



Ensuring the Integrity of the 2026 Elections



THE ISRAEL
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As Israel heads into its first election in four years still reeling from October 7 and its aftermath, President Isaac Herzog and the Head of the Shin Bet have warned that the country faces numerous hostile foreign and domestic efforts to influence and undermine the election.

Stressing that "elections are not a civil war," President Herzog's remarks reflect a climate of deep polarization and public suspicion:



56.5%

of Israelis expect attempts by domestic actors to improperly influence the results



49.4%

expect foreign interference





State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman has published a special audit reflecting that elections are especially vulnerable to manipulation, and that Israel still has no national policy or designated government body leading the response to foreign influence campaigns in the digital sphere.

The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI), the nation's largest nonpartisan policy think-and-do tank, is addressing these and additional potential pre-election, election-day, and post-election threats by developing practical policy recommendations and working directly with election authorities, Members of Knesset and party officials, law enforcement, the media, and civil society.

In the first half of 2026 alone, to advance these efforts, IDI:



Held more than
60 meetings

&



Produced 3 comprehensive, widely cited reports
on how to address key aspects of the election challenge



Pre-Election Threats | Digital Manipulation & Misinformation

Digital influence efforts now outpace existing safeguards. AI-generated political material and coordinated campaigns by hostile foreign states—including China, Russia, Iran, and Qatar—as well as domestic actors are flooding the public sphere with deceptive content, eroding voters' ability to distinguish fact from fabrication.



In late 2025, two foreign influence operations were exposed: one attracted tens of thousands of followers through fictitious Arab Israeli organizations and AI-generated content, while the other engaged thousands of conservative Jewish Israelis through fake religious and lifestyle online communities.



In April 2026, a domestic AI-generated campaign video fabricated scenes implying an alliance between Israel's opposition and Arab parties.

Amplifying the threat, a majority of Israel's 640,000 first-time voters rely on social media, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Telegram as their primary source of political information.



Pre-Election





IDI's Response



Secured a requirement in the proposed Elections Law to label AI-generated content in election campaigns, based on IDI research.



Prompted the establishment of a dedicated Central Elections Committee team to monitor digital election activities.



Convened a cross-party forum with party legal advisers on election privacy and digital campaign risks.



Proposed a real-time system to detect and classify AI-generated content and coordinated influence activity and report it to relevant enforcement bodies.



Pre-Election





Election-Day Threats | Polling Station Operations

Election-day conduct at and around polling stations poses a tangible risk to the integrity and inclusiveness of the voting process.



In 2019, hidden cameras used by party representatives at polling stations in Arab communities prompted allegations of voter intimidation and suppression.

Looking ahead, illegal or intimidating tactics such as violence or provocations near polling stations could target specific groups and deter them from voting.

Security arrangements near polling sites also risk eroding trust when overlapping responsibilities and training gaps among different security bodies lead to delays, inconsistent enforcement, and perceptions of political interference.

Deliberate deterrence, difficulty reaching polling stations, and language barriers may further depress turnout.



Election-Day





IDI's Response



Clarify the legal roles of Israel Police, Central Elections Committee officials, and non-police actors (e.g., municipal security units, volunteer patrols) at polling sites.



Develop and advance recommendations for police and election-day security personnel training on neutrality, the lawful use of authority, and consistent enforcement.



Map barriers and voter-deterrence risks and identify gaps in election-day coordination between Israel Police and election authorities.



Engage MKs and the Central Elections Committee on barriers affecting Arab, Haredi, and Russian-speaking communities, first-time voters, nursing home residents, and students living away from their registered address.



Advance recommendations for multilingual voter communications and improved access to voting.



Election-Day





Post-Election Threats | Electoral Disputes & Legal Challenges

Legal processes—including fraud claims and challenges to Central Elections Committee decisions or the final approval of election results—can be manipulated in broader political disputes.



In March 2026, when the appointment of the Committee's legal advisor drew criticism from political parties over the legality of the selection process, prompting a petition to the High Court of Justice, while Committee Chair Justice Noam Sohlberg strongly defended the appointment as proper.

More dangerously, **challenges to election results could fuel unfounded claims** that the outcome cannot be trusted and, as the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol demonstrated, potentially contribute to serious political unrest.



Post-Election



IDI's Response



Track legal challenges, petitions, and emerging claims of electoral misconduct in real time to identify threats to public confidence and the integrity of the electoral process.



Develop and publish clear legal standards for handling challenges to electoral decisions, including certification of results.



Deliver rapid-response legal analysis to clarify disputed issues and support the consistent, transparent, and impartial application of election rules.



Continue to work closely with the National Election Committee and the security agencies to identify threats and develop responses in real time.



Post-Election



To support
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I call on all of the law enforcement authorities to stand firmly and effectively against these threats. In the age of social media, the dangers are great. All of us must be thoughtful, careful, and responsible in the content we consume, and all the more so in the content we broadcast... We have a historic responsibility to the generations who came before us, and to generations to come. I say it again: elections are not a civil war. We will get through these elections together, as one people. Respect, influence, and vote.

President Isaac Herzog July 21, 2026

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