

NEWS FLASH: ISRAELI GOVERNMENT MAY FALL WITHIN HOURS

MAY 2, (EIRNS)--The Israeli coalition government headed by Ehud Olmert may collapse, perhaps as early as today. According to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz and sources on the ground in the region, the Winograd Commission report, which sharply criticized the Olmert handling of the summer 2006 Lebanon war, could force his resignation.



As this news item is being written, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni is meeting with Olmert, and will reportedly ask him to resign. If he refuses, according to both Ha'aretz and Ynet, she will resign, precipitating a governmental crisis. In another report in Ha'aretz, Defense Minister and Labor Party head Amir Peretz is also reportedly about to resign his post, under intense pressure from Labor Party factions.

In an editorial this morning, Ha'aretz called for Olmert's resignation and the appointment of an acceptable interim prime minister to serve until early elections can occur. The Ha'aretz editorial cited Shimon Peres as an acceptable interim prime minister. However, in a Ha'aretz poll, showing overwhelming public support for the resignation of Olmert, the largest bloc of voters, 26 percent, supported Olmert's replacement with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Likud Party head and leading right-winger.



As EIR has reported for the past month, Netanyahu has been working behind the scenes to split the ruling Kadima Party and draw 10 Kadima MKs back to Likud, thus giving him the needed 61 votes to take over the government. A Netanyahu return to power would greatly increase the chances of an Israeli provocation against Iran, and would strengthen the hand of hardliners in the Bush Administration, led by Vice President Dick Cheney and NSC Middle East chief Elliot Abrams, who are both pushing a confrontation with Iran before the Bush Administration leaves office.

