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כנס הרצל'יה - 84260					

# Barak calls for center-left unity to topple Netanyahu government

**Gili Cohen**

Former Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ehud Barak called for left and centrist parties and organizations to unite in order to bring down the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"In recent months there have been clear signs of a civil-society awakening. It is really flourishing. In face of developments in the area, corruption in our political system and the takeover of government by extremists, a growing part of the nation understands that silence is not an option," Barak told an audience at the Herzliya Conference.

He cited "demonstrations in Petah Tikva [against Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit], a rally supporting two states, demonstra-

tions in favor of improved benefits for disabled people and against violence towards women" as "the harbingers of an Israeli Spring."

Continuing, Barak said "the government's drive towards an apartheid reality and its overall conduct are closer to Torat Hamelekh, a book inciting to violence against Arabs, than to the heritage of Israel's prophets, who advocated an exemplary society. Apartheid can take many forms but is no beacon of light. The ultranationalist leaders take the name of Israel's security in vain, claiming that only they love their country and possess the truth, exclusively associated with our heritage."

Regarding the law permitting the retroactive expropriation of privately owned Palestinian land, Barak said: "Netanyahu is no fool. He re-



**Ehud Barak** Gil Cohen-Magen

alizes this law can lead to The Hague." When asked how a tiny, demilitarized Palestinian state could be an existential threat to Israel, which, according to foreign media reports, has nuclear weapons, Barak said: "This argument sounds like a trick."

He said change will come to Israel through joint efforts across the political spec-

trum. "Together, people in the center, right and left will establish a camp of national responsibility. We need a sweeping large bloc, working in the spirit of renewal, struggle and action, not pale and hollow imitations of Netanyahu, and not tearfully pessimistic losers. Only a joining of hands of most parts of civil society, along with responsible political players can create the basis for a different leadership."

The Likud said in response that Barak sounded like a broken record. "This was the worst prime minister the country had and no tweet will let us forget that. The people chose to eject him from public life with a one-way ticket."

Six weeks ago, Haaretz reported that associates of Barak formed a company to serve as an organizational base for a return to politics.