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By: TA | AP Brief

No fraud found in Israel's vote



Israel's election commission said Wednesday it has found no fraud in last week's vote, dealing a blow to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's attempts to discredit the results.

Netanyahu and his supporters have repeatedly made unsubstantiated claims that Arab-led parties had "stolen" the election, possibly with foreign assistance.

The results showed Netanyahu's religious-nationalist bloc losing its parliamentary majority, while Arab-led parties made substantial gains.

"The review found no evidence of irregularities that compromised the integrity of the election or affected its results," the committee said in a statement.

The acting director of the elections committee, Dean Livne, said its investigation examined every complaint "individually and thoroughly," but found no evidence to support allegations that the election results were invalid.

The results, which are set to be formally certified Wednesday, "accurately reflect the choices voters made at the ballot box," Livne added.

A separate investigation by the Shin Bet intelligence service into allegations of foreign interference in the election is ongoing, according to a spokesperson for the elections committee.

The elections committee has said that while allegations that foreign actors may have sought to influence the election are serious, it does not believe any such interference affected the results of the election.

"Our position is that even if the suspicions are substantiated, this would not undermine the integrity of the electoral process or the election results as a whole," the head of the committee, Supreme Court Justice Noam Sohlberg, said Sunday.

Netanyahu's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Two days of consultations

After receiving the certified results, Israel's President Isaac Herzog will begin to meet Wednesday with each of the parties elected to parliament.

Following two days of consultations, he will choose the candidate — most likely Netanyahu or his chief rival, opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot — who he believes is best positioned to form a coalition government, setting the stage for weeks of negotiations.

> If neither man can put together a government, the country would hold a new election early next year

Neither Netanyahu's bloc nor Eisenkot's bloc of allies secured a parliamentary majority needed to form a new government.

That raises the possibility of an alliance between the two rivals or an alliance between Eisenkot and some of the Arab-led parties.

If neither man can put together a government, the country would hold a new election early next year.