder that the preservation of judicial independence and the clear separation of national security from partisan politics are essential to safeguarding democracy—not just in Israel but worldwide.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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