



Top court: Bar firing 'unlawful,' PM has conflict of interest

Chen Maanit

The Supreme Court announced on Wednesday it had ruled in favor of the petitions against the firing of Shin Bet security agency chief Ronen Bar by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The judges ruled that the dismissal process was carried out unlawfully, partly because Netanyahu has a conflict of interest due to investigations being conducted into the connections between his former aide and spokesperson and Qatar.

According to the justices, the government didn't bring Bar's dismissal before the Senior Appointments Advisory Committee, as required, and the decision "was made without a factual basis and without a hearing as required by law."

Supreme Court President Isaac Amit said that the loyalty of the Shin Bet director lies with the public, not the government or its prime minister.

"All security service heads, including the head of the Shin Bet, have a duty of loyalty to the public," Amit wrote. "Their loyalty isn't based on party politics to a specific government or personal loyalty to any prime minister. It is loyalty to the entire Israeli public, which has placed its most precious aspects in their hands: life and security."

Amit added that "On March 20, the Israeli government made a decision that is unprecedented in the history of the state – to order the end of the tenure of the head of the Shin Bet security service. This decision was made in an improper procedure."

Justice Noam Sohlberg wrote that the petitions have



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the end of his press conference in Jerusalem on Wednesday. (See coverage on Page 2).

Ronen Zvulun/Reuters

become moot, and therefore, a basic decision on the subject was unnecessary.

"It's hard not to see the government's decision-making process regarding the firing of Shin Bet director as one that arouses a significant difficulty, even if presumably," Sohlberg wrote.

"Therefore, on April 8, after an oral discussion, we saw fit to issue an interim in-

junction ordering the freezing of the decision on the dismissal of the Shin Bet head; a dramatic, not simple but necessary step, even though the Shin Bet head's conduct in the context of the dismissal process and the petitions that followed is not without problems."

However, Sohlberg noted that "Along the way, the situation changed. The Shin Bet

chief announced the date of his resignation, while the government canceled the decision to oust him." Sohlberg ruled that from that point and on, "there is no longer a conflict that requires a judicial decision. The petitions have become moot."

At the same time, Sohlberg added that "The language of the law, as well as its purpose, indicate that the

service and its head must act to carry out its goal in its areas of responsibility out of a duty of loyalty to the public 'in a statesmanlike manner'." This obligation, he said, along with the service's investigation powers, "in themselves, call for a proper degree of professional independence that is granted."

Amit, on the other hand, stressed at the start of his

service and its head must act to carry out its goal in its areas of responsibility out of a duty of loyalty to the public 'in a statesmanlike manner'." This obligation, he said, along with the service's investigation powers, "in themselves, call for a proper degree of professional independence that is granted."

Justice Daphne Barak-Erez explained that "The hasty nature of the firing of the Shin Bet head, in the course of substantial differences of

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IDF fires warning shots at diplomats on West Bank tour

Bar Peleg, Hagar Shezaf, Jack Khoury and Liza Rozovsky

Israeli soldiers fired warning shots at a diplomatic delegation visiting the West Bank's Jenin Wednesday after it allegedly veered off its approved route into an unauthorized area, according to the Israel Defense Forces. No one was hurt in the incident.

Eyewitnesses said seven warning shots were fired at the delegation. "We were a large group, at least 30 people, diplomats, local media and Palestinian Authority representatives," a diplomat on the tour said.

"We were told that everything was in accordance with the army."

The diplomat said the group visited two spots, the second being a gate outside the refugee camp. "We were there for about 10 to 15 minutes. We started to disperse, and by the time half of us reached the cars, the first shots started," he said.

The army said that the delegation had been instructed to follow an approved route because the area is an active combat zone.

According to the diplomat, the group did not enter the Jenin refugee camp and

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Amos Harel

A campaign to bring down the rule of law

The High Court of Justice's ruling in the petitions against Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar's dismissal expressed an impressive victory for the people and organizations still fighting to preserve Israel's democratic nature, given the government's increasing aggressiveness.

However, the practical implications of this ruling are limited. After all, Bar was forced to yield to pressure and announce his resignation, which is scheduled to take effect June 15. Moreover, it's hard to rule out a scenario in which the High Court's ruling leads to a slew of petitions against the next Shin Bet chief's appointment. This would, paradoxically, create a situation in

which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu indirectly dictates the appointment of a caretaker Shin Bet chief, thereby maintaining strong influence over the security service for himself.

The judges, in a 2:1 majority, according to a split anticipated in advance, determined that Bar was dismissed unlawfully and that Netanyahu acted while in a conflict-of-interest (as any reasonable citizen understood), and that the loyalty of a Shin Bet chief is to the public, not to a prime minister (Netanyahu is probably shocked by this).

Netanyahu, in an irregular press conference he

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PM blocked critical defense capabilities needed against Iran

Michael Hauser Tov

On one thing, both supporters and critics of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apparently agree: In recent years, the prime minister has tried to direct most of the public's attention to Iran, its nuclear program, and any possibility of thwarting it. But a Haaretz investigation reveals that alongside his declarations, Netanyahu actively prevented Israel's defense establishment from acquiring breakthrough capabilities necessary in a potential war with the Islamic Republic.

"People think Bibi isn't good at the small things because he's busy with Iran," a former senior political source tells Haaretz. "So they say the Mount Meron disaster happened on his watch because he was dealing with Iran, and that crime is up 110 percent because he's dealing with Iran. That's why it's so inconceiv-

able that on the biggest thing he talks about all day, he just didn't do anything. Nothing."

These remarks are not unusual. A series of interviews with political, military, and defense sources reveals how Netanyahu delayed, for at least three years, the funding and production of critical capabilities that Israel now possesses – ones that

allow it to surprise another country, even from a distance of 1,600 kilometers.

The defense establishment had invested heavily in developing these capabilities, which some would define as "game changers." However, just as they reached technological maturity, Netanyahu failed to allocate the necessary funds to turn them from theory

into practice. This was true even after the United States withdrew from the nuclear agreement with Iran in 2018, when the diplomatic option collapsed and the Iranians resumed their race toward the bomb.

The need for these capabilities did not arise due to Donald Trump's decision to withdraw in his previous term in the White House, made under heavy pressure from Netanyahu. As early as a few decades ago, in the late 1990s, the defense establishment recognized the need for a suitable response to threats from the "third circle" – enemies located far beyond Israel's borders.

"If we want to conduct a campaign against Iran – our ability to surprise them there is crucial," says a former senior Israel Defense Forces officer. "You have to understand that a strike there, for instance, against



Israeli interceptions of Iranian missiles in Oct. 2024. Ilan Assayag

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What began as a war with just objectives is now indefensible for Israel's strongest allies

Amir Tibon

In the first months of the Gaza war, immediately following Hamas' surprise attack on October 7, Israel and its supporters abroad had a go-to answer whenever the Jewish state's conduct of the war faced international criticism. The answer was that Hamas, which started

the war by attacking Israel, could also end it – by releasing the hostages it had taken.

It was an answer that Israel's critics, for a long time, found difficult to argue with. What would any other country in the world choose to do if terrorists kidnapped babies, toddlers and Holo-

caust survivors from their homes, and then held them at gunpoint in tunnels underground? This was Israel's strongest case for sending troops into Gaza and exerting pressure on Hamas.

But nearly 20 months into the war – and amid a new wave of international criticism over the government's plan to completely destroy Gaza, deprive its population of food and push Gazans out

of the coastal enclave into other countries – this argument no longer stands.

The families of the 58 hostages still held by Hamas, save for a few outliers, are demanding an end to the war in order to return their loved ones in a deal. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refuses to do so, and his loyalists in the Knesset

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Released hostage Yarden Bibas being interviewed by Channel 12.

Channel 12 screenshot

Bibas: After family's murder, Sinwar asked me how to help

Haaretz

Released hostage Yarden Bibas revealed on Tuesday that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, who was later killed by Israeli forces, allowed him to spend two weeks of his captivity with his friend and fellow hostage David Cunio, who remains in Gaza, after Bibas was informed of the death of his wife, Shiri, and two young children, Kfir and Ariel.

In an interview that aired on Tuesday on Channel 12, Bibas said that Sinwar asked him how he could help him, and subsequently granted his request. "After a week or two they separated us, I still don't know why," he said.

Bibas says he first saw Cunio in Gaza on the day that the latter's wife and two daughters were released from Hamas captivity in late 2023. "When he saw me for the first time, he was in shock. He was sure

he was staring at a ghost. I also didn't recognize him at first," Bibas revealed.

The freed hostage said he was initially hesitant to ask to spend time with Cunio, out of fear of his captors' reaction. Bibas explained that he "must be next to David" after his captors filmed him while telling him that Shiri and their two boys were killed.

Bibas added that moving to another location saved his life, since the hostages held with him up to then – Yagev Buchshtab, Yoram Metzger, Avraham Munder, Haim Peri, Alexander Dancycy and Nadav Popplewell – were murdered in captivity.

After being separated, Bibas and Cunio ran into each other occasionally. "Whenever we passed each other in the tunnels, there was always a hug and a kiss on the cheek. We'd say things like, 'It will be okay, bro. I love you.' I don't know how

he continued from there. I hope he's strong."

According to Bibas, Cunio was concerned about the fate of his twin brother, Eitan. He only found out that Eitan was still alive after another hostage told him he saw Eitan on television. However, Cunio learned that his younger brother Ariel had been taken hostage in Gaza only after seeing a picture of him on a placard at a protest.

Bibas further revealed that the hostages were aware when the Israeli army was renewing its offensive in Gaza: "Suddenly, there's a boom that shakes the whole ground. You hear gunshots and bombs, and all you can do is huddle up. I was clinging to the hope of seeing Shiri and the kids. I know that David is doing the same thing, [hoping] to see [his wife] Sharon, the girls, his brothers and his parents."