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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PGOV, IS  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL ELECTION CAMPAIGN REVIEW, OCT. 14

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 14400, (B) TEL AVIV 14399

1. ██████████

2. SUMMARY: 18 DAYS TO THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS. CAMPAIGN EVENTS ARE NOW A DAILY PHENOMENON THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND TELEVISION/RADIO ELECTION BROADCASTS ARE GETTING NASTIER. KEY LIKUD CAMPAIGN LEADERS WE SPOKE TO IN THE LAST WEEK BELIEVED THE ODDS FAVORED LIKUD EMERGING AS THE LARGEST PARTY, WHILE THEIR LABOR COUNTERPARTS TOLD US THEY SAW THE ELECTION ENDING IN A DEAD HEAT. TWO TELEPHONE-BASED SURVEYS GAVE LABOR A LEAD OVER LIKUD AND AN EDGE IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT. BUT IT IS STILL TOO DIFFICULT TO CALL THIS ELECTION. THERE ARE TOO MANY UNKNOWNNS: WHETHER KAHANE'S KACH WILL BE DISQUALIFIED, WHICH WOULD

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BENEFIT LIKUD; WHICH WAY THE MANY UNDECIDED VOTERS WILL GO; WHETHER VOTERS ATTRACTED BY THE SMALLER PARTIES WILL "RETURN HOME" TO LABOR AND LIKUD; THE UNCERTAIN SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE ISRAELI ARAB VOTE; AND THE OUTCOME OF THE BATTLE AMONG THE

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RELIGIOUS PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

ASSESSMENTS

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3. LIKUD: CAMPAIGN INFORMATION CO-DIRECTOR RONI MILO CONTINUED TO BE HIGHLY OPTIMISTIC LIKUD WOULD GAIN MORE SEATS THAN LABOR, WITH LIKUD HAVING A POTENTIAL WIN OF 48 SEATS. HE ALSO BELIEVED THE RIGHT/RELIGIOUS BLOC WOULD EMERGE LARGER THAN THE LEFT BLOC. CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION CO-DIRECTOR YITZHAK MODAI ALSO FELT GOOD ABOUT LIKUD'S PROSPECTS BUT, IN CONTRAST, FELT NO ONE COULD CALL THE ELECTION RESULTS AT THIS POINT.

4. LABOR: CAMPAIGN INFORMATION DIRECTOR ZVILI SAW NN BASIC SHIFT IN THE OVERALL ELECTORAL PICTURE AND BELIEVED THE RACE BETWEEN LIKUD AND LABOR WOULD END IN A "TIE." HE DID NOT BELIEVE LABOR WOULD MAKE REAL INROADS AMONG THE HEAVILY LIKUD-VOTING SEPHARDIM (JEWS OF NORTH AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EAST ORIGIN).

5. LABOR: ENERGY MINISTER SHAHAL, WHO HAS TITULAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HAIFA REGION IN THE CAMPAIGN, ASSESSED THAT LABOR AND THE OTHER ANTI-LIKUD PARTIES MAY NOT BE ABLE TO WIN A "BLOCKING MAJORITY" OF 61 KNESSET SEATS. HE FELT, HOWEVER, THAT IF LABOR EMERGED AS THE LARGEST PARTY IT MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO FORM A NARROW COALITION WITHOUT LIKUD BY WINNING THE SUPPORT OF SOME OF THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES DURING

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THE COALITION FORMATION PROCESS. (SHAHAL ALSO SAID SHARON TOLD HIM HE EXPECTED THE ELECTION TO RESULT IN A STANDOFF AND THERE TO BE NO ALTERNATIVE TO FORMING ANOTHER NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT.)

THE ARAB VOTE

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6. SHAHAL FELT LABOR'S PROSPECTS FOR HOLDING ON TO ITS 1984 SHARE OF THE ARAB VOTES (WHICH GAVE IT 3 PLUS SEATS) HAD IMPROVED IN RECENT WEEKS. IN CONTRAST, LABOR KNESSET CANDIDATE YOSSI BEILIN, WHO IS HANDLING RESEARCH FOR THE CAMPAIGN HQ, HAD NO INFORMATION SUGGESTING A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER FOR THE PARTY AMONG ISRAELI ARABS. (MOST OF OUR LABOR CONTACTS BELIEVE IT WILL GAIN NO MORE THAN THE EQUIVALENT OF 2 SEATS FROM THE ISRAELI ARABS).

7. MK ABD AL WAHAB DAROUSHE WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT HIS DEMOCRATIC ARAB PARTY'S CHANCES, NOTING THAT IT

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ALREADY HAD ALMOST 10,000 MEMBERS. HE EXPECTED THE ISRAELI ARAB VOTE TO DELIVER ABOUT 13 SEATS TO THE FOLLOWING PARTIES:

HADASH (COMMUNISTS)	5
PROGRESSIVE LIST FOR PEACE	2 MINUS
LABOR	2
DAROUSHE	2
LIKUD	1
CITIZENS RIGHTS MOVEMENT	.5
MAPAM	.5

8. COMMENT: WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE DAROUSHE WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME GETTING OVER THE 1 PERCENT THRESHOLD AND WIN A SEAT. HADASH, PLP AND CRM MAY DO

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BETTER AND LIKUD LESS WELL AMONG ARAB VOTERS THAN HE SUGGESTED.

9. PROGRESSIVE LIST FOR PEACE KNESSET CANDIDATE RIAH AL ASAL ASSERTED TO US HIS PARTY WOULD DO WELL IN THE ELECTION, PICKING UP MANY OF THE 20,000 VOTES HE EXPECTED TO BE LOST BY LABOR. HE ARGUED THAT NEITHER HADASH NOR DAROUSHE WOULD BENEFIT FROM DEFECTIONS FROM LABOR. DAROUSHE WOULD NOT MAKE IT PAST THE 1 PERCENT THRESHOLD, HE CLAIMED. ASAL SAID ANOTHER PLUS FOR THE PLP WOULD BE THE VOTES OF ISLAMICS WHO WOULD BE PARTICIPATING IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTION.

#### THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES

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10. THE STRUGGLE AMONG THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES HAS

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INTENSIFIED. THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY (NRP) IS SET TO STEP UP ITS ATTACKS ON THE MORE MODERATE MEMAD. MEMAD SEEMS LIKELY TO WIN A SEAT, HOWEVER, WHILE THE NRP MAY NOT WIN MORE THAN FOUR SEATS (DOWN FROM ITS CURRENT FIVE). NRP HAS DECIDED AGAINST CONCLUDING A SURPLUS VOTES AGREEMENT WITH EITHER RIVAL MEMAD OR THE NON-ZIONIST AGUDAT ISRAEL.

11. AGUDAT ISRAEL IS BATTLING THE NEW DEGEL HATORAH (TORAH FLAG) PARTY FOR THE ULTRA-ORTHODOX NON-ZIONIST ASHKENAZI (JEWS OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN ORIGIN) VOTE. FOR ITS PART, SHAS IS SEEKING TO PREVENT EROSIONS IN ITS PRIMARILY SEPHARDI CONSTITUENCY. RABBINICAL ENDORSEMENTS ARE THE KEY FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE ULTRA-ORTHODOX VOTE. RABBI SHACH IS THE SPONSOR AND PATRON OF SHAS AND DEGEL HATORAH, WHILE THE LUBAVITCHER AND GUR RABBIS ARE BACKING AGUDA. THESE RABBIS HAVE BEEN FEUDING FOR DECADES AND THEIR FIGHT HAS NOW TAKEN ON A POLITICAL DIMENSION.

12. AGUDA MK PORUSH BELIEVES HIS PARTY WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD ON TO ITS TWO SEATS. HIS ASSESSMENT WAS SHARED BY SHAS' KNESSET FACTION SECRETARY JACOBSON, WHO SAW THE FOLLOWING ELECTORAL OUTCOME IN THE ULTRA-ORTHODOX SECTOR: SHAS - 4; DEGEL HATORAH - 2; AND AGUDAT ISRAEL - 2 TO 3. LIKUD'S PONI MILO ALSO

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EXPECTED DEGEL HATORAH TO WIN 2 SEATS. THE IMPRESSIVE SHOWING OF DEGEL HATORAH'S FOUNDING MEETING, WHICH DREW THOUSANDS OF SHACH ADHERENTS, CONVINCED US THE NEW PARTY IS LIKELY TO WIN AT LEAST A SEAT. ALTHOUGH MILO ASSFRTED DEGEL HATORAH LIST LEADER RABBI RAVITZ IS CLOSE TO LIKUD, JACOBSON ASSERTED RAVITZ SHARES SHACH'S ESSENTIALLY DOVISH

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OUTLOOK AND WOULD CERTAINLY FOLLOW SHACH'S LEAD. RAVITZ HAS ALSO PUBLICLY STATED THAT "EVERYTHING IS OPEN" REGARDING LIKUD OR LABOR AS COALITION PARTNERS.

THE CAMPAIGN

13. THE PARTIES ARE NOW HOLDING DAILY CAMPAIGN EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. A SHAMIR-PERES TELEVISION DEBATE HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR OCT. 23. MEANWHILE, TELEVISION AND RADIO ELECTION BROADCASTS ARE GETTING NASTIER. LABOR AND LIKUD CONTINUE TO TRADE CHARGES OVER THE DISRUPTION OF SEVERAL LABOR CAMPAIGN EVENTS. LABOR IS FOCUSING ITS TELEVISION ELECTION BROADCASTS ON THE PERES/RABIN DUO AND ITS "NEW FACES," WHICH HAS GENERATED CONSIDERABLE DISSATISFACTION AMONG THE MINISTERS BEING KEPT OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT. LIKUD'S CAMPAIGN, RUN BY ARENS, HAS ALSO IRRITATED OTHER SENIOR LIKUD MINISTERS. ONLY IN THE LAST DAY HAS LIKUD BEEN SHARING THE SPOTLIGHT ON SHAMIR AND THE "LIKUD PRINCES" OF THE SHAMIR-ARENS CAMP WITH DAVID LEVY AND THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THE LEVY AND SHARON CAMPS. SHARON'S TRIP TO HUNGARY AT A CRITICAL POINT IN THE CAMPAIGN WAS CLEARLY A SIGN OF PIQUE THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN LIKUD'S REBUTTAL OF THE SECURITY PROPOSAL OF LABOR'S GENERALS OR GIVEN A ROLE IN LIKUD'S BROADCASTS.

JNCERTAINTIES

14. NEXT WEEK THE SUPREME COURT WILL ANNOUNCE ITS DECISION ON KAHANE'S APPEAL AGAINST THE KNESSET CENTRAL ELECTIONS COMMITTEE'S DISQUALIFICATION OF HIS KACH PARTY. IF KACH IS NOT ALLOWED TO RUN, MOST OF HIS SUPPORTERS ARE LIKELY TO OPT FOR LIKUD, WHICH

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COULD GIVE IT ANOTHER 1-2 SEATS.

15. THERE CONTINUES TO BE A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF UNDECIDED VOTERS. LABOR AND LIKUD TO A LESSER DEGREE ARE FOCUSING THEIR CAMPAIGNS ON THESE VOTERS. LABOR IS FOLLOWING UP ON ITS TELEPHONE PROJECT TO IDENTIFY THE FLOATING VOTER WITH HOME VISITS PUT LACK OF VOLUNTEERS -- PARTICULARLY IN THE KEY TEL AVIV REGION -- MAKE IT UNLIKELY IT WILL REACH MORE THAN 4 PERCENT OF ITS 130,00N TARGET HOUSEHOLDS. LIKUD HAS NOTHING TO COMPETE WITH THIS LABOR EFFORT AND SEEMS ALSO TO BE SHORT ON VOLUNTEERS. IN ADDITION, AS ELECTION DAY APPROACHES, VOTERS WHO HAD EXPRESSFD SUPPORT FOR THE SMALLER PARTIES MAY (AS IN THE PAST) "RETURN HOME" TO THE TWO BIG PARTIES.

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16. THERE ARE WILDCARDS WHICH COULD OCCUR FROM NOW TO ELECTION DAY. THE MOST OBVIOUS WOULD BE A TERRORIST ATTACK IN ISRAEL; A BLOODY CONFRONTATION IN THE TERRITORIES INVOLVING IDF/ARABS/SETTLERS; A PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING WHICH DECLARES AN INDEPENDENT STATE/GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE; OR A DRAMATIC ECONOMIC EVENT, SUCH AS A COURT-ORDERED BREAK-UP OF THE LARGE AND FINANCIALLY PLAGUED KOOR INDUSTRIES.

POLLS

17. TELESEKER SURVEYED 1,000 JEWISH ISRAELIS AND CONDUCTED A SEPARATE SURVEY OF ISRAELI ARABS BY TELEPHONE OVER OCT. 6-10 (FBIS TA 1410104488). ACCORDING TO ITS FINDINGS, LABOR WOULD WIN MORE SEATS THAN LIKUD (44-38) AND THERE WOULD BE A BLOCKING MAJORITY AGAINST A LIKUD-LED NARROW GOVERNMENT. RESULTS FOLLOW:

PARTY	SEATS	
LABOR	44	
MAPAM	2	
CITIZENS RIGHTS MOVEMENT	7	
CENTER-SHINUI	2	
ZIONIST CENTER/LEFT PARTIES SUBTOTAL		55
HADASH (COMMUNISTS)	4	
PROGRESSIVE LIST FOR PEACE	2	
DAROUSHE	2	
NON-ZIONIST LEFT PARTIES SUBTOTAL		8
LIKUD	38	
TEHIYA	6	

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TZOMET	1	
MOLEDET	1	
KACH	1	
RIGHT PARTIES SUBTOTAL		47
NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY	5	
SHAS	2	
ULTRAORTHODOX PARTIES	2	

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MEMAD 1  
RELIGIOUS PARTIES SUBTOTAL 10

18. MAARIV NEWSPAPER ALSO REPORTED A TELEPHONE SURVEY CONDUCTED LAST WEEK BY THE UNKNOWN BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC OPINION. NO INFORMATION WAS PROVIDED ON ITS SAMPLE. THE POLL RESULTS SHOWED LABOR WOULD WIN MORE SEATS THAN LIKUD (43-38), WITH THE BLOCS ABOUT EVEN.

PICKERING

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