

Israeli police, anti-regime protesters clash outside Knesset

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Israeli forces detain a protester during a sit-in blocking the entrance of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in the al-Quds on July 24, 2023, amid a months-long wave of protests against the regime. (Photo by AFP)

Tel Aviv, July 24 (RHC)-- Israeli police have clashed with anti-regime protesters outside the Knesset (parliament), hours ahead of a vote on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's judicial overhaul plan. On Monday, police used water cannon against protesters who blocked the entrance of Knesset. Several arrests were also reported.

The final vote on a major component of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu-proposed draft law is scheduled to start at 12:00 midday on Monday (0900 GMT) after a debate that started on Sunday. If passed, it would be the first major component of the plan to become law.

Under the judicial overhaul plan, Netanyahu seeks to give the regime's extremist cabinet more influence in the process of selecting the Supreme Court's judges, while seeking to empower the politicians and the Knesset to override the court's rulings.

Netanyahu, who has recently undergone surgery to fit a pacemaker, vowed on Sunday to be in the Knesset for the vote. "We're continuing our efforts to complete the legislation, and the efforts to do it in agreement (with the opposition)," he said on Sunday afternoon, adding "Either way, I want you to know that tomorrow (Monday) morning I'm joining my friends at parliament." The past two days have seen similar anti-regime protests.

Netanyahu introduced the plan in January, triggering months of unprecedented anti-regime protests, with critics describing the plan as a threat to the independence of the courts by the prime minister, who is on trial on graft charges.

Those in favor of the scheme allege that it introduces some balance in the power that is wielded by the different branches of the regime. Its opponents, on the other side of the ledger, say upon ratification, the plan would empower the ruling class to act in a more authoritarian fashion.

Faced with raging protests as well as a wave of mass industrial actions in support of those protests, Netanyahu announced a pause in late March in his drive to get the plan approved by the Knesset. The judicial overhaul plan originally sought to render the Supreme Court incapable of striking down politicians' decisions.

Pro-Netanyahu lawmakers have indicated that the new bill would be a far softer version of previous proposals that sought to almost totally roll back the Supreme Court's power to rule against the executive. The opposition, however, says the new bill would still open the door to corruption.

On Sunday, Israeli opposition leader Benny Gantz warned of a "worrying" security situation across the occupied territories caused by the months-long wave of anti-regime protests, sparked by Netanyahu's contentious policies.

This comes as some 10,000 reservists have said they'll halt their volunteer duty if Netanyahu's extremist administration passes the contentious judicial overhaul bill into law.

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