

Israeli Politics an Expression of Vibrant Democracy

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As a dual Canadian-Israeli citizen, it was my honour to have had the opportunity to cast my vote for Israel's next prime minister and government. In fact, it was rather exciting to debate the issues with countless Israelis, as the options weighed on me and on the Israeli citizens who reside here.

Just before the election, I visited Rabin Square. I touched the very spot where Rabin was assassinated because of his peace initiatives. Politics in Israel are very personal.

For nearly every Israeli I spoke with, I sensed a pressing need for change, – a change that Canadians may not completely comprehend. Our perspective on Israel is focused on security and survival concerns. Many Israelis, – though they value their own security, are apprehensive about their social welfare as well.

Indeed, just two years ago I witnessed massive demonstrations in Tel Aviv by young educated professionals who called for a social change in Israel. They were tired of the high cost of living, about the unaffordability of housing, about poverty and unemployment, about corruption and, most significantly, about successive governments who have ignored these issues.

I too began experiencing the pressure most Israelis were feeling about casting my vote for the future of the country. Should my primary concern be about safety and security? About the economy and social welfare? Or about the peace process? Should I vote Hard Left, Soft Left, Extreme Right, Centre Right, Religious, Secular or Centrist?

With more than two dozen parties to choose from and so many important issues, it was little wonder that nearly every Israeli I spoke with did not know who they were voting for before they got to the polling station.

I predicted in the [Canadian Jewish News](#) last week that Benjamin Netanyahu would win because

for Israelis, safety comes first. Indeed, the matter of Iran will continue to play a dominant role. But he will also have to listen to the plight of the people on issues of social welfare.

As the final votes were tallied and Netanyahu emerged as the clear winner, the jockeying for positions in the next government, likely to be a coalition of Right and Centre Right parties, had already begun.

But one thing is for certain: Israel's democracy is more vibrant than ever and its citizens and politicians – no matter where they fall on the political spectrum – are committed to their homeland and to serving their country.

I can tell you. I was there.