



The Israel-U.S. Relationship in Face of the Judicial Controversy

Israel has set clear boundaries for the Biden administration, demonstrating that foreign interference with Israeli internal affairs will not be accepted in the future.

by Zaki Shalom Sophia Schmidt / May 1, 2023

In recent weeks Israel has been facing its most severe internal political and judicial crisis in recent times. At the center of it stands a controversial judicial reform aiming to weaken the power of the supreme court in the national decisionmaking process.

The country's supreme court is regarded by many Israelis as a beacon of liberal human rights. Yet others see it as an undemocratic institution with too much power. The judicial reform put forward by the government included plans to curtail the power of the judiciary in several ways, including:

1. Merely requiring a simple majority in the Knesset (Israel's parliament) to overrule court decisions;
2. Increasing the government representation on the committee which appoints the supreme court judges;
3. Canceling the legal requirements that ministers have to obey the advice of legal advisers, guided by the attorney general.

The reaction to the proposed reform has been unprecedented in Israeli history: massive protests took place across the country, with as many as 200,000 people flooding the streets in Tel Aviv and over 500,000 countrywide; a countrywide strike was called out by Israel's Histadrut trade union; and as many as 750 reservists of the Israeli Defense Forces stopped answering their call-ups for training. Reserve and military officers from Israel's Military Intelligence Special Operations Division warned in an open letter the "legislation in question will destroy everything we have served and fought for.

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