

Bibi will try for Supreme Court veto if he wins, says analyst

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AFTER Israel's March 23 election, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could build a coalition between Likud and ultra-Orthodox parties with the aim of diluting the Supreme Court's powers, an Israeli journalist has told an Australian audience.

Addressing Monday's launch of the United Israel Appeal (UIA) Progressive Appeal at Emanuel Synagogue in Sydney and online, Amir Tibon, a senior editor with *Haaretz*, speaking from Israel, said Netanyahu, who for much of his career had defended the court's independence, has changed tactics to survive politically in light of criminal indictments he faces over allegations of bribery, and other charges.

"He now supports the ultra-Orthodox demand to allow the Knesset to overrule the Supreme



Amir Tibon addressing the UIA Progressive Appeal launch.

Photo: Screenshot

Court," said Tibon, foreshadowing that if Netanyahu and the religious parties should win a majority, he would try to pass legislation retroactively overturning his indictments. However, he must anticipate this law would be struck down by the Supreme Court.

"And that is when Netanyahu wants to pass a law in the Knesset that allows the smallest Knesset majority of 61 seats to overrule Supreme Court decisions," said

Tibon, describing this as "something that no other candidate for prime minister in Israel has ever offered before and hopefully will ever offer in the future".

A Knesset veto on Supreme Court decisions is highly dangerous, the Israeli journalist argued, imperilling landmark rulings such as the recent decision that converts to Judaism through Israel's Reform/Progressive and Conservative movements are Jewish and entitled to become citizens, as well as rulings on the rights of women and minorities.

After Benny Gantz balked at weakening the Supreme Court, Netanyahu's willingness to do that has won him the longer-term loyalty of Charedi parties. These parties were formerly transactional "kingmakers", said Tibon, prepared to consider aligning with a range of prospective coalition partners, rather than putting Israel through

the turmoil of its fourth election since early 2019, with a fifth election possible by mid-year.

Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ) co-president David Knoll said there are now almost 150 Progressive and Masorti congregations in Israel and 13 per cent of Israelis surveyed said they identify with Progressive Jewish movements. UIA Progressive Appeal donations foster initiatives such as pre-army programs, legal advocacy for pluralism, and establishing new Israeli Progressive community centres.

Late next month, the UPJ will host a visit and an in-person address by former Sydneysider Nicole Maor, director of the Legal Aid Centre for Olim at the Israel Religious Action Centre in Jerusalem. Maor, a lawyer, has represented the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism in key cases before Israel's Supreme Court.