[**Israel flounders**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1744961/israel-flounders)

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MANY people point out that these are extraordinary times and that the world is in a state of ferment. The last few years have witnessed increasing chaos as the planet contends with disease, the devastating effects of climate change, a war between two nations that has caused misery worldwide, and growing financial challenges for countries and societies.

Together, these have brought desperation and anger to a boiling point, as people curse their governments for back-breaking inflation, for being unjust and using repressive tactics against them. The citizens of Ghana, Pakistan, Iran and France are all out protesting. Some participate in large public events, whose every moment is choreographed. Others just take to the streets in a swarm armed with sticks and stones and other improvised ‘weapons’ to make their discontent known.

The protesters that have been crowding the streets of Israel are marching to demonstrate against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s efforts to ‘reform’ the judicial system in that country and take away its independence by giving parliament, and essentially the party in power, the right to appoint all the judges. The protests have not simply meant people coming out to demonstrate. They have also meant calls for strikes, with flights not able to leave the airports and hospitals cancelling non-emergency treatment. Concerns have also gripped the forces, with military reservists joining the demonstrations.

While Israel has pretended to be the ‘only’ Middle Eastern nation to be a democracy, its actual politics have not followed the expected democratic trajectory — especially where human rights are concerned. It has been castigated internationally for treating Palestinians and Israeli-Arabs like criminals and subjecting them to the daily humiliation of endless checkpoints and searches, besides wrecking their homes, building on their lands and killing them with bombs and guns.

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Today, the zeal with which Israel’s far-right is trying to erode the powers of the instruments of state and making institutions subservient to the government of the day is perhaps unprecedented, as it affects more than just the Arab population.

On the face of it, Prime Minister Netanyahu has capitulated and delayed his ‘reform’ plans. With the number of protesters threatening to grow even more, he agreed to withdraw his government’s proposal if the protesters also retreated. Nor have the protesters been limited to Tel Aviv. The city of Jerusalem saw 100,000 people in the streets — everyone seemed to be enjoying a party atmosphere. The stress on the prime minister has been all too visible.

It is entirely possible that the Israelis are done with the autocratic drivel falling off the lips of a man they once thought made sense but is now just desperately clinging to power by any means necessary. His firing of his defence minister, Yoav Gallant, who had spoken out against the prime minister’s intention to ‘reform’ the judiciary, is further proof that Netanyahu’s goal is to only have those people around him who agree with his plans and marvel at his brilliance.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians, whose protests have been trampled upon by bulldozers and bullets, continue to witness the unfolding saga. In a telling article in Newsweek, a social activist in the Gaza Strip, Muhammad Shehada, writes about how this long-forgotten segment of the population feels. “But watching the protests as a Palestinian was bittersweet. … Most of us have never experienced the rights and liberties that Israelis are fighting tooth and nail to preserve for themselves, and to us Palestinians, this tension between what Israelis were willing to risk for their own rights, and how little they seem to care about ours, was a painful juxtaposition.”

The real reason behind Netanyahu’s declining popularity and imminent downfall may well be that the agenda of his far-right party — which prioritises ‘security’ at the cost of just about everything else — is becoming redundant in the eyes of the people. The biggest challenge that the world faces today is not the repercussions of the terrible events of 9/11 but the rapidly boiling earth surface. The mad hunting down of international terrorists post 9/11 doesn’t quite impress people or make them feel instantly patriotic as they once did. A large number of adults, the older Gen Z in particular, were born after 9/11 and remember the tragedy as a historical event rather than as an example of a clear and present danger.

The protests that are happening in Israel reflect similar discontent in other countries, where men and women are taking to the streets to protest against one leader, cheer another and to reject old institutions at least in the form they exist. Have the people of the world finally become fed up? These emotions are going to change the globe.

Another bit of bad news for Israel has been the thaw between arch-rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia, who agreed to step back from their hostile positions after a meeting negotiated by the Chinese. It could well be that a peaceful Middle East, where Iran and Saudi Arabia are not in some perverse arms race, will finally sound the death knell for the ongoing cash pipeline between the United States and Israel. That same pipeline of cash is also threatening the rift emerging between the Israeli and American Jews. The former have become used to being cruel and treating the Palestinians as inhuman, and the latter are stunned when they learn of the bans on medicine and medical supply to the occupied West Bank.

This is a precarious time in Israel with internal dissent and geopolitical alliances changing fast. At a time when people have decided to hold governments and institutions accountable, and new regional influences are starting to exert themselves, it will soon find itself without recourse to a solution.

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