# Eisenkot unveils agenda to reverse Netanyahu's policies

## Israel's new parliament sworn in

**BY MELANIE LIDMAN**
Associated Press



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO BY OHAD ZWIGENBERG

Israeli lawmakers Gadi Eisenkot, left, and Meirav Ben-Ari attend the swearing-in ceremony for new members of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, on Tuesday in Jerusalem.

**TEL AVIV, Israel** — Gadi Eisenkot, the politician tasked with forming a new Israeli government, pledged on Tuesday to reverse many of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies as the new parliament was sworn in.

The pledge sets the stage for a consequential month of legislative action and coalition negotiations. Eisenkot, a former military chief, has up to six weeks to form a government that would end the tenure of Israel's longest-serving prime minister.

While it remains unclear whether Eisenkot will be able to forge a coalition government, the new Knesset can enact legislation in the meantime. Netanyahu's opponents now control a solid majority in parliament.

Eisenkot's bloc introduced a series of bills at the start of the legislative session that target Netanyahu and his policies. They include launching an official government-led inquiry into Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attacks, setting term limits on the position of prime minister and overturning changes the outgoing Netanyahu-led government made to limit the powers of the judiciary. It was not immediately clear how quickly or far those bills would advance in the weeks ahead.

The former general, who campaigned as a no-nonsense straight shooter, reiterated on Tuesday that his goal was a government that all Israelis could trust, not one that represents only certain factions.

"We will act for all citizens of Israel, those who voted for us and those who did not, out of deep commitment," Eisenkot said ahead of the Knesset swearing-in ceremony.

Netanyahu has sought to undermine the certified election results after his bloc fell short of a majority. He has repeated unsubstantiated claims that Arab-led parties "stole" the elections.

In a speech following Tuesday's ceremony, Netanyahu reiterated his claim that Arab politicians, who represent a minority comprising 20% of Israel's population, cannot be trusted. He attacked Jewish opposition leaders who have signaled a willingness to partner with Arab parties to form a government. Eisenkot has left that possibility open if the parties meet several conditions, including accepting Israel's identity as a Jewish state and declaring Hamas a terrorist group.

"I ask you: Are you prepared to be dependent on those whose goal is the destruction of the Jewish state?" Netanyahu said.

Eisenkot said Netanyahu's speech was "divisive" and "hate-filled," adding: "I am now even more convinced that he is unfit to remain in office for even one more minute." He later said he had canceled a meeting with Netanyahu's Likud party planned for Wednesday because of the speech.

Eisenkot's bloc also triggered a process on Tuesday to install a new parliamentary speaker as they kicked off work on their legislative agenda.

A majority of members submitted signatures calling for the ousting of the current Netanyahu-backed speaker, Amir Ohana, the first step toward a vote on his replacement. The vote can take place even before a coalition government is in place.

The Knesset speaker is a powerful position. The speaker determines what bills the Knesset will take up, meaning one picked from among the Eisenkot-led opposition parties could propel their legislative agenda forward.

The opposition nominated Matan Kahana, a senior member of Eisenkot's Yashar party, for the job. A vote to appoint him speaker could come as early as this week.

# Tenn. seeks to block Pike's attorneys from inspecting drug used in failed execution

**BY JACK BROOK**
Associated Press/
Report for America

Tennessee is seeking to block Christa Pike's attorneys from accessing the lethal injection drug used in her failed execution on the grounds that it would reveal the supplier in violation of state law, court filings show.

The request follows a judge's order to preserve evidence in a lawsuit filed by Pike's attorneys and reflects the secrecy surrounding execution drugs, which states often argue is necessary to protect access to the drugs and the safety of suppliers.

Pike, 50, survived two doses of pentobarbital in September, which her attorneys say probably did not enter her bloodstream correctly and instead pooled in her arms, leaving them burned and blistered. The state has said it is complying with a broader order by Judge I'Ashea L. Myles requiring the preservation of evidence.

But in a Friday court filing, the state asked the judge to rescind the part of her order allowing Pike's legal team to inspect, collect and test any leftover pentobarbital from the execution attempt.

In an affidavit cited in the state's filing, a Tennessee Department of Correction employee said the drug supplier would become identifiable if Pike's legal team is allowed to handle vials of pentobarbital left over from the execution attempt, or review the vials' labeling. The employee, whose name was not disclosed, wrote that residue of the pentobarbital used in Pike's botched execution is "most likely to be found" in vials of the substance used in the attempted execution.

The employee stated the state's supplier was concerned that even with redactions on the labels, the source of the pentobarbital would be identifiable. The employee said that another supplier had stopped communicating with the department in 2024 after its identity was exposed and that the state would likely be unable to find other providers if it lost access to its current source for the drug.

"Pike's counsel and experts cannot be allowed to see, handle, or otherwise get the information on the leftover vials of pentobarbital from Pike's attempted execution," Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti wrote in a court filing.

# FBI: Texas man charged in cruise ship murder argued with woman

**BY ANNA WILDER and DAVE COLLINS**
Associated Press

A cruise ship passenger was charged Tuesday with killing a woman after the vessel departed from Texas this weekend, telling FBI agents that he beat and choked her in their cabin after an argument caused him to "snap," court documents showed.

The woman, who was not immediately identified, was found dead Sunday after 48-year-old Jason Watford opened their room's door for a ship housekeeper with blood on his hands and clothes, according to an FBI affidavit filed in federal court. The housekeeper spotted the victim lying on the floor with facial injuries, and an investigator on the cruise ship contacted authorities.

Watford was taken into custody the next morning after the vessel returned to Galveston, Texas. A video posted on social media shows him being escorted off the ship in handcuffs.

Watford, of Tyler, Texas, made an initial federal court appearance on a murder charge Tuesday in Galveston, and was being held in a county jail. His public defender, Javier Martinez, did not respond to requests for comment. His next hearing is scheduled for Monday.

A man who said he is Watford's son declined to comment Tuesday when reached at a phone listing in public records for relatives.

The death happened aboard the MSC Seascape, a towering white vessel that has 2,270 cabins and can host nearly 5,900 guests on five- and seven-night trips to the Caribbean, according to the company's website.

In an interview with FBI agents Monday, Watford said he and the woman boarded the vessel together Sunday and started to argue while having dinner at one of the ship's restaurants, according to the affidavit. The argument continued in their room, it said.

Watford told agents he struck the woman several times and "applied pressure" to her neck "for approximately four to five minutes" until he became exhausted, the affidavit said. He said she lay motionless for about 10 minutes until the housekeeper arrived.







