

The False Narratives Playbook

Disinformation and Illegitimate
Propaganda in Israel's 2026 Election



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Chen Egri

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June 2026

Introduction

Israel is in an election year, and the campaigns of the various parties and candidates are already underway. Election propaganda has always included smears, lies, and attempts at delegitimization, but in the current era, these tactics seem to be taking over political discourse. We have reached a point where they pose a real and tangible threat to the very possibility of fair democratic elections. Alongside them comes a murky flood of harmful and illegitimate rhetoric, pushing its way from the margins of public debate into the mainstream and undermining the democratic logic itself.

As early as 2024, the World Economic Forum identified misinformation and disinformation as the most severe short-term global risk facing the world. “Information disconnected from facts – and from any conception of truth – changes the fate of countries and their citizens,” its experts warned (World Economic Forum, 2024). In 2025, Carolina G. Azevedo, Chief of Communications and Results Reporting at the UN Development Coordination Office, warned that “disinformation can unravel the threads that hold societies together. In settings with increased instability, it can tip societies into violence. It can also corrode the norms of debate and science-backed evidence that societies take for granted” (Azevedo, 2025).

Disinformation and falsification have become a global epidemic in the age of “post-truth,” and the assault on facts is in full swing. Yet while “truth” and “falsehood” remain, at least in principle, concepts that still command broad consensus, another fierce attack is unfolding in an even more unstable human domain: the realm of views and opinions.

In the age of social media, a broad consensus among researchers and institutions has emerged: disinformation is not the only major threat to democratic spaces. So too is the dissemination and normalization of harmful and illegitimate rhetoric – including racism, misogyny, discrimination, and hate speech. International organizations point to the way the digital sphere enables the unprecedented acceleration of such content, weakening traditional mediating mechanisms and intensifying social and political polarization (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022; Kalfas, 2025).

Baldauf et al. (2019) emphasize that these processes are part of a wider trend of eroding democratic norms, as positions once considered marginal or illegitimate enter the mainstream of public discourse and even gain political representation.

For the Israeli public, these destructive effects are especially tangible. Israeli society is already complex, divided into different “tribes” with distinct, and sometimes opposing, aspirations. Social polarization has shaken the political arena. Israel was pulled into a prolonged sequence of election campaigns; Benjamin Netanyahu, the country’s most powerful politician, was indicted on corruption charges; and when he finally formed a government, it was the most extreme in Israel’s history. In 2023, that government launched an attempt to reshape the state’s institutions and strip the judiciary of power, triggering mass protest. Then came the October 7 attack on Israel and the gravest security failure in the country’s history. The war that followed slowed the judicial overhaul, but as it dragged on, the government’s efforts to advance it were renewed. Together, these events have led to growing warnings of an irreversible rupture within Israeli society.

In this context, the dangerous effects of disinformation, conspiracy theories, and false ideas are especially stark. In the months after October 7, surveys by researchers from the Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University found that roughly one-third of Israelis believed the false conspiracy theory that “traitors from within” had cooperated with Israel’s worst enemies in order to keep Netanyahu in power. The spread of these falsehoods overrode one of the basic forms of glue that has long held Israeli society together: the shared sense of external security threat.

“The findings raise a profound question about the future of Western society,” one of the researchers told The Seventh Eye. “We are living in a reality in which the very concept of truth is slowly falling apart. The idea that, as a society, we can generate public debate based on agreement over facts is weakening. The spread of misinformation and disinformation through social networks, or through technological tools that distort our picture of reality, poses a deep threat to our ability – as a democracy – to conduct a lively, turbulent dialogue around policy” (Persico, 2023).

In an article for Telem, Dr. Ronit Donyets-Kedar, a senior lecturer at the College of Law and Business and a lecturer at Tel Aviv University’s Faculty of Law, warned that social media is eroding the shared factual ground on which democratic debate depends. As an example, she noted that “a month and a half after October 7, a quarter of the Israeli public did not rule out the possibility that Israeli actors knew about the attack in advance and were involved in it” (Nir et al., 2023). She also pointed to findings among young Americans, arguing that social media allows such narratives to be cultivated without oversight or democratic restraint until they gain force, radicalize their audience’s worldview, and enter public consciousness (Donyets-Kedar, 2024).

The threat posed by disinformation, fake news, and the spread of conspiracy theories is not merely that different people hold different perceptions of reality. It is that the very possibility of conducting public debate collapses when there is no longer any shared basis of knowledge. A democratic society depends on the ability to agree on the nature of reality and on the facts that shape public discussion. When the gaps become too wide, the distinction between fact and fiction, between truth and falsehood, is erased. As Hannah Arendt observed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the person convinced by a particular lie, but the person for whom the distinction between truth and falsehood no longer exists.

Another dangerous consequence of disinformation is the erosion of trust in society. As the UNDP report notes, the spread of disinformation reduces overall trust: in state institutions, public officials, the free press, and fellow citizens. Instead of democratic debate occurring within agreed-upon, clearly defined norms, public life becomes a battlefield between factions that attack one another – sometimes violently – on the basis of false and unreliable information (UNDP, 2022).

Election propaganda is not, in itself, illegitimate. On the contrary, the presentation of views and positions by parties and politicians is the lifeblood of elections. But when propaganda relies on disinformation, lies, conspiracy theories, racism, hate speech, incitement to violence, discrimination against women, and other harmful or illegitimate views, it becomes something far more severe and dangerous. It undermines the public's ability to make informed decisions and turns into a chokehold on democracy.

How, then, can we confront the grave threat posed by false and illegitimate propaganda?

Researchers in social psychology have shown that debunking false claims after they have already been spread is not effective enough. Once a false narrative has been absorbed into consciousness, the ability to convince someone that it is false declines. From the moment a person is first exposed to a lie as though it were true information, that initial exposure leaves a trace in human memory. Moreover, repeated exposure to false information - even when it is presented in order to debunk it - can actually reinforce its effect. Experts call this the “continued influence effect.” The problem becomes even harder when dealing with conspiracy theories or political lies, where belief is often rooted in emotional and identity-based commitments rather than purely rational judgment (Goldberg, 2021).

These challenges led to the adoption of an approach that has proven more effective in confronting disinformation: strengthening people's resistance to lies before they encounter them in the wild. This approach, known as “inoculation theory,” was developed by the American social psychologist William McGuire. Like a medical vaccine that prepares the body

to deal with a virus, exposure to weakened versions of lies can make it easier to recognize and resist them when they appear in full force (Goldberg, 2021).

According to this theory, if people are exposed to versions and examples of false information while they are clearly framed as false – in a way that resembles real information but is also presented within a normative framework that identifies the manipulation, that exposure can help them resist the lie later. In order to do this, it is necessary to present the lies, harmful views, and manipulative techniques; explain why they are false or illegitimate; identify the deception behind them; and show whom they serve.

Studies have found that exposing people to examples of fake news, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and harmful propaganda – while explaining the lie, the manipulation, and the interest behind them – is the most effective way to confront them.

In inoculation theory, this move is known as “prebunking,” and research has found it to be more effective than later attempts at debunking. According to Dr. Sander van der Linden, one of the leading researchers in the field, the reason is that prebunking “activates” a kind of immune system in people’s minds. It helps them encode false information as false, and later recognize it as such.

“The more time you give people to connect the lie to real examples, the better they can remember it,” van der Linden said in an interview. “Without that, it can become fact.”

He explains that the mind needs many examples of what manipulation looks like in different situations – just as the immune system needs exposure to different pathogens. Prebunking focuses on helping people identify the building blocks of manipulation: what deception looks like, how it happens, and how recurring tactics operate. By providing small “microdoses” of misinformation in advance, prebunking builds mental resilience among its recipients.

While debunking focuses on fact-checking false claims after a person has already encountered them, prebunking provides warnings and counterarguments before the false narrative appears. It is therefore also more resource-efficient, because it addresses the manipulation behind many false messages at once, rather than responding separately to each one after the fact (Dori, 2023).

A well-known example of this approach was the action taken by the American administration before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In an unusual move, the administration publicly exposed intelligence information in advance – including expected Russian disinformation operations and false-flag narratives. The goal was to undermine the credibility

of those messages before they appeared and to increase public skepticism toward Russian disinformation.

There are two main methods of prebunking. The first is technique-based; the second is narrative-based. Technique-based prebunking focuses on identifying general, recurring features of manipulative and disinformation-driven claims, regardless of the specific narrative. For example, it may warn against manipulative claims about climate change denial by explaining common patterns such as the distortion of facts, attacks on the scientific consensus, and the use of misleading evidence.

Indicators for Narrative-Based Identification of False and Manipulative Narratives

- **Fake experts** – using people who are not experts in order to create the impression that no consensus exists.
- **Logical fallacies** – false dichotomy, false balance, straw man arguments, circular reasoning, false causality, and hasty generalization.
- **Impossible expectations** – demanding a level of proof that cannot be met – the equivalent of “prove you don’t have a sister” – or shifting the burden of proof during the debate.
- **Cherry-picking** – selectively choosing data that supports the narrative’s position.
- **Conspiracy theories** – an unfounded theory presented as truth.

Indicators for Narrative-Based Identification of Conspiracies

Because conspiracy theories are a central component of disinformation and manipulative discourse in Israel, we will also note the seven features of conspiratorial thinking that can help determine whether a given claim is credible and legitimate information or a conspiracy theory. Identifying two or three of the following features is enough to classify a narrative as conspiratorial.

- **Internal contradictions** – holding contradictory beliefs at the same time.

- **Excessive suspicion** — extreme skepticism toward the official account, combined with blind belief in any alternative.
- **Malicious intent** — assuming from the outset that the motive is always deliberate and harmful.
- **“Something must be wrong”** — even when a specific claim is debunked, the broader belief remains intact.
- **The persecuted-victim posture** — conspiracy believers see themselves as victims persecuted by the system.
- **Immunity to evidence** — any contradictory evidence is interpreted as part of the conspiracy itself.
- **Overinterpretation of randomness** — random events are assigned intentional meaning.

Another method of prebunking disinformation and manipulation focuses on the techniques used to spread them. The advantage of this approach is that while the information used to spread disinformation and manipulation may be broad, varied, and therefore difficult to monitor and identify, the techniques used to mislead and influence people tend to repeat themselves. These techniques do not change as quickly as the narratives used for manipulation and false propaganda.

Common Techniques for Spreading Disinformation and Manipulation

- **Impersonation** — presenting content in the name of a trusted person or institution.
- **Emotional manipulation** — using language designed to trigger moral outrage, fear, or anxiety.
- **Polarization** — intensifying differences between groups.
- **Conspiratorial narratives** — explaining events through the actions of a secret group.
- **Trolling** — provocation intended to elicit an emotional response.
- **Smear and discrediting tactics** — attacking the source of the information instead of addressing its content.

Whether one chooses to use the first method, the second, or a combination of the two, there are three basic and necessary components for formulating an effective prebunking message:

1. **Warning** — alerting the public to a future rhetorical attack, thereby activating its “immune system.”
2. **Refuting** — providing tools for confronting the argument: facts, an explanation of the rhetorical structure, and a possible response.
3. **Microdose** — controlled exposure to a “weakened dose” of the manipulative narrative, allowing future versions to be identified early.

On the basis of this approach, and with the aim of protecting the Israeli public from lies, manipulation, conspiracy theories, and illegitimate election propaganda, The Seventh Eye is launching a special project for the election period ahead of the 26th Knesset elections, originally scheduled for October 2026.

The Seventh Eye monitored and analyzed hundreds of hours of news-channel broadcasts and identified a significant number of false, conspiratorial, and illegitimate narratives. This Playbook seeks to help media outlets, editors, journalists, civil society, and the general public inoculate themselves against the wave of disinformation and manipulation that will accompany us until Election Day — and, unfortunately, beyond it.

It is important to note that the aspiration to hold fair and clean elections, as well as to maintain a decent and fair public sphere grounded in facts and shared values, is not limited to any particular political camp. Unfortunately, the comprehensive examination we conducted found that the ruling party, Likud, is the most dominant force in spreading false and illegitimate propaganda. This finding is not surprising under the current circumstances in Israel, where the government, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in particular, holds far greater control and influence over Israeli media than any other party or politician — by orders of magnitude.

A recent examination published by The Seventh Eye, covering all broadcasts on the main news channels, found that the parties in Netanyahu’s coalition receive clear and consistent overrepresentation, and that Netanyahu himself receives far more exposure than any other politician — by margins ranging from hundreds to thousands of percent.

In this project, we have chosen to use both methods of the prebunking approach — the narrative-based and the tactical — together. First, this Playbook is organized according to the disinformation and manipulation narratives we identified using The Seventh Eye’s Subtext system. This is a system based on artificial intelligence and human analysis, developed by Shakuf and The Seventh Eye, through which hundreds of hours of television news and current-affairs broadcasts, as well as political speeches and statements, were monitored and classified.

The findings were then subjected to in-depth analysis, on the basis of which The False Narratives Playbook was written. Its purpose is to characterize the false, misleading, and manipulative election propaganda expected to be directed at Israeli citizens ahead of the elections for the 26th Knesset.

This Playbook presents an initial list of false and illegitimate narratives expected to be spread by various politicians and candidates during the election campaign, through the mainstream media and familiar propaganda platforms. It is not a list of the false and illegitimate publications themselves — countless examples of which are, of course, constantly being circulated — but rather of their “prototypes” in the context of the election campaign. This is a dynamic and developing list, which will be updated in periodic publications.

At times, it is difficult to distinguish one narrative from another. They are often interconnected and woven together. Attacks and lies directed at the opposition and the media, for example, may merge with the “deep state” conspiracy, or with false and inflammatory narratives targeting the judiciary and the security establishment and relying on historical revisionism. As part of the tactical approach, we will explain and demonstrate which manipulative techniques are used in each narrative, how they can be identified, and how they can be countered. Each prebunking entry will include a warning, tools for refuting the narrative, and a weakened dose - or microdose - of the narrative itself.

As noted, the aim of the project is to “inoculate” media outlets, editors, managers, and journalists against this collection of manipulative and false narratives, and to provide a toolkit that will make it possible to identify future messages based on disinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories.

The press — the fourth estate, the watchdog of elected officials, and a servant of the public — bears the responsibility not to cooperate, whether deliberately or inadvertently, with manipulation, disinformation, false propaganda, and harmful or illegitimate rhetoric that will be spread during the election period. More than that, it has a duty to inoculate the public against them.

As described at length above, warning alone is not enough. For example, the warnings recently issued by the media about possible attempts to cast doubt on election results or claim fraud do not guarantee inoculation against the future false narrative of a rigged or stolen election — especially since such warnings may mix manipulative claims with authentic concerns.

For such warnings to be effective, it is necessary to prove that a manipulation is taking place and to explain how similar manipulation can be identified in the future; to analyze and expose the components of the manipulation; and to demonstrate how it works. For example, one might

explain that claims stemming from this false narrative will be unsupported by evidence and will contain conspiratorial elements, logical fallacies, fake experts, and other recognizable features.

The Seventh Eye would like to thank the members of the expert panel for their comments and professional assistance in the process of developing this Playbook: Prof. Anat Ben-David and Dr. Ayala Panievsky, members of the board of The Seventh Eye; Dr. Almog Simchon; Prof. Doron Navot; Ron Gerlitz; and attorney Shahar Ben-Meir.

Narrative No. 1: Political Delegitimization of Arab Citizens and Parties

Warning

During the upcoming election period, we are likely to encounter campaigns and statements promoting a racist and inflammatory narrative against Arab candidates running for the Knesset; against the parties United Arab List (Ra'am), Hadash, Ta'al, and Balad; and against the Joint List framework under which they are expected to run together. This narrative will claim that Arab parties and candidates are not legitimate partners in forming a government – and are not even legitimate candidates for election to the Israeli Knesset.

Arab members of Knesset will be accused of supporting terrorism; belonging to the “Muslim Brotherhood”; supporting Hamas; failing to condemn the October 7 massacre; and seeking the dissolution of the State of Israel as a separate political entity. The conclusion drawn from these claims is that if they are elected to the Knesset, they will endanger Israel’s security and its very existence.

This narrative will also be directed against Israel’s Arab citizens. One example is the claim that high voter turnout in Arab society, translated into political power, would lead to the abolition of the Jewish state – and that Arab citizens’ participation in elections therefore endangers Jewish citizens. This narrative may even amount to voter suppression targeting Arab citizens of Israel through threats and intimidation.

The delegitimization of the Joint List and its members will also be directed at any candidate who states that they do not rule out including them in a future coalition – using emotionally charged formulations such as “Are you of Israel?”¹ to imply that such cooperation places them outside the Israeli collective.

The aim of this narrative is to suppress voting for Arab parties, attempt to disqualify them from running in the election, and prevent the formation of any government without Netanyahu. According to most polls, these parties could hold the balance of power in forming the next government.

¹ See [Kan 7.10 360 Digital Memorial Project](#)

Identification Tools

This narrative is built on **logical fallacies**: it relies on **false causality** — “if they are Arab, they are against the State of Israel and against Jews” — and on **hasty generalization**: “all Arabs.” It can also be identified by the repeated use of **selective quotation**, in which isolated statements are taken out of context.

The main tactics used in this false narrative are **polarization** — creating an “us versus them, the Arabs” divide — and hostility, by presenting an entire community as a single unit threatening the existence of another, namely Jewish Israeli society. The narrative also relies on **manipulation and emotionally charged language**, especially fear-based language, rather than factual, rational discussion. Finally, it uses **smearing and discrediting tactics**: attacks on people because of their identity — Arabs as Arabs — rather than on the basis of any specific issue or substance.

Refuting

Voter suppression and incitement against Arab citizens are illegal. They violate the principle of equality and the democratic obligation to ensure fair representation and full participation for national minorities in Israeli society and government.

These are legitimate parties that have been democratically elected to the Israeli Knesset in the past and whose candidacies have not been disqualified to date. The Central Elections Committee did vote to disqualify Balad from running in the election for the 25th Knesset, but the Supreme Court accepted the party’s appeal and overturned the decision (Maanit, 2022). The ruling stated:

“With regard to the Balad party (EA 6668/22), the Court unanimously ruled that the decision of the Central Elections Committee to prevent the party from running should be overturned, in light of the Supreme Court’s previous rulings concerning Balad and given the paucity of evidence presented in the disqualification request. Accordingly, it was held that Balad may run in the election for the 25th Knesset.”

The Central Elections Committee itself rejected both petitions seeking to disqualify Ra’am from running for the Knesset. Across the political spectrum, political actors have either forged alliances with an Arab party or attempted to do so. Under Netanyahu, Likud courted Ra’am during the 2021 election period in an effort to secure its support for forming a coalition. Ra’am

also cooperated with parties from the center-left bloc and helped establish the “change government” that same year.

The sweeping claim that these parties support violence against Israel or its Jewish citizens is not supported by the record, and their representatives have repeatedly condemned the October 7 massacre. Already on October 7, MK Mansour Abbas described the events as “sorrowful, tragic, and reprehensible,” called on Arab citizens and all citizens — Arabs and Jews alike — to show restraint, uphold law and order, refrain from violence or harm to human life, and avoid rumors or incitement aimed at escalating tensions (Teller, 2023). A month later, he stated: “The massacre is against everything we believe in, our religion, our Islam, our nationality, our humanity” (Sokol, 2023).

Abbas was not alone. The Hadash faction and the Maki party announced that they “reiterate an unequivocal condemnation of any harm to innocent civilians.” MK Ofer Cassif, a Jewish member of Hadash, wrote on Facebook: “Nothing justifies crimes and massacres such as those committed today in southern Israel.”

Additional condemnations followed in the days after the massacre. “It is absolutely forbidden to accept any harm to innocent civilians, and I strongly condemn Hamas leadership’s call on the Arab public to join the struggle against Israel,” MK Ayman Odeh declared on October 10, 2023. “Nothing in the world justifies harming innocent people, not in the south and not in Gaza,” he added the next day.

On October 12, 2023, Odeh spoke in the Knesset plenum and said (KnessetTV, 2023a):

“There is nothing in this world — not even the cursed occupation — that can justify harming innocent people. Nothing. I have always categorically opposed harming civilians, and I will continue to oppose it with every fiber of my being. It is a violation of our collective humanity. We must remove all civilians — Jews, Arabs, Palestinians, all civilians in the world — from the cycle of terror, from the cycle of murder, from the cycle of war.”

That same day, MK Ahmad Tibi also spoke in the Knesset plenum and said (KnessetTV, 2023b):

“The murder of women, children, and elderly people, and the atrocities committed against civilians in the south, deserve unequivocal condemnation.”

The claim that the Israeli public would not accept the formation of a government with “Arab parties” after October 7 is also false. According to a *Ma’ariv* poll from December 19, 2025, 61% of those intending to vote for one of the opposition parties — excluding Ra’am and

Hadash-Ta'al — said they would support including Ra'am in a future coalition in order to form a government without Likud and Netanyahu. Only 25% opposed such a move (Cohen, 2025).

Moreover, as noted above, a government supported by Ra'am was already formed after the 2021 election, after Likud chairman Netanyahu approached Ra'am chairman Mansour Abbas in an attempt to persuade him to support a government under Netanyahu's leadership and cooperate with Likud. This is the same Abbas and the same party that Netanyahu now incites against and warns against including in a government, or even relying on from outside the coalition.

Microdose of the Narrative

"Naftali Bennett wants to form a government with people who support terrorism, with people who did not condemn October 7, with people who do not recognize the State of Israel's right to exist."

— Minister May Golan, *The Open Studio*, Channel 14, February 3, 2026

In this example, we can identify the false attribution of support for terrorism, as well as a false claim regarding condemnation of the October 7 massacre and recognition of the State of Israel. All three **claims are presented without evidence and in contradiction to the facts**. The statement also uses **emotional manipulation, hasty generalization, smearing, and discrediting tactics**.

Recommendations for the Media

- Avoid manipulative framing such as "Abbas in talks with the left."
- Whenever a speaker makes a general claim about "the Arabs" or "the Arab parties," ask a follow-up question requiring them to identify the specific quote on which the claim is based. This can expose selective quotation - and sometimes outright falsehood.
- Avoid presenting seat-projection polls in a way that treats Arab parties as a separate bloc, thereby reinforcing the delegitimization of their full political participation.
- Significantly increase screen time for Arab elected officials, who suffer from acute underrepresentation. Give them fair representation and a platform from which to counter this false narrative.

False Narrative No. 2: Delegitimization of Women's Equality

Warning

Women's rights and gender equality are presented in political campaigns in Israel not as foundational values of Israeli society and democracy, but as controversial beliefs associated with a particular political camp - and even as illegitimate, rejected, and harmful values.

During the election period, we are likely to encounter claims portraying different aspects of women's equality, such as the integration of women into the IDF, as causes of the October 7 failure, the weakening of the IDF, and a danger to the Jewish state.

This narrative promotes gender discrimination in the public sphere: in academia, shopping centers, public events, women's public participation, and women's service in the IDF, especially in combat roles.

The narrative will be used by various candidates and parties to smear other parties and candidates who oppose discrimination against women and seek to promote genuine equality. Even the fact that a particular party ensures equal representation for women on its slate may be used as grounds to attack it.

These candidates and parties will be portrayed as part of the "woke," "progressive," and "radical left" camp, which allegedly seeks to discriminate against Orthodox religious Jews, erase the Jewish character of the State of Israel, and even harm its security.

According to the false and illegitimate narrative against integrating women as combat soldiers, this integration is the result of foreign influence and illegitimate values imposed on the IDF, which supposedly caused its commanders to undermine the army's readiness and abandon the value of victory. According to the messaging of this narrative, integrating women into combat roles weakens the IDF because women are not as capable as men; the army is a "male arena" in which women have no place or value; and the very presence of women in combat units distracts male soldiers and harms their performance.

Another reason for spreading this misogynistic narrative, beyond harming rival parties and candidates, is to present women's service in the IDF as the main reason for Haredi refusal to serve, and as an obstacle preventing Haredi integration into the IDF.

This narrative is not limited to security issues, but extends across all areas of life. For example, within this narrative, the exclusion of women from the public sphere will be falsely and discriminatorily framed as religiously necessary “separation,” an expression of “respect for religion,” and so on. In the context of an election period, this expression of the narrative will translate into smears against female candidates and against candidates and parties seeking to fight gender discrimination in Israel.

Identification Tools

The main sign that an argument is false is false causality - creating a causal link between two events without proving any connection between them. For example: linking the October 7 failure to the integration of women into combat and elite units. Another sign is the false dichotomy of “either gender equality or a Jewish state,” instead of recognizing that both can coexist.

This manipulative narrative is based on a conspiracy theory according to which “progressivism” uses the value of equal rights for women, with malicious intent, in order to weaken the IDF and Judaism and harm national security. “Progressivism” is presented as a vague and malicious force operating in the shadows and in secret in order to advance its agenda.

This narrative also contains logical fallacies and cherry-picking. For example, it relies on the hasty generalization that all women are weaker than men, or not good enough compared to men, and therefore cannot serve as combat soldiers. In addition, the narrative is based on the generalization that all religious Jewish men want gender separation in the public sphere.

Finally, this manipulative narrative uses polarization to portray women and men as belonging to two separate and opposing spheres.

Refuting

Discrimination against women and the exclusion of women from the public sphere violate two principles at the foundation of every liberal democratic society: the protection of human rights and the principle of equality. The principle of equality includes women’s right to dignity and to rights equal to those of men. Beyond the principle of civil equality, violating women’s rights is also a violation of human rights. Women, like all human beings, are entitled to basic rights. Discriminating against them violates these rights, particularly the right to live free from discrimination in employment, education, and other areas of life.

The illegitimacy of this misogynistic and discriminatory position is also reflected in Israeli law and jurisprudence, which define it as wrongful and illegal. Israeli law established gender equality and the prohibition on discrimination against women as early as 1951, under the Women's Equal Rights Law, 5711-1951, which states that "one law shall apply to a woman and a man regarding every legal act" and that any legal provision discriminating against a woman as a woman shall not be followed (Knesset, 1951).

In the Alice Miller case, the High Court of Justice ruled that rejecting Miller's request to be admitted to the pilots' course because she was a woman constituted unlawful discrimination. The ruling also helped establish the doctrine that Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty grants constitutional, supra-legislative status to the prohibition on discrimination against women, even though the Basic Law does not explicitly list equality as a protected right (Supreme Court of Israel, 1995).

In March 2024, ahead of International Women's Day, the Knesset held an event titled "The Contribution of Women in the Iron Swords War." The Knesset website reported that Knesset Speaker MK Amir Ohana spoke at the event about the heroism of a female armored corps team that fought Hamas during the invasion (The Knesset, 2024). The Knesset Channel also tweeted Ohana's statement that "their story illustrates the central role played by Israeli women in combat" (Knesset Channel, 2024).

In May 2025, the IDF website published a study examining the integration of women combat soldiers in the IDF. According to the study, during the early stages of the Iron Swords War, female IDF combat soldiers demonstrated noteworthy performance under complex operational conditions, including initiative and rapid response. The study also noted media reports indicating that tank crews, mixed-gender infantry units, medics, and individual female soldiers performed with effectiveness similar to that of male soldiers in confronting Hamas's initial attack (Rosman-Stollman & Rickover, 2025).

Microdose

"Progressivism killed the IDF, and that is why we had no army on October 7" - Attorney Odelia Kedmi, Deputy Head of the Zikhron Ya'akov Local Council, "Equality or Burden - The Struggle Over the Character of the IDF," Channel 14, February 1, 2026.

This quote demonstrates **false causality**: two separate events - organizational processes within the IDF and Hamas's attack - are presented as causally connected without any proof of

such a link. In addition, in this example, the **conspiracy-theory** element is easy to identify through the use of the term “progressivism.”

Recommendations for the Media

Whenever a speaker claims a causal link - for example, between “progressivism” and the October 7 failure - ask a follow-up question demanding specific proof. If none is provided, clarify that this is an opinion, not a fact.

Avoid inviting panelists who are not experts on the subject to discuss the implications of integrating women into combat. In the absence of a genuine expert, it is better to forgo coverage than to “balance” it with a commentator who is not an expert.

Replace passive formulations such as “controversy over the integration of women” with active and precise formulations such as “commentators on Channel X claimed that...”

Cover findings such as the IDF’s 2025 study as facts that stand on their own, not merely as a response to claims.

Avoid giving a platform to this misogynistic narrative, and make clear that this is not a legitimate public debate with two equal sides, but rather a position intended to promote gender discrimination and profoundly harm women’s rights.

Increase the representation of women in the media.

False Narrative No. 3: Netanyahu Stands Above the Law

Warning

This narrative is designed to benefit one candidate in particular: Likud chair Benjamin Netanyahu, who is charged with bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in three criminal cases. His trial, which began in 2020, has proceeded slowly amid repeated delays, and has become a central factor in shaping Israel's political map.

In the coming months, we are likely to hear repeated calls to cancel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's criminal trial, alongside efforts to undermine it in various ways, such as delaying the proceedings or imposing sanctions on the judges and prosecutors. All these messages point toward the same desired outcome for those spreading this narrative: the cancellation of Netanyahu's criminal charges, which would likely end his political career.

The election campaign already includes, and will continue to include, various versions of the claim that Netanyahu effectively stands above the law. This claim is reflected, for example, in the "pardon" campaign, which rests on a pardon request that lacks the basic components required by law; in the campaign for sanctions against the judiciary and the president; and in other campaigns targeting the judiciary and the president in connection with Netanyahu's criminal trial.

According to this narrative, the criminal charges against Netanyahu should be canceled because they interfere with his work as prime minister, and even pose a grave security risk given the state of war in which Israel has been immersed for nearly three years. Another version claims that since Israel has already "won" the war - again and again - even as the war continues, Netanyahu is effectively entitled to have the charges against him shelved. This narrative is distinct from other narratives related to Netanyahu's criminal trial, such as the "fabricated cases" conspiracy theory.

Beyond its circular logic, this narrative challenges the rule of law and the principle of equality before the law. In the context of the current election campaign, promoting it has enormous significance for Netanyahu and Likud. Netanyahu's criminal trial was the central reason the coalition against him formed, and it remains a persistent source of political damage that will be felt in the coming election campaign.

The pardon narrative, and the broader demand to cancel the criminal charges against Netanyahu, may be promoted by various actors in Israel and abroad, including U.S. President Donald Trump. The narrative may take different forms, but it is easy to identify because the goal it advances is consistent and clear.

Identification Tools

This false narrative is based on a **false dichotomy**, according to which only two options exist: continuing the trial or canceling it in an unprecedented manner. In reality, there are other options, such as a pardon or a plea deal - which, as is customary, would include an admission of guilt and, in the current context, retirement from political life - or Netanyahu waiving his testimony, which would in itself eliminate the justification for calls to delay the trial.

This narrative can be identified as manipulative because it is based on well-known **conspiracy theories**, according to which the prime minister is the target of a “witch hunt” and “fabricated cases” orchestrated by the “deep state.” It is also based on a **logical fallacy**: Netanyahu himself repeatedly stated that managing the trial would not interfere with his ability to govern the country, and it was partly on that basis that the court approved his service while under criminal indictment.

Statements advancing this narrative will also use **smearing and discredit tactics** on the judges, the attorney general, the State Attorney’s Office, and the police, rather than engaging with the charges themselves. These statements will often be marked by **impossible expectations**, such as the demand that the trial not interfere with the running of the country - as Netanyahu promised in response to petitions against his appointment - and by **trolling** intended to provoke an emotional reaction, for example the claim that the trial is “tearing the nation apart.”

Refuting

Over the years in which Netanyahu’s trial has continued, various actors have proposed ways to reach a plea deal or end the trial through accepted legal means. For example, the first contacts toward a plea deal - which would include moral turpitude and a seven-year removal from political life, as follows from such a conviction - began even before the indictment was filed, with Netanyahu’s associates and attorneys participating, including with future President Isaac Herzog and former President Reuven Rivlin.

Netanyahu himself even expressed willingness to discuss such a plea deal. Communications adviser Avi Benayahu later wrote that in January 2022, Netanyahu asked him to convey a message to Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit stating that he agreed to the terms of the deal. But this took place too close to the end of Mandelblit's term, and Mandelblit was unwilling to sign off on such a decisive move immediately before stepping down (Tausig, 2025).

In January 2022, Axios reported that Netanyahu had hoped to reach a plea deal before Mandelblit left office, but that Mandelblit had informed Netanyahu's lawyers this would no longer be possible. The deal under discussion would have kept Netanyahu out of prison but barred him from politics for seven years, and the matter was expected to pass to the next attorney general (Ravid, 2022). After Mandelblit's departure, the prospect of an imminent deal faded under the new attorney general, Gali Baharav-Miara, who signaled that she was not interested in pursuing a non-binding mediation process (The Times of Israel, 2023). In 2025, it was revealed that a secret meeting had taken place between Netanyahu's attorneys and former Supreme Court president Aharon Barak, in which Barak made clear that any deal to end the trial would have to include Netanyahu's retirement from political life (Sharon, 2025).

The current "pardon" campaign, which is in effect a campaign for the unprecedented cancellation of the criminal indictment, promotes a false and dangerous narrative according to which Netanyahu is entitled to special status above the law: cancellation of his criminal charges without an admission of guilt, moral turpitude, or punishment, because he is the "supreme leader" or "anointed by God," and because Israel's security - and even its fate - supposedly depend on freeing him from dealing with his criminal entanglements.

This position is irrational and contradicted by clear evidence: the gravest security disaster in the history of the State of Israel occurred under Netanyahu's leadership, and as a direct result of his diplomatic-security policy over the years and his political-social conduct during the judicial overhaul. And of course, Benjamin Netanyahu is a citizen like any other citizen of the State of Israel. Placing him above the law would harm the basic principles of Israel as a state governed by law. In addition, the criminal charges against him are weighty, involving offenses directly related to the abuse of governmental power in the country's highest office. They cannot be swept aside, certainly not when he intends to run again for that same position of governmental power, without being held accountable by the Israeli public and his voters.

The claim that conducting the trial, particularly Netanyahu's own testimony, harms the management of the country or its security also has a simple solution that would not undermine the principle of equality before the law: Netanyahu can resign, or he can waive his testimony. In addition, it is plain to see that Netanyahu devotes a significant portion of his time not to

running the country and managing its affairs, but to political and personal advancement, as every politician does - and perhaps even more than the average politician.

In the case of this false narrative, the party with the clearest interest in spreading it is Prime Minister Netanyahu himself, who is trying to secure the cancellation of his trial by various means. In an attempt, among other things, to obscure this fact, the narrative will be promoted and disseminated through many channels: from members of his government and party, through his supporters and allied media figures, and all the way to figures such as President Trump.

Microdose

“The ball is now in the president’s hands, and he will have to choose between tearing the nation apart by continuing a proceeding that millions of Israeli citizens do not believe in, and a pardon that will finally bring relief and an end to a saga that has shaken Israel for many years.”

— Moti Castel, main edition, Channel 14, November 30, 2025

This quote demonstrates the use of a **false dichotomy**, in which only two possible options are presented as available: continuing the trial or granting a pardon. This conceals the accepted way to end a trial without a verdict: a plea deal. It also conceals the truth: Netanyahu is not requesting a pardon, which would include an admission of guilt and remorse, but rather the unprecedented cancellation of his trial.

The **manipulation** can be identified through the use of emotionally charged language - “tearing the nation apart,” “shaken Israel” - and through the **conspiratorial narrative** embedded in the quote, which relies on a claim presented as self-evident truth: “a proceeding that millions of Israeli citizens do not believe in,” without offering any evidence to support it.

Recommendations for the Media

Do not open a news broadcast with the headline “debate over a pardon,” which creates the false impression of a debate between two reasonable and legitimate positions.

Whenever a spokesperson for Netanyahu’s government presents this narrative, the framing or follow-up question should make clear that this is the prime minister’s personal interest.

Every report on the possible cancellation of the trial should mention that Netanyahu agreed to a plea deal, that his pardon request is not truly a pardon request, and that no citizen stands above the law. These are the facts this false and manipulative narrative seeks to dismantle.

Avoid panels in which the positions “supporting a pardon” and “opposing a pardon” receive equal time. This is false balance, presenting an attack on the rule of law as a legitimate position.

False Narrative No. 4: Delegitimization of Opposition Candidates and Parties

Warning

Every election campaign can include legitimate attacks on political rivals. Debate between candidates and parties is an inherent part of democratic politics. But when such attacks are based on lies, manipulation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories - and when they escalate into incitement - they are no longer legitimate political criticism. They are illegitimate propaganda, and they should be rejected as such.

During the coming election campaign, we are likely to see false and even inciting smear campaigns. One of the central campaigns will target parties and candidates from the political right, center, and left who oppose Netanyahu's coalition. Just as the government used false narratives during the war against the civil protest movement, including against the families of the hostages held in Gaza, we can expect to see the same tactic during the election period.

These parties and candidates will be accused of defeatism, subversion, and betrayal of the state; of supporting "refusal" to serve in the IDF; of serving as representatives of Israeli protest organizations that have been the targets of an ongoing smear campaign; of responsibility for the October 7 massacre; of undermining victory in the war; of cooperating with the "deep state"; of acting on behalf of foreign actors, as in the false claim that the Biden administration misused nearly \$1 billion in taxpayer funds to fuel political dissent in Israel (Samuels, 2025); of protecting an elitist hegemony that seeks to replace the people; of intending to dismantle the Jewish state and erase Israel's Jewish identity; of being secretly controlled behind the scenes by controversial figures; and of many other lies and conspiracy theories.

These candidates and parties will be described as "not of Israel" - an inversion of the Hebrew phrase *shel Yisrael*, "of Israel," which entered the public vocabulary after October 7 as an expression of basic belonging and trust. In the hands of Netanyahu supporters, however, the phrase has been turned against his opponents: to say that someone is "not of Israel" is to suggest that they are not truly part of the national collective.

This narrative can be summed up in that phrase: "not of Israel." It is a red flag for one of the most extreme forms of polarization: expelling political rivals from the collective and marking them as not truly Israeli, not loyal, and not "one of us."

Another version of this narrative calls candidates from left-wing parties “Kaplanists” in disguise - “Kaplanists” referring to the protest movement associated with Kaplan Street in Tel Aviv - and therefore “deranged,” “sick,” and “traitors.” Following directly from the previous version, this narrative bases its smears against Netanyahu’s political rivals and his coalition’s opponents on the inciting conspiracy theory that the October 7 massacre was caused by the Brothers in Arms protest organization and the “Kaplanists.” Therefore, according to the narrative, the “left-wing” parties that allied themselves with these supposedly treasonous actors are illegitimate and must be denounced.

The purpose of this narrative is clear: it is a delegitimization campaign against the opposition parties, designed to weaken them on Election Day by spreading false, conspiratorial, and inciting messages.

The opposition and opponents of the government will be accused of responsibility for the October 7 failure, of endangering the lives of the hostages, of defeatism and surrender, and of attempting to seize control of the state through undemocratic means using the institutions that supposedly make up the “deep state” - the judiciary, the defense establishment and law enforcement, the media, academia, and so on.

Identification Tools

This narrative is characterized first and foremost by a tactic of **polarization**, in which “the left” or “the opposition” are excluded from the Israeli collective through the direct claim, or indirect implication, that they are “not part of Israel.”

This polarization relies on **smear tactics and discrediting tactics**. Claims made under this narrative are not backed by evidence or proof. Instead, they use personal or collective accusations - for example, accusations of treason - as a substitute for substantive discussion of reality and facts. The narrative also uses **emotional manipulation**, especially fearmongering among Jewish voters through the claim that the Jewish state is in danger.

The narrative also contains clear elements of **conspiracy theory**. These include **exaggerated suspicion** toward the left, the opposition, and government critics, and the attribution of **malicious intent** to them. Another recurring feature is the image of the **persecuted victim** - in this case, “the real people” and “the real Jews” who are “part of Israel” and are supposedly being persecuted by “the left.”

The narrative also creates baseless **conspiratorial links** between “the left,” the “deep state,” unnamed or secretive forces, and the October 7 massacre. Another conspiratorial element is

the belief that “**something must be wrong**”: even when a specific version of the narrative is debunked, the broader belief in the message remains intact.

Refuting

The conspiracy theory rests on a double move: falsely blaming the protest movement against the judicial overhaul, and then linking that movement conspiratorially to political parties. According to this conspiratorial logic, the protest is a monolithic body, led by shadowy figures pursuing personal goals.

In reality, the Israeli protest against government policy - from the judicial overhaul to the management of the war - is a legitimate and spontaneous civil protest representing large segments of the Israeli public, who seek to improve the state and Israeli society according to their views. One may agree or disagree with its messages, but the protest has not endangered the State of Israel or its security, has not echoed the enemy’s messages or cooperated with it, and is not being managed by shadowy forces belonging to an imaginary “deep state.”

Moreover, the Israeli opposition is made up of a range of parties with different, and sometimes contradictory, agendas and ideologies. It is not a single bloc, as this narrative attempts to portray it.

Microdose

“The left-wing camp, whose position is that what we need here is a state of all its citizens - and to hell with Judaism, to hell with the Jewish state - as opposed to a camp that truly cares about what matters, about our roots, and about the fact that the State of Israel must be a Jewish state.”

- Yaki Adamker, *The Patriots*, Channel 14, February 8, 2026

This example clearly shows the **polarization** this narrative seeks to create: the left is framed as “not of Israel,” meaning outside the national collective, while the right is framed as the camp that truly represents Israel.

It also demonstrates **smear and discrediting tactics** through the attribution of an extreme position to an entire political camp - “to hell with Judaism” - without quoting any actual speaker or providing evidence for the claim. In addition, it uses **emotional manipulation** by spreading fear of the destruction of Judaism.

Recommendations for the Media

Whenever phrases such as “not of Israel” or “traitors” appear, they should be explicitly identified as illegitimate and manipulative propaganda, not treated as legitimate political positions.

Media outlets should avoid inviting panelists who regularly use these expressions. This is not censorship - it is a professional choice to avoid amplifying lies and conspiracy theories.

Opposition representatives should be given broader space to present their positions and election platforms, and to debunk the false narratives spread about them. A review by *The Seventh Eye* found that mainstream media gives disproportionate airtime to coalition representatives (Egri, 2026).

False campaigns that use artificial intelligence technologies to promote this narrative should be monitored and exposed.

False Narrative No. 5: Rewriting the History of the War

Warning

Israel's upcoming election will take place in the shadow of the greatest security disaster in the country's history: the October 7 failure and massacre. Questions of responsibility and blame; the conduct of the war that followed; the fate of the hostages; the defeat of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran; the "day after"; and whether Israel has won or lost — all are expected to be central issues in the coming election campaign. On each of them, we are likely to encounter systematic attempts to rewrite recent history in ways that serve specific candidates and parties.

Almost all candidates and parties are expected to invoke recent history in their election propaganda. But our analysis points to one consistent narrative whose purpose is to absolve Netanyahu's government, and especially Netanyahu personally, of any responsibility — and certainly any blame — for the October 7 failure and for the failures that followed. At the same time, this narrative is designed to entrench manipulative Netanyahu campaign messages such as "total victory" and the "legend of the second day" (Gatenio, 2025), while crediting him exclusively for the successes achieved since October 7.

The narrative rests on assigning responsibility solely to the security establishment and its leaders — Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar, IDF chief of staff Herzi Halevi, and others — rather than to the government; falsely blaming the protest movement against Netanyahu's government, the various organizations associated with it, opposition activists, and others; and blaming the so-called Change Government, which served for only a year and a half before the government in power on October 7. Added to this is the blaming of previous governments, from 20 years ago or more, for major political undertakings such as the Oslo Accords and the disengagement from Gaza.

This narrative includes simple lies, such as the claim that Netanyahu's strategy immediately after the failure was to seize the opportunity to "change the Middle East" — the "legend of the second day." It also includes full-blown conspiracy theories, such as the "betrayal from within" theory, according to which Israeli citizens and members of the security establishment cooperated with Hamas and assisted the October 7 attack in order to harm Netanyahu. This conspiracy theory has spawned several sub-theories, including the "spy from the south" theory (Maanit, 2026).

Part of this false rewriting of history begins with the most basic terminology: changing the name of the *Swords of Iron* War to the “War of Rebirth,” and using the term “event” to describe the October 7 massacre. It extends as far as falsifying protocols and spreading conspiracy theories.

Identification Tools

This false and manipulative narrative, which is divided into six sub-narratives, relies on several different techniques. The tools for identifying these techniques are relevant to all the sub-narratives discussed below.

One way to identify this false narrative is through the **impossible expectations** it seeks to promote. The use of the goal of “total victory,” which no one knows how to define, allows the benchmark for success to be changed during the war itself — without any real possibility of challenging that benchmark, since it was never defined in measurable terms to begin with.

Another way to identify the manipulation is the consistent use of **cherry-picking** from testimony, investigations, reports, and partial protocols. One example is Netanyahu’s “revelation” from the State Comptroller’s report, from which he carefully selected only the quotations that supported his claim (Berman, 2026).

Because this narrative cannot be sustained on the facts, it relies heavily on **smearing and discrediting tactics** on every possible actor, without evidence and without reference to any specific event or issue. Its purpose is to undermine trust in the institution, body, or individual being attacked. Attacks on the Shin Bet and its director, the military echelon, the chief of staff, the Supreme Court, and any other actor outside the government serve as a diversionary tactic, replacing a substantive discussion of the October 7 failure and the question of responsibility.

Finally, this narrative also rests on **conspiracy theories**, such as the “traitors from within” theory, which contains nearly all the hallmarks of conspiratorial thinking. In this case, these include **excessive suspicion** and extreme skepticism toward the official explanation — a political and military failure — alongside blind faith in any alternative explanation, such as the claim that Israeli citizens and intelligence and military officials helped Hamas attack Israeli civilians in order to remove Netanyahu from power. This also involves attributing **malicious intent**.

In line with the conspiratorial marker of “**something must be wrong**,” belief in this conspiracy persists even after it has been repeatedly debunked, as can be seen, for example, in the “spy from the south” conspiracy. This is also made possible by the “**immunity to evidence**”

characteristic of conspiracy theories, whereby any contradictory evidence is interpreted as part of the conspiracy itself. Added to this is the **overinterpretation of randomness**, in which incidental facts — for example, that Shikma Bressler's husband is a Shin Bet officer — are loaded with incriminating meaning.

Given the central role this narrative is expected to play in the election campaign, the following sections will examine several of its different expressions in greater detail.

A. The Security Establishment Concealed Information from Netanyahu and the Political Leadership

Warning

According to this sub-narrative, the political leadership received no security warnings before October 7, 2023; the security establishment even stated that Hamas was deterred and recommended preserving the calm; and the many documented examples of such warnings are false.

The purpose of this false narrative is to allow the government and its leader to evade responsibility for the greatest security failure in the country's history, so that this failure does not damage their electoral prospects. This narrative developed over the months following the massacre and was reflected, among other things, in the campaign to establish a politicized commission of inquiry and in the publication of partial, edited transcripts from the State Comptroller's report.

The claims that the security leadership failed to warn the government — and even reassured it — have been debunked by journalistic investigations and documents. They have also been denied by senior officials in those systems, in testimony before the State Comptroller, in the IDF investigations conducted so far, and publicly in the media. In the absence of a state commission of inquiry capable of genuinely examining the events, Netanyahu and members of his government can publish tendentious excerpts from testimony and investigations in order to construct this false narrative.

Refuting

This false narrative has repeatedly been debunked by documents and testimony from journalistic investigations and freedom-of-information requests. These sources showed that the security establishment repeatedly warned of the danger posed by Hamas, especially after

the judicial overhaul began in Israel, and that Netanyahu repeatedly ignored those warnings in order to preserve Hamas's rule — and his own.

For example, a Channel 12 News investigation by Omri Maniv revealed the large number of warnings Netanyahu received from the Mossad, the Shin Bet, and other elements of the security establishment. The investigation found that information about Hamas's plan for a mass invasion of Israel had been known to Netanyahu as early as 2014, a year before the disturbances at the border fence began, and had even been one of the reasons for building the security barrier.

Moreover, the security establishment repeatedly recommended an offensive approach, while Netanyahu sought to preserve Hamas's rule in Gaza in order to weaken the Palestinian Authority and prevent progress toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict. According to the investigation, in 2018 Netanyahu again rejected the recommendation of the Shin Bet director and the defense minister to assassinate Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif. Netanyahu did not want to fight Hamas; he chose to buy quiet. He sent Mossad chief Yossi Cohen to ask the Qataris to transfer to Gaza the funds that had previously been transferred by the Palestinian Authority. The investigation also noted that Netanyahu received intelligence indicating that the Qatari money was being used by Hamas for military buildup and tunnel construction (Berman, 2024).

This pattern continued until October 7, 2023: the military kept warning, and Netanyahu kept ignoring the warnings. According to the investigation, IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi and Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar approached Netanyahu together and requested an urgent private meeting in order to warn him that the danger of war was real. Netanyahu refused to meet them. They met instead with Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and what was said in that meeting led Gallant to go public.

On October 1, 2023, six days before the Hamas attack, Netanyahu convened a meeting with the heads of the security establishment. The Shin Bet chief presented an operational plan to eliminate Hamas's senior leadership, including Sinwar and Deif, and the chief of staff warned that Israel needed to prepare for a major campaign against Hamas. Netanyahu again ignored the warning and instead demanded that the issue of IDF readiness be blurred.

The IDF investigation into the October 7 failure, which examined the intelligence conception before the massacre and the military's performance, also addressed the political leadership. According to the investigation, "three months before the attack, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the military to shift its focus to Iran, Hezbollah and the West Bank while de-escalating the Gaza front" (Zitun, 2025).

On May 23, 2024, the IDF confirmed in an official response to a freedom-of-information request filed by the Hatzlacha NGO that between March and July 2023, Netanyahu received four warning documents from the IDF Intelligence Directorate regarding an “imminent danger of military escalation.” Then-Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar also told Netanyahu directly in July 2023: “I am warning you that war is incoming. I can’t give an exact day and time. But this is the warning” (Eyal, 2024).

Researchers at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) explained that Netanyahu’s disregard for the security establishment’s warnings had an additional motive: not only the desire to preserve Hamas’s rule, but also growing hostility toward the security establishment because reserve soldiers and officers had joined the protest against his government’s policies. According to the researchers, the political echelon viewed the military with criticism and suspicion, and extended that suspicion to the intelligence warnings the military conveyed during that same year (Michael & Padan, 2025).

According to various reports, the Egyptians also warned Netanyahu of the approaching war. As early as October 9, 2023, two days after the massacre, Ynet reported that about ten days before Hamas’s surprise attack, the Egyptian intelligence minister had warned Netanyahu of “something unusual, a terrible operation” that was about to come from Gaza. The Associated Press also reported that Egypt had warned Israel in advance, citing an Egyptian intelligence official who said Egypt had repeatedly spoken with Israeli officials about “something big” (Goldenberg, 2023).

In March 2026, Channel 12 News, in a report by Amit Segal, aired a recording of Ziv Agmon, Netanyahu’s spokesperson, saying, among other things: “Likud has ended its career. The Egyptians need to release the recording of the call with Bibi — he’s finished” (Lis, 2026).

Microdose

“We will discuss the astonishing document Netanyahu has published, his response to the State Comptroller, which reveals a security establishment in a state of total coma, and the strategic failure on October 7 — the security and intelligence agencies did not pass on to the prime minister information that could have pointed to a reality different from the one presented to him.”

— Moti Castel, *The Main Edition*, Channel 14, February 7, 2026.

In this example, we can identify the media amplification of a leaked document composed of **cherry-picked** pieces of information selected by an interested party; its use to **cast suspicion**

on the security establishment; and its treatment of the event itself without a shred of evidence. Added to this are the conspiratorial features of **excessive suspicion** toward these bodies and the attribution of **malicious intent**.

B. The “Traitors from Within” Conspiracy

Warning

This sub-narrative feeds on the crisis that the October 7 failure created for many Israelis: how could Hamas have surprised Israel’s sophisticated intelligence apparatus and temporarily overwhelmed an army as powerful as the IDF? The gap between the IDF’s strength and Hamas’s relative weakness, and between that imbalance and the scale and horror of Hamas’s attack, deepened the crisis both logically and emotionally.

This crisis laid the groundwork for a conspiracy theory that offered a simple, convenient answer — one that confirmed believers’ assumptions about Israel’s mythologized power and reinforced their political views: the attack was made possible, and succeeded, because of “traitors from within” — people at various levels of the security establishment who helped the enemy in order to harm Netanyahu’s government.

This conspiracy theory appeared on October 7 itself, as documented by *The Seventh Eye*. It spread on social media and was echoed consistently and unmistakably by Netanyahu supporters, by people close to him, and even by Netanyahu himself. Its spread was aided by Netanyahu’s use of dog whistles, including social media posts that were published and then deleted. But above all, it was aided by his insistence, even when answering direct questions, on not clearly denying the conspiracy theory, not condemning those who spread it, and even hinting at it ambiguously (B.Z., 2023).

Over time, the theory began to spread more explicitly beyond social media as well, in media outlets loyal to Netanyahu, such as Channel 14 and Galei Israel. It also began to generate sub-conspiracies, including the “spy from the south” theory, which was promoted, among others, by MKs Tally Gotliv of Likud and Almog Cohen of Otzma Yehudit.

This sub-narrative also serves as a foundation for other false narratives about October 7 and the war: the “traitors from within” did not warn the political leadership in advance, did not wake Netanyahu in time, and did not respond as required.

Refuting

There was no betrayal from within on October 7. There is no evidence whatsoever to support this false story. Conspiracy theories often rely on fragments of information or shards of fact that are assembled into a false mosaic of events. But in the case of “traitors from within,” those spreading the false allegations do not even try to build on pieces of reality.

This was the case, for example, with the attack on protest activist Shikma Bressler, which was based entirely on the fact that she is married to a Shin Bet officer. Around this innocent fact, baseless and fabricated stories were stitched together: that U.S. intelligence agencies had intercepted a call between her husband and Yahya Sinwar; that she met with the head of the Mossad because of that call; that she had ties to senior intelligence and security officials that supposedly led to the October 7 massacre; that she supposedly fled the country after the massacre; and that she deleted social media posts in an attempt to conceal “evidence.”

Another example is the “spy from the south” conspiracy, according to which a reserve officer infiltrated Southern Command with the help of the protest group Brothers in Arms and Yair Golan, chairman of The Democrats, in order to pass secret information to the enemy. In reality, this was a case involving a man with mental illness who had wandered around military bases; in any event, he did not pass information to any foreign entity (Curiel, 2026).

While MKs such as Almog Cohen and propaganda platforms such as Channel 14 published fabricated stories about mysterious warnings and a supposed “cover-up” of the affair in order to smear law-enforcement authorities (C14, 2024), the conspiracy had already been debunked in the media even before the legal proceedings were completed and a verdict was issued, including in an investigation broadcast on Kan 11’s *Real Time* by Bar Shem-Or (Kan 11, 2025a).

Microdose

“And I’m telling you, if anyone else had been in that position, anyone who saw all the signs... even if it wasn’t true, he would have set the country on fire and said, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, there was betrayal,’ in order to get all the votes of everyone who is certain there was betrayal here! And Netanyahu is preserving the state; he is not setting the country on fire.”

— Avi Shushan, *The Patriots*, Channel 14, February 8, 2026.

In this narrative, a dangerous conspiracy theory is presented according to which “there was betrayal.” This **conspiratorial narrative** includes **excessive suspicion** toward opponents of the government, the Shin Bet, the security establishment, and everyone accused of being part of the betrayal. It also clearly attributes **malicious intent**: the “traitors from within” supposedly

sought to betray the state and help Hamas carry out the October 7 massacre in order to bring down the government.

Smearing and discrediting the alleged traitors are central here, as is **immunity to evidence**: the facts do not matter — not even the fact that the Shin Bet director publicly stated that there was no betrayal. Finally, this narrative also glorifies Prime Minister Netanyahu as part of his **election propaganda**.

C. The Security Leadership Did Not Wake Netanyahu Before Hamas’s Attack

Warning

This sub-narrative has been promoted by the political leadership and Prime Minister Netanyahu since the beginning of the war. Its purpose is clear: Netanyahu did not know, and therefore did not act. He did not fail; he is not responsible, and he certainly is not to blame — because he was not woken in time.

Over time, this narrative developed in an effort to take root among the public. According to the false logic behind it, the reason the Shin Bet and the security establishment as a whole kept Netanyahu out of the loop during the critical early morning hours of October 7 is that they are part of Israel’s “deep state,” which supposedly controls the country in practice: they are the real sovereign, not the elected political leadership.

This conspiracy theory serves as fertile ground for many other false narratives, since the “deep state” supposedly controls every center of decision-making in the country. It is malicious, seeks to replace right-wing rule, and believes any means are justified. Only within this logic can the claim that the Shin Bet chose not to wake Netanyahu sound reasonable or plausible.

Refuting

This claim is baseless. As early as February 2025, following a Channel 12 News report, the Prime Minister’s Office admitted that “the message about developments on the night of October 7 was conveyed to Netanyahu’s military secretary in the middle of the night, and not after 6:00 a.m.” (Segal, 2025). In February 2026, it was reported that Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar testified before the State Comptroller that “as early as 3:03 a.m., indications were received of unusual Hamas activity. Ronen Bar left his home and family in the middle of the night and drove from his community in the Sharon region to Shin Bet headquarters in Tel Aviv to review the material. At 5:00 a.m., he instructed his people to ensure Netanyahu was woken. And he

showed the State Comptroller’s staff that by 6:00 a.m., there was already documentation of his order” (103FM, 2026).

The facts show that even after Netanyahu was brought into the picture, there was no meaningful command or coordination. This was evident in the long time it took to regain control of the communities near Gaza, and in the first days and weeks of the war, when chaos prevailed and civilians provided solutions for themselves — and even for IDF soldiers — in the face of the dysfunction of the state and its institutions.

Netanyahu’s office diary, published only after a petition by the Hatzlacha NGO, shows that on the morning of October 7, even after he was “woken,” it took Netanyahu an hour and a half to leave his home for the Kirya military headquarters (Persico, 2024).

As horrific testimonies about the ongoing massacre spread across social media and the press, the prime minister disappeared from public view. Only five hours later did Netanyahu release a video declaring that Israel was at war. The next day, he released another short video. Only on the evening of October 9, 2023 — two and a half days after the attack began — did Netanyahu himself appear and address the media. Accounts from that period described the shock that gripped Netanyahu and his government, and his main preoccupation with framing the failure in a way that served him and absolved him of responsibility, rather than managing the war on the front and the home front.

Microdose

“In the end, this is the body that brings the information, whether it is Military Intelligence or the Shin Bet, and that is the information he received. But compared with this intelligence failure, the prime minister, whom they also did not wake that day [...] I remember, on the first day of the war, the only one who came in determined and said, ‘We will turn the tables,’ despite the fact that they did not wake him, despite the fact that they did not bring the warnings to his desk, despite the fact that months earlier, and even a week earlier, in the final assessments, they had determined that Hamas was deterred. He came in and produced that turnaround against the organizations, against the protests...”

— Topaz Luk, communications adviser to Prime Minister Netanyahu, *The Patriots*, Channel 14, February 10, 2026.

This narrative begins by **smearing and discrediting** Israel’s intelligence agencies. It relies on **excessive suspicion and the attribution of malicious intent**, both regarding the alleged failure to pass information to the prime minister and regarding the supposedly misleading information conveyed before the attack. Although this claim has already been debunked, this

conspiratorial narrative is also characterized by **immunity to evidence**: no matter what facts are presented to conspiracy believers, they will claim that the facts themselves are part of the conspiracy.

It is important to emphasize again: the broader narrative of rewriting history would not have spread, or been internalized by parts of the public, had a state commission of inquiry been established — the very body meant to provide authoritative answers about responsibility for the failure and the massacre.

D. The Myth of the Second Day

Warning

This false sub-narrative promotes Netanyahu's claim that already on the day after the terrible failure of October 7, he foresaw Hamas and Hezbollah being defeated, Assad falling, and Iran being dealt a decisive blow (Gatenio, 2025). This message aligns with the narratives of "total victory" and the "War of Rebirth," and serves the same purpose: to recast the gravest failure and disaster in Israel's history as a victory and a success — a "period of miracles" (The Jerusalem Post Staff, 2024).

Netanyahu began spreading the false "myth of the second day" narrative in an opening statement at a press conference he convened on December 9, 2024, the day after Bashar al-Assad's regime collapsed in Syria and the rebels seized power. That event caught Netanyahu by surprise, as it did intelligence agencies around the world, and its roots lay not in any Israeli master plan but in the weakening of the Russian military due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. "On October 9, two days after the war broke out, I told the heads of the local authorities in the south: 'We will change the face of the Middle East,'" Netanyahu declared.

Later that month, in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, Netanyahu claimed that from the second day of the war he had acted according to a carefully planned grand strategy to bring down Hamas, Hezbollah, and Assad, and to change the face of the entire Middle East (Kaufman, 2024).

Refuting

A review by *The Seventh Eye* of Netanyahu's statements from those days shows that the truth is very far from this false narrative. In reality, in the first days of the war Netanyahu was in shock and could not even settle on a precise definition of the war's objectives. Not only did he not

promise the Israeli public that he would change the Middle East; he did not even dare promise the elimination of Hamas (Gatenio, 2025).

In any case, as will be explained in the refutation of the next narrative, the face of the Middle East has not changed in the way this narrative suggests: Hamas is still operating and armed in Gaza, Hezbollah continues to demonstrate its capacity to exact a heavy toll on Israel, the Iranian regime has not fallen, and Iran's nuclear program has not been destroyed.

Microdose

"I said on the second day of the war that we would change the face of the Middle East, and we are doing it."

— Benjamin Netanyahu, *The Patriots*, Channel 14, June 17, 2025.

This narrative is characterized first by the setting of **impossible expectations** that cannot be measured and cannot be used to define success, victory, or defeat. What does it mean to change the face of the Middle East? That is never stated. We can also identify **cherry-picking** in the presentation of reality: the massacre and the hostages are ignored, and the focus is placed on the military achievements of the war — even though whether the face of the Middle East has in fact changed, and in what direction, remains highly debatable.

E. Netanyahu Single-Handedly Led the War of Rebirth and Achieved Total Victory, Despite Pressure to Surrender and Defeatism at Home and Abroad

Warning

This false sub-narrative was created to serve three purposes.

The first is to glorify Prime Minister Netanyahu's leadership and create the impression that when he has the information and controls the war effort, there are only achievements and victories — in contrast to October 7, when he was supposedly kept out of the loop, did not control events, and therefore the disaster unfolded as it did.

The second purpose is to label those applying "pressure" from home and abroad as the people preventing Netanyahu from managing the war and achieving success, and to convince the public that if it had been up to them, Israel would have "surrendered" and ended the war long ago. The seemingly vague phrase "pressure from home and abroad" relies on other false

narratives, through which it becomes clear who these supposed sources of pressure, appeasement, and defeatism are: opponents of the government, the military, the Shin Bet, the opposition, and an antisemitic world supposedly arrayed against us.

The third purpose is to present the greatest disaster in Israel's history as a victory: an attempt to make people forget October 7 and the difficult days that followed; the captivity of the Israeli hostages in Gaza; and the many people killed and wounded, physically and mentally. This is done by directing the spotlight exclusively toward achievements and successes, and by spreading the message that the goal Netanyahu set for the war from the very first moment was to change the Middle East — and that he succeeded.

Refuting

Hamas remains active in the Gaza Strip, and its military and political capabilities have not been destroyed. Netanyahu signed a hostage-release deal that provided for ending the war in Gaza, despite his repeated promises that only military pressure would bring the hostages home and that he would not end the war by non-military means — by “surrender,” as he himself defined it.

Turkey, Qatar, and the Palestinian Authority are part of Trump's Peace Council and of the forces expected to take part in his plan to rebuild the Gaza Strip, contrary to promises of mass expulsion and the forced demilitarization of Gaza.

The northern front has not been neutralized: Hezbollah continues to demonstrate its capacity to exact a heavy toll on Israel. The 12-day war with Iran did not eliminate Iran's military or offensive capabilities, as shown by the fact that Israel launched another war in order, once again, to remove the Iranian threat. As of this writing, that war too has ended without significant achievements and without fulfilling its objectives, while leaving more Israelis dead, wounded, and displaced.

Residents of the Gaza border communities and northern Israel who were evacuated, or who left their homes, have still not returned to their homes and communities. The damage caused by the war has not been repaired, and many homes still stand in ruins. Tens of thousands of soldiers have been serving in the reserves for nearly three years, and millions of Israeli citizens continue to live under physical threat.

All of this comes on top of the destruction and devastation the war has already caused:

1,163 people were killed in the October 7 massacre.

251 hostages were abandoned in captivity for many long months, and 41 hostages were killed in captivity instead of returning home alive.

In the two years that followed October 7, 2023, according to the Ministry of Defense, 1,152 soldiers were killed; more than 22,000 wounded people were admitted to the Defense Ministry's Rehabilitation Department; and more than 6,500 relatives were added to Israel's bereaved families, including about 1,973 bereaved parents, 351 widows, 885 orphans, and 3,481 bereaved brothers and sisters (Israel Ministry of Defense, 2025).

Additional casualties have been recorded since. For example, the Ministry of Defense reported that between Memorial Day 2025 and Memorial Day 2026, "174 fallen soldiers were added to the count of the fallen, along with another 54 disabled veterans who died as a result of their disabilities and were recognized during the year as fallen in Israel's wars" (Israel Ministry of Defense, 2026).

Beyond the stark numbers published on the Defense Ministry website, it should be remembered that the Israeli government fell silent and disappeared on October 7 and in the weeks that followed, leaving its citizens to fend for themselves. That abandonment continued throughout the war, as the Israeli government, led by Netanyahu, chose to leave its citizens in captivity in Gaza for the sake of the same vague "total victory" that never arrived.

The claim that Netanyahu stood alone against pressure from home and abroad is also false. Protocols revealed since the outbreak of the war, as well as testimony from senior officials, prove otherwise. Moreover, the "pressure" framed in this false narrative as surrender and defeatism was aimed at reaching a deal to release the hostages from captivity in Gaza — not out of defeatism, but in order to fulfill the war's foremost objective: bringing all the living hostages home alive. Netanyahu failed to achieve that objective.

Microdose

"The entire Middle East has changed from one end to the other, and we should give the prime minister credit: he stood almost alone [...] Netanyahu acted despite them, against the military echelon, and led us to all these achievements."

— Limor Samimian-Darash, *Saturday Night Edition*, Channel 14, February 21, 2026.

The tactic of **impossible expectations** appears here again, just as it did in the previous sub-narrative. Netanyahu is portrayed as the **persecuted victim** who acted alone in the face of military refusal, while **immunity to evidence** makes it possible to believe this claim without proof. Finally, this narrative **smears and casts suspicion** on the military echelon, which

allegedly opposed Netanyahu's plan to change the Middle East, obstructed him, and was proven deeply wrong.

F. Netanyahu Returned All the Hostages

Warning

Immediately after the body of the last hostage held in captivity, Ran Gvili, was returned, Netanyahu, his ministers, and his supporters launched a manipulative and false campaign claiming that the prime minister had succeeded in "returning all the hostages." Beyond rewriting history in his favor, this false narrative is intended to absolve Netanyahu of the blame that attached to him during the war as someone who repeatedly abandoned the hostages in captivity in Gaza.

Refuting

During the murderous terrorist attack, 251 civilians and soldiers — including babies, children, young women, and elderly people — were abducted to the Gaza Strip. They joined the four civilians and soldiers abducted by Hamas in the years before the October 7 massacre. Forty-one male and female hostages were murdered by their captors or killed by IDF fire, and dozens of Israeli citizens were left in captivity for many months, in some cases for two full years.

The hostages were abandoned twice: first when they were abducted to Gaza, and then again when the prime minister, who had opportunities to bring them home alive much earlier in the war, chose to leave them in captivity so that the war in Gaza would not end, his government would not collapse, and scrutiny and investigations into the road to the massacre would not begin.

Netanyahu was the one who consistently sabotaged every chance of a comprehensive deal. A body of journalistic investigations from Israel and abroad, testimony from within the negotiating team, and explanations from the most senior figures in the security and political establishments all pointed to Netanyahu as the central actor who obstructed the efforts to return the hostages and thwarted the deals for their release. According to many of these testimonies, he did so for political and personal reasons.

Bar Shem-Or of Kan 11's *Real Time* revealed in his investigation *Strike at the Headquarters* how the Israeli government and its leader worked to dismantle the Hostages and Missing Families

Forum in order to silence opposition to the government. This included portraying the struggle to bring the hostages home as a political campaign to topple Netanyahu, establishing the Tikva Forum, and making direct and indirect threats against hostage families (Kan 11, 2025b). Netanyahu did not embrace the hostage families; he attacked them. He did not return the hostages; he abandoned them.

For example, the investigation revealed that the first call from Netanyahu's office to the forum came only on October 15: the forum was asked to send family representatives to meet with the prime minister that same day. But three relatives of hostages who were not affiliated with the forum were unexpectedly added to the meeting through Shmuel Meidad, known as Zangi, CEO of the far-right organization Honenu. What those families — who would later become the Tikva Forum — had in common was that they lived in the West Bank (Egri, 2025c).

The investigation further revealed that from the very beginning of the families' forum, hostage families were repeatedly met with warnings and even threats from Knesset members and ministers because of their public campaign. In meetings between representatives of the forum and various ministers and government officials, they heard the same message from all of them: their criticism of the government was harming them and their loved ones held in captivity, and they would be better off keeping a lower profile.

Freed hostage Rom Braslavski testified in an interview on Channel 13's *Hatzinor* about two years of captivity, hunger, abuse, and the loss of hope and the will to live (VERTEX, 2025). He described the painful truth Netanyahu worked tirelessly to hide and whitewash: that Braslavski and the other hostages had been abandoned for two full years.

Last August, Channel 13 aired *The Hostage Deals Investigation* by Raviv Drucker and Neria Kraus. The investigation showed, stage by stage, how from the beginning of the war onward Netanyahu thwarted opportunities to bring back the hostages, despite numerous proposals drafted in accordance with Israel's interests, while denying, undermining, or violating proposals and agreements that he himself had formulated or approved (Egri, 2025e).

An agreement to release all the hostages in exchange for ending the fighting had been on the table from the very beginning, according to testimony from senior officials in Israel, Qatar, and the United States. But ending the fighting was unacceptable to Netanyahu's far-right political partners, the Religious Zionism and Otzma Yehudit factions. Every poll at the time predicted that the collapse of Netanyahu's coalition would lead to his defeat in an election, force him to face his criminal charges like any ordinary citizen, and bring him before a state commission of inquiry. The immediate victims of Netanyahu's political refusal to accept a deal were the Israeli citizens held captive in the Gaza Strip.

At the end of 2024, President Trump forced Netanyahu to accept a comprehensive hostage-release deal, which entered into force on January 19, 2025. The deal was divided into stages. Its second stage was intended to return all the remaining hostages to Israeli territory — and end the war. However, on the day negotiations over the second stage were supposed to begin, Netanyahu unilaterally violated the ceasefire agreement, ordered the IDF to resume fighting, and blew up the deal.

In September 2025, with Trump growing closer to the Qataris on one side and the Qatargate scandals in the Prime Minister's Office on the other, a desperate Netanyahu took a dangerous gamble: he ordered an attack on senior Hamas officials in Doha, Qatar's capital, while they were meeting to discuss the American proposal for a comprehensive deal that had been placed on the table just two days earlier. Netanyahu ordered the assassination of the Hamas representatives before they had a chance to respond to the proposal.

The gamble failed — not because the strike missed the target entirely and hit none of the leaders of the terrorist organization, but because it further increased Qatari pressure to end the war and gave Trump the final leverage he needed to force Netanyahu into an agreement, including a humiliating apology to the Qataris. Netanyahu was forced to agree to the proposal he had rejected for two years, under unprecedented American pressure and growing international isolation caused by the unprecedented destruction and killing in Gaza.

Even when Israeli citizens took to the streets in huge numbers to make clear to their prime minister that, for them, total victory meant saving our brothers and sisters from captivity by a cruel terrorist organization, he refused to listen. Instead, he briefed against the protesters and the hostage families, sent his mouthpieces to label them as people interested only in “toppling” him, and — with peak cynicism — tried to silence them with false claims that they were harming the negotiations, while he himself was doing everything in his power to sabotage them.

How did Netanyahu manage to do this again and again, including blowing up the last hostage deal while it was still underway, while the Israeli public remained in the dark and convinced that Hamas alone was refusing every deal? Drucker's answer was clear: because media outlets that served Netanyahu and his government concealed the truth at decisive moments and echoed the government's spins at critical junctures.

The election period gives the Israeli media an opportunity for correction. After two years of war in which the press failed to oversee the government and its conduct, and failed to properly fulfill its role as democracy's fourth estate and as a public servant, it now has the ability to do its job and act as a gatekeeper between the false narratives of politicians and public figures and the public.

Presenting these narratives as false, refuting them, and mapping the interests behind their dissemination is the most effective and appropriate way to confront them — rather than amplifying them.

Microdose

“I do want to say something about the book *Mr. Abandonment*, which the Kaplan camp published and distributed in all kinds of places, that same libel they attached to Prime Minister Netanyahu. This man returned all the living hostages, almost all the fallen, returned Hadar Goldin — how can you spread a blood libel against the prime minister in this context? It’s simply outrageous.”

— Moshe Cohen-Eliya, *The Patriots*, Channel 14, November 9, 2025.

This narrative again presents **impossible expectations**, as the goal of returning the hostages shifted repeatedly over the course of the war according to the political leadership’s needs and in order to blur its failures. The narrative **smears and discredits** anyone making the correct and truthful claim: Netanyahu did not return all the living hostages. On the contrary, several dozen hostages returned only after death. Because this narrative is repeated endlessly, it is also marked by **immunity to evidence**: the facts speak for themselves.

Recommendations for the Media for the Overarching Narrative of Rewriting History

In every interview with a government spokesperson about the war, journalists should keep a list of the original statements from October 2023 and present them against the claims being made now. This is the strongest tool against moving the goalposts — that is, changing the benchmark for success in the war while the war is still underway.

Do not adopt new terminology — such as “War of Rebirth” or “the October 7 event” — without explicitly discussing its meaning.

In the absence of a state commission of inquiry, every report should make clear that any such claim is a political claim that has not been authoritatively established.

Do not allow documented history to be rewritten. For example, do not echo Netanyahu’s claim that he “returned all the hostages”; debunk it using the investigations and findings published so far.

Do not publish partial transcripts without stating explicitly that they are partial, and without identifying the actor who selected the quoted excerpts.

False Narrative No. 6: The “Deep State” Conspiracy

Warning

During the election period, we are likely to encounter the claim that the judiciary, the military, the intelligence services, the police, the media, civil society, and academia are secretly coordinating against Netanyahu, the Likud, and the parties that support him. This narrative is based on a global conspiracy theory that has also taken hold in Israel: the idea that a shadow government prevents the elected government from acting and governing, effectively runs the country in its place, and works to undermine it in order to entrench its own power.

This is an umbrella conspiracy - one from which other conspiracy theories branch off, or from which they draw inspiration. One example is the “fabricated cases” conspiracy, which claims that hundreds or thousands of people associated with the “Deep State” conspired to manufacture criminal cases against Netanyahu.

In the version of this conspiracy promoted by Netanyahu’s supporters, Netanyahu alone embodies the Right. When promoted by other elements of the far right, the “Deep State” is said to be acting against the real people and against authentic Judaism.

The “Deep State” is said to include the legal and law-enforcement system: the High Court of Justice, judges, the State Attorney’s Office, attorneys general, the Military Advocate General’s Corps, and the Police Internal Investigations Department. It also includes the media and all journalists, except those who echo the messages of the conspiracy’s promoters; the security establishment, including the IDF, Military Intelligence, the Shin Bet, and the Israel Police; academia; civil-society organizations; political activists; teachers; and any other center of power or authority.

In practice, the “Deep State” includes anyone who challenges the person promoting the conspiracy, while anyone who accepts that person’s authority without question is excluded from it. As a result, different institutions and individuals can be added to or removed from the blacklist arbitrarily and without warning.

This is how the “fabricated cases” conspiracy was constructed: as a way of responding to the suspicions, and later the criminal charges, against Netanyahu without addressing their

substance. Like other conspiracies, this one is supported by and linked to additional conspiracies and false narratives, such as the “Netanyahu is above the law” narrative.

In the electoral context, this narrative is designed to portray candidates and parties as seeking to seize control of the state by undemocratic means, or as cynically exploiting the democratic process. In the context of the upcoming election, its purpose is to present the current opposition parties, which span the political spectrum, as partners in a malicious “Deep State” - illegitimate and dangerous.

Identification Tools

The foundation of this narrative is its **conspiratorial character**, and it contains all the classic markers of conspiratorial thinking. It is **immune to evidence** and attributes **secret, coordinated, malicious intent** to a vast group of people and institutions. The narrative is based on **smearing and casting suspicion** on institutions, public servants, activists, and professionals, rather than addressing a specific event or issue. It also presents the government as a **persecuted victim**.

This narrative may appear in many concrete forms, but its structure remains the same: it is a manipulative conspiracy theory.

Refuting

As explained in the introduction, one of the central features of conspiratorial thinking is “immunity to evidence”: the conspiracy does not collapse when counterevidence is presented, because that evidence is treated as part of the conspiracy itself. This makes confronting the spread and effects of conspiracy theories especially difficult.

In response to this umbrella conspiracy, it should be stated plainly that no evidence has ever been presented or found of an organized, coordinated, secret, and malicious plot of this kind among election candidates, state institutions, government agencies, civil servants, the media, or senior figures in the security or legal establishments.

The most effective way to expose such a statement as conspiratorial is to point to the markers of conspiratorial thinking: the attribution of malicious intent, secret coordination, excessive suspicion, and immunity to evidence.

Microdose

“The attorney general is only one of the arms of the ‘Deep State’ - the left-wing jurists who did everything they could to transfer power from the people and their elected representatives to the bureaucracy and the left-wing jurists. It has reached the point where today we live in a country where the highest decision-making body is the High Court of Justice, which is an unelected body.”

– Attorney Shay Galili, Likud Comptroller, *News of the Night*, Channel 14, February 23, 2026.

This is a typical example in which the markers of **conspiratorial thinking** can be identified. The elected government is portrayed as the **persecuted victim** of state institutions - in this case, the legal system - that supposedly **operate in coordination and secrecy** with other unnamed actors and institutions, described as “arms of the Deep State,” with **malicious intent** to seize control of the government and the state.

The statement also contains the marker of **smearing and discrediting**: instead of addressing the issue under discussion, it attacks the source of the information - the legal system as a whole.

Recommendations for the Media

During broadcasts, when a speaker claims the existence of a “Deep State,” “fabricated cases,” or “selective enforcement,” ask a follow-up question requesting specific evidence. Do not treat a general assertion as self-evident.

In coverage, distinguish between legitimate and reasoned criticism of a specific institution or figure and the portrayal of that institution or figure as part of a coordinated and malicious system - that is, as part of a conspiracy.

Whenever this narrative appears, mention conspiracies that have already been refuted, such as the “spy from the south” libel, in order to show that this is part of a recurring pattern.

Avoid framing sweeping claims, such as “the public believes Netanyahu’s trial is biased,” as facts. Such framing embeds the conspiracy rather than dismantling it.

False Narrative No. 7: The Media Are Traitorous and Politically Biased

Warning

This narrative is aimed directly at you - journalists and media outlets - and it is the hardest to inoculate against, because every attempt to refute it is framed as proof that the narrative is true. Its purpose is to undermine public trust in media outlets and journalists that are not political propaganda platforms masquerading as journalism.

This narrative will include false attacks on media outlets, portraying them as liars, inciters, “leftists,” and traitors whose sole purpose is to conspire against a particular candidate or party. It will also claim that the truth can be found only among platforms and media figures identified with that same candidate or party. The narrative also includes calls for boycotts and incitement to violence.

Delegitimizing the media is essential to the broader effort of false propaganda, because the media’s role is to expose the very manipulations on which such propaganda relies. This narrative also undermines the possibility of holding fair elections based on informed choices by citizens who receive information through the press.

Tools for Identification

One indicator of this narrative is the sweeping nature of the attack - a **hasty generalization** - directed at entire channels, or even at “the media” as a whole, usually without any specific basis. Alongside this, we will also see **smear and discrediting tactics** directed at specific journalists whose common denominator is that they have published critical reporting about a particular candidate or party. This is different from legitimate criticism of a specific article or statement.

We will also see **cherry-picking**: selectively choosing isolated examples without context, or ignoring contradictory statistical data. Another recurring feature is **polarization** - creating a sharp divide between “patriotic media,” meaning “Israel’s media,” and “traitorous media,” meaning media that are “not Israel’s.”

Although this narrative is as old as the media itself, in the current era, in which propaganda platforms that use the appearance and rhetoric of media outlets have become highly prominent, we will also see the cynical use of criticism against those platforms as a lever for attacks.

This manipulative narrative can also be identified through **trolling**: provocation intended to elicit an emotional response. The structural and sweeping attack on the media is intended to create fear and deterrence among media outlets and journalists, and to produce a chilling effect when it comes to critical coverage of the candidates and parties behind the attack.

Microdose

“They are a bunch of liars, whose whole idea is really to divide, to pit people against each other, and to poison. Do you understand why you must not watch the news on Friday evening?”

– Yinon Magal, *The Patriots*, Channel 14.

This quote presents a **blanket smear and discrediting attack** on all channels and journalists - except for the propaganda platform masquerading as a media outlet - instead of criticism of a specific publication or statement. It also contains features of **conspiratorial thinking**, suggesting that the media has a secret goal of “dividing and poisoning” the public out of **malicious intent**, a claim that is not based on data or evidence. The most prominent feature here is the **polarization** the statement seeks to create between “the real media” - Channel 14 - and “the poison channels,” meaning the actual media.

Refuting

Criticism of politicians - certainly those in power - is not treason. It is the central role of the media in a democratic state, and the media itself is an integral part of the institutions that make democracy possible. Labeling such criticism as “sourness,” “poison,” or a “witch hunt” is an attempt by public figures to deflect criticism instead of addressing it. The attempt to portray criticism as political persecution stems from a clear political interest: elected officials’ desire to be free of public criticism and oversight.

More specifically, claims of political bias in the media - and certainly claims of a “conspiracy” - are baseless when they come from Netanyahu, the Likud, or the bloc of parties that support them. Since Netanyahu and the Likud have been in power since 2009, apart from a year and a

half, both “source bias” and “ownership bias” in the media naturally tend to work in their favor, because of their control over sources of information and their influence over regulation. Major media outlets, such as the *Israel Hayom* group, are identified with the right, while others, such as Channels 12 and Kan 11, include senior journalists and panelists identified with Netanyahu.

Investigations conducted by *The Seventh Eye* in recent years have shown again and again how the mainstream media - not the propaganda channels already devoted to the government’s talking points - adopts Netanyahu’s narratives and serves his interests, especially at decisive moments. This was the case in news coverage of the *Iron Swords* war, in which the main television news broadcasts disseminated false and engineered narratives handed to them by various interested parties - from spokespeople in the Prime Minister’s Office to unnamed “senior officials” (Egri, 2024, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d, 2025e, 2025f; The Seventh Eye Editorial Staff, 2025).

The narratives promoted included: “We are very close to a hostage deal,” “ Hamas is the party refusing hostage deals,” “Only military pressure will save the hostages,” “There are no innocent civilians in Gaza,” “There is no hunger or humanitarian crisis in Gaza,” “The Philadelphi Corridor is the rock of our existence,” “We must not leave the Netzarim Corridor,” “We are at the stage of defeating Hamas,” and more.

The television channels, which are the main source of news consumption in Israel, also cooperated almost fully with Netanyahu’s demand to take over prime-time news from time to time, interrupt news broadcasts, and air his statements - sometimes prerecorded. They did so even though he has boycotted those same channels for more than five years, refused to give journalistic interviews, and held press conferences only rarely, and even then allowed only a handful of questions.

In addition, investigations published by *The Seventh Eye* found that Netanyahu’s coalition consistently receives disproportionate representation compared with opposition parties - more than its share in the current Knesset and far more than its strength according to polling over the past three years. For example, a study conducted over three and a half months in 2026 found that all the news channels - 11, 12, and 13 - as well as the public radio stations Kan Reshet Bet and Galei Tzahal, gave coalition representatives 68% of airtime and screen time, compared with only 32% for opposition representatives and new candidates in the “anti-Netanyahu” bloc (Egri, 2026a, 2026b).

Recommendations for the Media

Do not become defensive in every appearance - that only feeds the narrative. Instead, consistently present high-quality journalistic work.

Whenever someone attacks “the media” in general terms, ask for a specific example, and correct the record if the example is inaccurate.

Avoid inviting panelists who systematically use language that reflects delegitimization of the media. This is not “presenting different viewpoints” - it is giving a platform to a structural attack.

Be transparent about journalistic errors. Acknowledging a specific mistake strengthens overall credibility and reduces the power of sweeping generalizations.

False Narrative No. 8: The “Ethnic Demon²” and a War on Religion

Warning

According to this narrative, the parties of the left and center represent an Ashkenazi, secular elite that seeks to oppress Mizrahim and religious Jews in Israel and to undermine the country’s traditional and Jewish character. The narrative relies on the logic of identity politics, according to which a candidate’s ethnic, communal, religious, or similar identity defines who they are and dictates how they will act.

In the Israeli context, this false narrative promotes the claim that an Ashkenazi-secular elite controls the state, reshaping it in its own image while excluding and oppressing anyone outside that elite.

During the election period, this narrative will be used to mark candidates and parties as part of that same elite, and to present them to the Israeli public as seeking to oppress Mizrahim and Orthodox religious Jews and to wage war against Orthodox Judaism.

This narrative will also be directed against Mizrahi and Orthodox religious politicians themselves, who will be portrayed as “useful idiots” of the elite, or as people seeking to improve their own status by aligning themselves with it.

Naturally, this narrative will be aimed primarily at the current opposition parties, in an attempt to delegitimize them.

² The “ethnic demon” is a well-known term in Israeli sociological and political discourse referring to the historical and ongoing divide between Mizrahi Jews, whose families came primarily from the Middle East and North Africa, and Ashkenazi Jews, whose families came primarily from Europe. The term evokes deeply rooted socioeconomic, cultural, and political inequalities, as well as the recurring use of this divide in Israeli politics.

Identification Tools

During the upcoming election campaign, we are likely to encounter systematic attempts to create sharp **polarization** between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, and between “real” Mizrahim and “fake” Mizrahim - a distinction supposedly determined by whether they oppose a specific political candidate.

We will see **smear and discrediting tactics** directed at Mizrahim who support the left or oppose the Netanyahu government, using labels such as “Handmaid” or “useful idiot.” We will also see **emotional manipulation** that exploits the real historical pain of discrimination against Mizrahim, stokes moral outrage, and tries to generate fear of secular Ashkenazim who supposedly want to “dismantle Judaism in Israel.”

This narrative is based on **logical and rhetorical fallacies**, above all **hasty generalization** about two groups based on ethnic origin; the use of **fake or irrelevant experts** to support the narrative; a **false dichotomy** according to which one cannot be both Mizrahi and opposed to the government; and **conspiracy theories**.

In this case, the conspiracy theory is the “Deep State” conspiracy, which holds that Ashkenazim are part of the same secret, coordinated group seeking to control the state from the shadows. The theory relies on **excessive suspicion** and attributes **malicious intent** to “Ashkenazim” on the premise that “**something must be wrong**.” Like every conspiracy theory, it is **immune to evidence**. At its center stands the figure of the persecuted victim: the Mizrahi Jew or the Orthodox Jew.

Refuting

There is no dispute that structural discrimination against Mizrahim exists in Israel. This discrimination began with the founding of the state, was extremely blatant in the past, and, despite many changes, still persists in Israeli society today.

But the fabricated conclusion that this discrimination now exists with renewed intensity because of a deliberate effort by an Ashkenazi and secular elite to seize control of the centers of power and decision-making in the state, in order to exclude Mizrahim and traditional Jews and dismantle the Jewish state, is entirely baseless.

As with the “Deep State” plot, this conspiracy theory can be debunked by noting that it lacks evidence and by clearly defining it for what it is: a conspiracy theory.

The absurdity of this narrative is especially easy to spot when its spokespeople are themselves Ashkenazim who supposedly belong to the elite. It can also be identified through the coordinated attacks on Mizrahim who dare to challenge the lie.

Microdose

“You have to understand, anyone who looks at this Kaplan protest sees a class-based, ethnic protest, where anyone who is Mizrahi is treated as suspect. And they always have their useful Mizrahim, like Naama Lazimi, who will do the dirty work.”

– Moshe Cohen-Eliya, “The Main Edition,” Channel 14, February 4, 2026.

Here, we can easily identify the use of **polarization** - portraying the protest as ethnic - alongside **smear and discrediting tactics**, as in the phrase “useful Mizrahim,” and **emotional manipulation** that exploits the pain caused by discrimination against Mizrahim in Israel in order to attack a specific political side. These are joined by conspiratorial features, including the figure of the **persecuted Mizrahi** and the attribution of **suspicion and malicious intent** to activists protesting against the government.

Recommendations for the Media

Media outlets should ensure that discussions focus on the ideological, political, economic, and social agenda each party and candidate offers; on their past actions; and on their plans for the future - not on their ethnic origin or communal identity.

When a speaker uses terms such as “useful Mizrahim” or “Handmaid,” this should be explicitly identified as delegitimizing language rather than criticism.

Panels should include Mizrahim from across the political spectrum, so that “Mizrahi” is not reduced to a marker of a single political position.

Media outlets should avoid inviting Ashkenazi panelists to speak on behalf of the Mizrahi public, as doing so plays directly into the narrative of the “useful Mizrahi.”

It is important to distinguish clearly between historical analysis and its current political use.

As with every conspiracy theory, the media’s role is to debunk it and expose the truth behind it.

False Narrative No. 9: Violent Ultranationalism Is “Of Israel”

Warning

During the coming election period, we are likely to encounter a narrative claiming that calls to commit war crimes and incitement to violence are a legitimate, even desirable, position of the “Israeli side” in the country.

Since the October 7 massacre, a “discourse of revenge” has spread in Israel. It has been marked by incitement to violence and to the commission of war crimes in Gaza and against Palestinians in general. This discourse, which has taken root in Israeli public life despite being both immoral and unlawful, has also created a divide between the “proper Israeli,” who believes that “there are no innocents in Gaza and it should be flattened,” and the delusional leftists who do not.

According to this narrative, anyone who opposes war crimes is denounced and portrayed as a traitor who values the enemy’s lives over our children’s. This invented and manipulative distinction presents the public with a way to identify which candidates and parties are, among other things, “of Israel” - meaning that they care about the State of Israel and the security of its citizens - and which are “not of Israel” - meaning that they care more about Israel’s image in the world, human rights, and the rule of law than about the country’s future, its security, and the safety of its soldiers.

This narrative is designed to raise the level of hatred and racism in Israeli public discourse. It also connects to the narrative delegitimizing Israel’s Arab citizens, who are marked as an enemy within simply because they are Arabs, and to the narrative delegitimizing candidates and parties marked as “not of Israel” - in other words, as traitors.

Identification Tools

This narrative rests on a **false dichotomy** between those who are “for the Israeli public” and those who are “loyal to international law, human rights, and morality.” In reality, there is no contradiction between the two. Israeli patriotism does not conflict with support for upholding the law and basic morality; it requires it. Based on this false dichotomy, the narrative creates

sharp **polarization** between those who are “of Israel” and those who are “not of Israel,” while using **emotional manipulation** of the pain caused by the October 7 massacre and the war to legitimize violent, inciting, and unlawful statements.

Refuting

Incitement to violence and war crimes is not “of Israel.” Such incitement violates not only basic morality and human decency, but also Israeli law and the IDF’s ethical code, which, as part of this false narrative, is itself attacked as too “progressive” and as harmful to soldiers.

Under Section 144D2(a) of Israel’s Penal Law, 5737-1977, “Incitement to violence or terror,” a person who publishes a call to commit an act of violence or terror, or words of praise, approval, encouragement, support, or identification with such an act, may be liable to five years’ imprisonment if there is a real possibility that the publication will result in acts of violence or terror. Section 144D3 also criminalizes possession, for distribution, of a prohibited publication that incites to violence or terror.

The document “The Spirit of the IDF,” which defines and anchors the IDF’s ethical code, draws on four sources, as stated in the document itself: “The tradition of the IDF and its military heritage as the Israel Defense Forces; the tradition of the State of Israel, its democratic principles, laws and institutions; the tradition of the Jewish People throughout their history; universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life” (The iCenter, n.d., “The Spirit of the IDF” section).

The document further states that “The IDF and its soldiers are obligated to protect human dignity. Every human being is of value regardless of his or her origin, religion, nationality, gender, status or position.” In addition, under the value of “Purity of Arms,” it makes clear that “The IDF servicemen and women will use their weapons and force only for the purpose of their mission, only to the necessary extent and will maintain their humanity even during combat. IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property” (The iCenter, n.d., “Human Dignity” and “Purity of Arms” sections).

It is impossible to claim that statements inciting violence and war crimes are “of Israel” when they contradict Israeli law and the ethical norms accepted in Israel. Moreover, repeated incitement to violence and war crimes by politicians and media figures has caused enormous damage to the image of the State of Israel, contributed to challenges to its judicial sovereignty, and exposed many Israelis to prosecution and punishment under international law.

As a result, among other developments, South Africa filed a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague under the Genocide Convention; international arrest warrants were issued by the International Criminal Court for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity; and many Israelis fear arrest when visiting other countries.

In reality, those who harm the State of Israel and endanger its security are the people spreading incitement to violence and war crimes, not those who oppose it.

Microdose

“This incident is a serious moral failure, but not by the soldier. The person who should have broken that terror monument was not a lone soldier, but the great IDF. Not with a five-kilo hammer, but with a D9. Then the IDF would have taken pride in destroying infrastructure of incitement. Why is desecration grounds for dismissal? Return the fighter to combat, and above all, restore dignity to Judea as well.”

– Omer Rahamim, director general of the Yesha Council, *The Patriots*, Channel 14, March 9, 2026.

This is a typical example of **emotional manipulation** based on anger at the IDF for supposedly abandoning a lone soldier, while supporting criminal conduct through the use of a **false dichotomy** and **polarization** between the soldier, who is “of Israel,” and the supposedly defeatist IDF.

Recommendations for the Media

Incitement to violence is not a legitimate position in public debate and is prohibited by law. People who express themselves this way should not be invited to panels.

Whenever such a statement is made on live broadcast, it must be addressed immediately, and it must be made clear that such a statement is neither lawful nor legitimate. Silence is consent.

When covering international developments, such as the issuance of international arrest warrants, the connection should be made explicitly between those developments and the “discourse of revenge” spread by various public figures, including the most senior political representatives.

Avoid attempts to create a false balance. There is no opposing view to incitement to war crimes and violence. This is not a question of for or against. It is simply unlawful.

False Narrative No. 10: Stealing the Election

Warning

In the months before the election, and in the days after it, we are likely to encounter a systematic effort to cast doubt on the reliability of Israel's election system. This false narrative is one of the most dangerous, and also one of the most predictable, narratives of the current election year.

This narrative became especially prominent ahead of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, when President Donald Trump promoted a conspiracy theory claiming that the election was likely to be "rigged." After he lost to the opposing party's candidate, Joe Biden, the claim became the "stolen election" conspiracy: Trump and his allies claimed, without evidence, that millions of votes had been falsified, that voting machines had been manipulated, and that figures in the Democratic Party, the media, and the "Deep State" had conspired to prevent him from winning.

Dozens of legal challenges filed by the Trump camp were rejected by courts, including by judges appointed by Trump himself, and senior officials in his own administration acknowledged that no evidence of widespread fraud had been found. Nevertheless, the conspiracy continued to spread, culminating in the storming of the Capitol by Trump supporters on January 6, 2021, in an attempt to prevent the certification of the election results.

In Israel, too, ahead of the 2026 elections, we are likely to see claims of election manipulation, voter suppression, and even falsification of the results. These claims will draw on several of the false narratives described earlier in this playbook, especially the "Deep State" conspiracy theory. This narrative will include false claims intended to cast doubt on different election mechanisms by portraying them as politically biased or as serving the "Deep State."

The need to oversee election mechanisms and protect them from bias and fraud is real and important. Israel's election system is not beyond criticism. But there is a difference between legitimate criticism that presents evidence of failures or flaws in specific mechanisms, and false propaganda built on baseless claims that have never been substantiated.

One of the main targets of this narrative is the Central Elections Committee, the body responsible for election integrity in Israel. The chair of the committee is a Supreme Court justice appointed by the president of the Supreme Court, Isaac Amit, who has himself been the

target of a focused incitement campaign in recent years. We are likely to encounter various versions of the narrative that the Central Elections Committee is controlled by the judiciary, which has supposedly joined forces with the opposition and the media to bring down the rule of the “real Right.”

An early sign of this false narrative has already appeared in Netanyahu’s attempt to cancel the appointment of attorney Yifat Siminovski as the Central Elections Committee’s legal adviser. That attempt was blocked by the committee’s chair, Deputy President of the Supreme Court Justice Noam Sohlberg (Sokol, 2026).

The great danger in spreading this false narrative is that it lays the groundwork for false claims of election fraud if the results do not align with the aspirations of a particular party. Another danger is voter suppression through the erosion of public trust in election mechanisms, which are central to democratic elections.

Identification Tools

This narrative is based on **conspiratorial thinking** that seeks to undermine the credibility of institutions even before the claims against them could possibly materialize - a classic conspiratorial feature according to which “**something must be wrong.**”

The conspiratorial narrative lays the groundwork for post-election claims of fraud, relying on **excessive suspicion** and accusations of **malicious intent** without evidence. For example, even after Netanyahu’s legal challenges regarding the legal adviser to the Central Elections Committee were rejected, the message that she was unfit for the role and should be treated with suspicion persisted in public discourse.

This narrative is also marked by **smear and discrediting tactics** directed at key figures within these mechanisms, and at the mechanisms themselves, rather than engagement with a specific issue or case.

Refuting

Contrary to the claims promoted by this narrative, Israel’s Central Elections Committee is not politically biased toward either side. The committee is composed of representatives from all parties in the Knesset, in proportion to their size.

Alongside the chair, who, as noted, is a Supreme Court justice, the committee includes four deputy chairs representing the largest factions in the outgoing Knesset. It also includes representatives from all Knesset factions, according to a formula of one representative for every four members of Knesset. Even a faction with fewer than four Knesset members is represented on the committee by at least one member.

Microdose

“Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Likud against the Central Elections Committee: demand to halt the tender for the position of legal adviser due to claims of a backroom appointment and violation of the Civil Service Law [...] This comes against the backdrop of concern within the party that following the departure of the previous legal adviser, Dean Livne, who served in the role for about 13 years, senior officials in the committee are trying to install a convenient candidate identified with the left-wing camp, through a tailored tender conducted at high speed, with candidates given less than two weeks to apply.”

– Moti Kastel, Channel 14, March 15, 2026

This is a typical example of a political talking point dressed up as a news report, containing all the elements of **conspiratorial thinking** that characterize this narrative. Because the previous legal adviser left and a new legal adviser was appointed in his place, “**something must be wrong**.” This sentiment fuels “concern” about intentional election manipulation - **excessive suspicion and malicious intent** - and places responsibility on both the newly appointed, little-known legal adviser and the institution tasked with overseeing the elections.

All of this is done without presenting a shred of evidence of secret cooperation with the “left-wing camp,” while portraying the right as a **persecuted victim**. In addition, the reporter **smears and discredits** the new legal adviser without making any concrete allegation against her, other than identity-based labeling.

Recommendations for the Media

Media coverage of political attempts to manipulate elections in general, and to undermine trust in election mechanisms in particular, should make clear the interests behind these moves, who benefits from them, what their purpose is, and what danger they pose. Coverage should also include a specific refutation of every false claim made in this context.

Whenever an election institution is attacked, it is advisable to remind the public of the broad political representation on the Central Elections Committee. This helps make clear that the claim of built-in institutional bias is false.

Whenever a public figure claims that fraud has occurred, they should be asked to provide specific evidence. If they cannot do so, it is important to state clearly that the claim is unsubstantiated.

On Election Day and in the days that follow, media outlets should prepare in advance to debunk baseless fraud claims.

False Narrative No. 11: The Election Results in Arab Society Cannot Be Trusted

Warning

Ahead of Election Day, we are likely to see calls for increased or special monitoring of polling stations in Arab localities - and only in Arab localities - on the grounds that they are supposedly characterized by high rates of voter fraud. This manipulative narrative has only one purpose: to suppress voting in Arab society.

Arab votes in Israel have a major impact on coalition formation, primarily benefiting parties on the left and in the center. For that reason, reducing turnout in Arab society would improve the right-wing bloc's chances of winning the election.

This narrative rests on an earlier one discussed above: the delegitimization of Arab elected representatives in Israel and of Arab voters. That is precisely why these manipulative and racist claims may pass without sufficient resistance.

This is not a new narrative. In the April 2019 election, the Likud placed dozens of hidden cameras in polling stations in Arab localities, claiming - without evidence - that widespread voter fraud was occurring in Arab society. The move achieved its purpose: it caused disruption and led to delays in voting at some polling stations. It was accompanied by a billboard campaign, whose funding source remained secret, calling for a boycott of the election.

Ahead of the November 2022 election, a day and a half before the polls opened, Channel 13 aired an investigation by Raviv Drucker and Sefi Ovadia that exposed a campaign to suppress voting in Arab society: "A few days before the party lists were submitted to the Knesset, an anonymous campaign appeared in Arab society on billboards that read: 'No unity, no voting.' In the eyes of many, this was a campaign to suppress voting in Arab society and lower turnout, because it was entirely clear that there was no chance of the parties uniting at that stage." According to Channel 13, the Likud Party and right-wing NGOs were behind the campaign (Alkalak et al., 2022).

Identification Tools

The identifying signs of this manipulative narrative include **logical fallacies** such as **hasty generalization** (“all polling stations in all Arab localities pose a risk of election fraud”); **false dichotomy** (“there is also voter fraud in polling stations outside Arab localities, but no one talks about those”); and **impossible expectations**, both in the demand for a level of monitoring not required at other polling stations and in the claim that election fraud can be prevented entirely.

These are joined by **emotional manipulation**, through fearmongering about election fraud; **trolling** intended to deter Arab voters from coming to the polls because of “monitoring”; and **polarization** between “reliable polling stations” and “suspect polling stations” on the basis of race.

Refuting

In every election, instances of fraud are discovered at various polling stations in various localities across the country. But there is no evidence to support the claim that the rate of election fraud is higher in Arab society.

Voter suppression against minorities or opponents of the government is an old and illegitimate practice. It uses intimidation, threats, lies, and incitement to prevent certain groups from exercising their civil right to vote.

Notably, it was Shlomo Filber - who managed the Likud’s 2015 election campaign, remembered for Netanyahu’s fearmongering video about voting in Arab society (“the Arabs are moving in droves to the polls”; Lynfield, 2025) - who provided a concise explanation of why the fraud claim is baseless in a post on X:

“In Israel, it is almost impossible to falsify election results. Because of the manual counting method and the dispersion of polling stations, certainly not on the scale of tens or hundreds of thousands of votes, which is what would be needed to close the gaps currently shown in the polls. There is no scenario, on either the right or the left, in which thousands of ordinary volunteers could be recruited to risk committing an offense punishable by five years in prison. The chance that such a secret coordination and election fraud operation would succeed without being exposed is smaller than the chance of a meteor striking Earth that same day” (Filber, 2026).

Microdose

“Because in recent election campaigns a number of activists identified improper patterns of conduct in the Arab sector, which harmed the essence of democracy and election integrity, we decided to maximize the representation of the national-camp parties at polling stations in order to safeguard election integrity.”

– Likud Party, “Zohar Hamidot,” April 9, 2019 (Azoulay, 2019).

This move encompassed all the tactics described above. It can be identified by the **impossible expectations** it sets; the clear, race-based **polarization** between polling stations in Arab localities and those where Likud activists were not stationed; and, of course, the **emotional manipulation** and **trolling** involved, as Likud activists deterred voters from coming to the polls. This is a documented and characteristic example of the gap between the manipulative claim of election fraud and the actual objective: suppressing voting in Arab society.

Recommendations for the Media

Every call for special monitoring of Arab polling stations should explicitly mention the 2019 case and its outcome: voter suppression and disruption.

Any move to place cameras, field activists, or new technology in polling stations in Arab localities should be covered independently - before Election Day.

The issue should not be presented as a legitimate debate over election integrity. It is race-based voter-suppression propaganda.

There should be substantial and sustained coverage of voting in Arab society as an expression of democratic values, in order to neutralize future attempts to portray it as suspicious.

Conclusion

The Seventh Eye analyzes and critiques the Israeli media based on the values of free, independent, and responsible journalism, and with a commitment to journalistic ethics and professional standards. The independence and quality of the press during an election period are essential components of any democratic election.

This Playbook was written to help safeguard the integrity of Israel's upcoming election by monitoring Israel's mainstream media and examining how it responds to a set of false and manipulative narratives, as well as illegitimate positions, that are expected to flood public discourse during the election campaign.

The Playbook presents a list of false and illegitimate narratives that *The Seventh Eye* has identified as the central narratives likely to accompany the coming election period. This list is based on the monitoring and analysis of hundreds of broadcasts on Israel's main news and current-affairs channels.

The Playbook draws on a range of approaches used around the world to address the spread and reporting of false news, disinformation, and conspiracy theories - phenomena that have taken hold globally and in Israel. It relies in particular on inoculation theory and prebunking: approaches that warn the public in advance about false and manipulative narratives, thereby "inoculating" it against "infection" by misleading or false information.

This Playbook defines 11 false and illegitimate narratives expected to accompany public discourse in Israel during the election period, across the political spectrum and across media outlets. For each narrative, it presents the manipulation tactics involved; the purpose behind them; the tools that make it possible to identify them; a refutation of the narrative; a microdose; and a set of recommendations for journalists and media outlets in Israel, as well as for the general public.

The Seventh Eye calls on all media outlets and journalists in Israel to deepen their understanding of the tools for identifying manipulative, false, or illegitimate narratives, and to use them when assessing messages and statements from elected officials. It also calls on them to implement the recommendations presented here as part of a proper, ethical, and informed response to such statements.

During the current election period, it is especially important to “inoculate” the public against manipulative, false, and illegitimate election propaganda, in order to protect the public and prevent election manipulation and voter suppression. This inoculation is the responsibility of the media - the guardian of democracy and a public-serving institution - which must first protect itself, and then the public, from these manipulative, false, and illegitimate narratives.

This publication was produced, among other things, with the support of Expertise France, CFI, and the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of *The Seventh Eye* and do not necessarily reflect the positions of CFI, Expertise France, or the European Union.

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