

Sept. 18, 2008

Israeli Government in Transition

Members of Israel's Kadima Party on Sept. 17 elected Foreign Minister Tzipi Livi as the new head of the party. She will replace current Party leader Ehud Olmert, who is resigning his post as both leader of the party and prime minister. The selection of a new Kadima leader sets into motion a series of steps that will ultimately lead to the selection of a new prime minister and the formation of a new government. Below is an outline of the process by which a new government will likely be formed.

Resignation of the Prime Minister

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert previously announced he would resign upon the election of a new Kadima party leader. Under the Basic Law—Israel's version of a constitution—the entire government is also deemed to have resigned along with the prime minister. Despite the use of the term “resignation,” the prime minister and the government will continue to serve in an acting capacity until a new government can be constituted.

Formation of a New Government

President Shimon Peres upon the prime minister's resignation has seven days to assign the task of forming a new government to a member of the Knesset—Israel's parliament. Peres is widely expected to assign the task to Livni.

Livni will then have a period of 28 days to form a government with a possible extension of 14 days. If a government is not formed in the allotted timeframe, Peres may assign the task of forming a government to another Knesset member.

If Livni or another member of Knesset succeeds in forming a new governing coalition, that person will become Prime Minister. Under this scenario, national elections will be held as scheduled in 2010 and the current Knesset will continue to serve until that time.

Possibility for New Elections

If no member of Knesset is able to form a government, Peres will notify the speaker of the Knesset and new national elections will be scheduled.

Elections will be held on the last Tuesday before the end of a 90 days period starting with the president's notification that a new government cannot be formed or a vote of confidence in a proposed government fails. Olmert and the government will continue to serve throughout the formation of a new government and elections if needed.

Upon the completion of the new election Peres will assign the task of forming a new government to a member of the Knesset and the process of forming a new government will begin once again.