

Israel

Israeli intelligence chief announces resignation after spat with Benjamin Netanyahu

Prime minister's attempt to fire Ronen Bar pushed country to brink of constitutional crisis



Israel's government sacked Ronen Bar, pictured, in a contentious move that was lambasted by opposition leaders and civil society groups as politically motivated © Ronen Zvulun/Reuters

Neri Zilber in Tel Aviv

Published APR 29 2025

Updated APR 29 2025, 11:24

Israel's domestic intelligence chief announced he would step down on June 15, after weeks of public sparring with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that pushed the country to the brink of a constitutional crisis.

Shin Bet head Ronen Bar had previously said he would resign due to his role in the failures surrounding Hamas's October 7 2023 attack on southern Israel.

"As the person who stood at the head of the organisation [on October 7], I took responsibility," Bar said in a speech commemorating Shin Bet's fallen operatives on Monday night.

"Now, on an evening that symbolises remembrance, heroism and sacrifice, I have chosen to announce that I will follow through and have decided to step down as director."

[Netanyahu](#)'s government sacked Bar last month in a contentious move that was slammed by opposition leaders and civil society groups as politically motivated.

The supreme court then issued a temporary injunction halting Bar's removal until it

could ascertain whether Netanyahu could legally fire the domestic spy chief amid ongoing investigations by Shin Bet and others into possible lobbying work undertaken by the premier's aides on behalf of Qatar.

In a sworn affidavit filed to the court this month, Bar alleged that Netanyahu had demanded personal fealty in the event of any future constitutional crisis with the country's judiciary.

Bar also alleged he had been asked to use the vast powers of his agency to monitor anti-government protesters and to halt Netanyahu's ongoing corruption trial on security grounds.

In a rival affidavit filed to the court on Sunday, Netanyahu denied Bar's allegations, saying they were replete with "lies and contradictions", and insisted he had the authority to sack the Shin Bet chief. Netanyahu's ruling coalition threatened to ignore the supreme court, with several senior ministers pushing to halt all work with Bar.

Bar is the final senior Israeli security chief from the October 7 attack still in place. Erstwhile defence minister Yoav Gallant was sacked by Netanyahu last November, while Israel Defense Forces chief Herzi Halevi resigned under pressure from the prime minister last month. Several other senior military officers have also either resigned or have stated their intention to do so.

Netanyahu and his allies in government and the media have tried to pin sole blame for the October 7 attack on Bar and the army generals. The prime minister, in power for much of the past 16 years, has consistently refused to accept any responsibility for the worst loss of life in Israeli history, and has stymied the creation of a national commission of inquiry to fully investigate the attack.

Bar in his speech took a veiled swipe at Netanyahu, saying that: "Given the magnitude of the event, all of us who chose public service and defending the security of the state as our life's mission . . . should bow our heads in humility . . . and act accordingly."

It remains unclear what the supreme court's next steps will be, as it had previously pushed both Netanyahu and Bar to find a compromise date for the spy chief's exit. Yet Bar said on Monday that he hoped his case laid the "necessary groundwork" for the court to issue a decision that would protect both Shin Bet's independence and the country's democratic system.

"Clarification is needed regarding the institutional protections that will allow any [future Shin Bet] director to do his job independently and free from pressure," said

Bar. “That will draw a clear line to distinguish between trust and loyalty.”

After Bar’s announcement, the Netanyahu government cancelled its original decision to sack Bar and accepted his decision to step down in June, in what analysts said was a move designed to convince the supreme court to drop the case.

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