

Olmert: I have no intention to return to politics, will remain Kadima member

Former prime minister's remarks come two days after he was acquitted of two of his three corruption trials; Olmert: 2006 Lebanon war began when Israel lost its deterrence in 2000.

By Gili Cohen and Jonathan Lis

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Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said on Thursday that he has no intention to return to politics, days after [he was acquitted](#) on two of three counts of corruption, adding that he would remain a member of the Kadima party and would not move to form another political entity.

On Tuesday, Jerusalem District Court president Moussia Arad headed the panel of judges that found Olmert not guilty of the charges in the Rishon Tours and Talansky affairs, however convicted him in one count – breach of trust – in the Investment Center affair. Accusations over the Talansky affair led to Olmert's forced resignation as prime minister.

In response to the court's decision, the former prime minister said after the trial, "There was no corruption, there were no envelopes of money." He said he would learn from the breach of trust charge he had been found guilty, which he added was based on a failure to follow procedure, not corruption.

The acquittal fueled rumors of Olmert's possible return to politics, after being forced to step down as premier in 2008 over the corruption allegations.

Referring to the possibility of his return, Olmert said at a conference of the [Institute for National Security Studies](#) on Thursday: "I read in the past two days about my political plans. I want to calm you down – I don't have plans to go back to politics."

"I am not involved in politics. I deal with other issues and nothing else. I don't have a shelf party – I am a member of Kadima," he added.

Olmert also referred to the Second Lebanon War in 2006, for which he was criticized as the prime minister at the time, saying that the "Second Lebanon war started in 2000 when we didn't react to the kidnapping of our soldiers. We lost the deterrence."

The former premier was thus referring to the kidnapping of three IDF soldiers near the Lebanese border in 2000.

However, Speaking on the eve of his acquittal, Olmert indicated that [he did have political aspirations](#), reportedly saying to his associates that he will "return to political life and run for prime minister."

"I'm the only politician who can run as a candidate for the center bloc. There's no one else there - neither Shaul Mofaz nor Yair Lapid nor Shelly Yacimovich [can do it]," he said.

However, Lapid's Yesh Atid party denied on Thursday that the would-be politician had any intention to team up with Olmert, citing the former premier's membership in Kadima as reason.

"Ehud Olmert is a family member, and I'm happy for his acquittal," Lapid said in a statement, adding, however, that the two "were not running for an elections together, and any publication on the matter is fabricated nonsense, or worse – an attempt by interested people to hurt Yesh Atid."

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