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EXCLUSIONARY LANGUAGE ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIKUD PARTY

*A Chronological and Structural Assessment of Ethnic, National, and Racial
Rhetoric in Israeli Political Discourse, 2012–2026*

AI Disclosure. This dossier was compiled with the assistance of AI language models (initial research draft via Gemini Deep Research; verification, correction, and finalization via Claude, Anthropic). All quoted statements, dates, and outcomes have been cross-checked against primary news reporting current as of finalization. Two AI-drafted claims (a mischaracterized date and an unsourced quotation attribution) were identified and corrected during human-directed review. Readers should independently verify any claim before relying on it for legal, journalistic, or academic citation. This is an analytical compilation of publicly reported statements and events, not an original investigative disclosure, and does not claim to be the output of an automated forensic-linguistics system.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is an open-source intelligence (OSINT) compilation examining the recurrence of racially, ethnically, and nationally exclusionary or dehumanizing language among individuals, candidates, campaign materials, and activists associated with the Likud party in Israel. It synthesizes primary-source public statements, campaign advertisements, leaked internal communications, and regulatory and court rulings, each cross-referenced against contemporaneous news reporting, to describe the frequency, context, and structural handling of such rhetoric.

The record shows several recurring strands: anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian narratives, pathologizing language directed at African asylum seekers and migrants, and internal ethnic tension between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jewish populations within the party's own base. Exclusionary language recurs most visibly during high-stakes national and municipal campaigns and during internal party crises. Official platforms generally maintain formal legal compliance, while decentralized channels — municipal advertisements, social-media messaging, and grassroots activist networks — have repeatedly produced more overtly polarizing rhetoric. The party's internal disciplinary mechanisms have, in several documented cases, ultimately reinstated or retained figures at the center of such controversies, though outcomes vary by case and some figures (including the most recent, below) did leave their posts.

NOTE ON SOURCING AND REVISION

This dossier was originally drafted as an AI deep-research report and has been fact-checked, corrected, and reformatted for publication. Corrections applied during this pass are marked inline where they affect a specific claim. All scores below (Toxicity / Confidence) are qualitative editorial judgments made by the compiler using the rubric defined in the Methodology section — they are not the output of an automated system.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This report organizes public-record statements and events using a two-axis qualitative rubric applied by the compiler during source review. It does not rely on, and does not claim to rely on, an automated natural-language-processing or toxicity-detection pipeline; the scoring below reflects editorial judgment against the criteria stated, applied consistently across entries and cross-checked against the cited reporting.

Toxicity Score ($T_s \in [1,10]$)

1 represents standard partisan rhetoric; 10 represents explicit, dehumanizing hate speech or direct incitement to violence. Scores were assigned by comparing each statement's language, target, and context against this scale.

Confidence Score ($C_s \in [1,10]$)

1 denotes a single unverified allegation; 10 indicates the claim is corroborated by primary-source audio/video, an official transcript, or a regulatory/court ruling, and was independently checked against current reporting during this revision.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Political speech assessment requires human contextual judgment: idiom, sarcasm, and biblical or historical allusion are frequently misread by automated toxicity classifiers. Every entry below was checked against named news sources rather than scored by a model in isolation.

TYPOLGY OF EXCLUSIONARY LANGUAGE

The rhetoric documented in this archive clusters into five recurring types:

1. **Ethnic Slurs and Pathologizing Metaphors** — reductive animalistic, mechanical, or medical comparisons applied to human populations (e.g., describing migrants as a "cancer," or political rivals as animals).
2. **Demographic Fear Narratives** — framing minority population growth or civic participation as an existential threat to state identity or security.
3. **Exclusionary Nationalism** — defining national identity as the exclusive property of the majority ethnic group, casting minority citizens as secondary.
4. **Incitement and De-legitimization** — statements advocating displacement, silencing, or suppression of a specific ethnic, national, or political collective.
5. **Calls for Unequal Treatment** — administrative or campaign measures designed to obstruct equal civic or political participation on ethnic or national grounds.

CHRONOLOGICAL VERIFICATION ARCHIVE

The following table aggregates verified primary-source statements and campaign materials, categorized by typology, with editorial Toxicity (T_s) and Confidence (C_s) scores. Hebrew-language originals are given where documented, alongside an English rendering.

DATE	ACTOR	CATEGORY	STATEMENT (RENDERED)	CONTEXT / OUTCOME	T_s	C_s
May 2012	Miri Regev, MK	Pathologizing metaphor	Called Sudanese asylum seekers "a cancer in our body"	Delivered at a South Tel Aviv anti-migrant rally that preceded unrest; Regev later apologized specifically to cancer patients for the comparison.	8.5	10
June 2012	Eli Yishai, Interior Minister (Shas)	Exclusionary nationalism	"This country belongs to us, to the white man"	Comparative baseline showing the wider rhetorical climate of the period; Shas, not Likud, but frequently cited alongside Likud-era migrant policy.	8.0	9
Oct 2013	Local Likud lists	Incitement / religious discrimination	Municipal ads calling to "return Jaffa to Israel" and to silence mosques	Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Karmiel municipal campaign material; banned by the Central Elections Committee as racist and disruptive to public order.	7.0	10
Mar 2015	Benjamin Netanyahu, PM	Demographic fear narrative	Election-day video warning that Arab voters were "moving in droves" to the polls	Released to mobilize right-wing turnout; publicly condemned by then-President Reuven Rivlin as an attack on equal democratic rights.	6.0	10
Mar 2019	Benjamin Netanyahu, PM	Exclusionary nationalism	"Israel is not a state of all its citizens... [but] the nation-state of the Jewish people alone"	Posted on Instagram in response to actress Rotem Sela; cited the Basic Nation-State Law.	5.0	10
Apr 2019	Netanyahu campaign / Yoav Gallant	Unequal treatment	Roughly 1,200 concealed cameras deployed at polling stations in Arab-majority towns	Contracted PR firm publicly credited the operation with suppressing Arab turnout below 50%; ruled illegal by CEC Chairman Hanan Melcer.	7.5	10

DATE	ACTOR	CATEGORY	STATEMENT (RENDERED)	CONTEXT / OUTCOME	T _s	C _s
Sep 2019	Likud campaign chatbot ("Bibi-bot")	Demographic fear narrative	Automated message claiming Arabs "want to destroy us all"	Distributed via Netanyahu's official Facebook page; Facebook suspended the page for 24 hours for hate-speech violations.	8.0	10
Feb 2020	Natan Eshel, senior adviser	Populist majoritarianism	"Hate is what unites our camp" (re: non-Ashkenazi voter base); called MK Miri Regev an "animal"	Leaked private recording on campaign strategy; drew formal rebuke from Netanyahu and coalition partners.	7.0	9
Jul 2023	Itzik Zarka, party activist	Ethnic slurs / incitement	Told anti-judicial-overhaul protesters "Ashkenazim... may you burn in hell... I am proud of the six million that were burned"	Filmed at Ein HaNatziv counter-protest; Netanyahu ordered his expulsion, but Likud's internal court reinstated his membership in Sept. 2023, citing his service to the party.	9.5	10
Mar 25-26, 2026[†]	Ziv Agmon, acting Chief of Staff / spokesperson to PM Netanyahu	Ethnic slurs / internal denigration	Leaked messages calling MK Nissim Vaturi a "baboon" and MK Eliyahu Revivo a "retarded Moroccan"; called MK Eli Dallal "a nobody" / "a clown"	Reported by journalist Amit Segal (Channel 12), March 24-25, 2026. Agmon resigned; Netanyahu initially said he had accepted an apology and would keep him on, then reversed course after intra-party backlash and named Ido Norden as replacement (announced Apr. 5-6, 2026).	7.5	10

[†] Corrected from an earlier draft date of "April 2026." The leak broke March 24-25, 2026; the replacement announcement followed in early April. An unsourced claim in the earlier draft that Agmon also called Blue and White party members "monkeys" could not be verified against current reporting and has been removed.

CASE STUDY: THE 2019 POLLING STATION CAMERA OPERATION

The clearest example of exclusionary rhetoric translating into a structural campaign operation is the deployment of concealed surveillance at polling stations ahead of the April 9, 2019 Knesset election. Likud deployed an estimated 1,200 activists equipped with hidden cameras to monitor polling stations situated in Arab-majority municipalities. The operation was proposed by Netanyahu, managed by campaign operator Yoav Gallant, and its logistics were run by the PR firm Kaizler Inbar, which recruited volunteers from national-religious yeshivas.

Firm head Sagi Kaizler had previously articulated exclusionary views regarding Arab political participation, stating in 2015 that Arab citizens are not trusted at the polls despite the country being theirs too by law. Following the discovery of the cameras, confrontations at several polling sites temporarily halted voting as Arab voters reported feeling surveilled. Kaizler Inbar subsequently published a statement crediting the operation with suppressing Arab voter turnout to historic lows below 50%.

Adalah filed a criminal
complaint

CEC ruled the operation
illegal

Team 3 "military service" hiring clause challenged as
indirect discrimination

Central Elections Committee Chairman Hanan Melcer ruled that the unauthorized placement of cameras constituted illegal ethnic profiling and disrupted the voting process. Following the ban, an election-observer contractor (Team 3) began requiring applicants to have completed "military service" — a requirement legal advocates challenged as an indirect exclusion of Arab citizens, who are exempt from conscription.

CASE STUDY: PATHOLOGIZING RHETORIC AND MIGRANT POLICY

Miri Regev's May 2012 "cancer" remark was not an isolated comment; it echoed a broader state usage of the term *mistanenim* ("infiltrators") — historically applied to armed cross-border raiders in the 1950s — now used to describe asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan as an existential demographic threat. An Israel Democracy Institute Peace Index poll from May 2012 found that a majority of Israeli Jews surveyed agreed with the "cancer" characterization, with notably higher agreement among Likud and Shas voters specifically.

This rhetoric coincided with several structural policy measures directed at asylum seekers:

- **Detention infrastructure:** the Holot facility in the Negev, built under the Anti-Infiltration Law; separately, Israel negotiated third-country removal arrangements with Rwanda.
- **Economic coercion:** 2017 legislation requiring employers of African migrants to withhold 20% of wages into a fund releasable only on departure.
- **Deportation choice policy:** a 2018 policy offering migrants a choice between paid "voluntary" removal to Rwanda or Uganda, or indefinite detention at Saharonim prison.

Scholars have also noted that some of the most forceful anti-migrant and majoritarian rhetoric of this period came from politicians of Middle Eastern and North African Jewish descent themselves — including Regev and then-Interior Minister Eli Yishai, who told reporters in 2012 that "this country belongs to us, to the white man." Analysts have suggested this reflects a broader dynamic in which politicians from historically marginalized Jewish communities have sometimes adopted majoritarian nationalist rhetoric to assert status within the state's dominant political framework — though this remains an interpretive reading rather than a settled finding.

CASE STUDY: INTRA-JEWISH ETHNIC CLEAVAGES

Tension between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jewish communities functions as a recurring engine of Likud's populist coalition-building. A February 2020 leaked recording of senior adviser Natan Eshel captured him describing "hate" as the unifying force of the party's "non-Ashkenazi" base, and mobilizing resentment toward the press, judiciary, and left-wing elites. Eshel also referred to Culture Minister Miri Regev in dehumanizing terms in the same recording, and was separately recorded mocking a prominent religious-Zionist rabbi using a dismissive wordplay on his name.

This cleavage resurfaced during the 2023 judicial-overhaul crisis, when reform proponents cast the Supreme Court as an unrepresentative Ashkenazi elite blocking a Mizrahi-majority democratic mandate. Likud activist Itzik Zarka was filmed at a July 2023 counter-protest directing an antisemitic-inflected tirade — including a reference celebrating Holocaust deaths — at Ashkenazi protesters. Netanyahu publicly condemned the remarks and ordered Zarka's expulsion, but Likud's internal party court restored his membership two months later, citing his long service to the party. The same internal court separately declined to permanently bar two other activists known for comparing political opponents to Nazi collaborators.

The most recent chapter in this pattern is the March 2026 Agmon leak (detailed above): private messages in which Netanyahu's then-acting chief of staff used derogatory ethnic language about Mizrahi and Moroccan-Jewish colleagues, including sitting Likud MKs. Unlike the Zarka case, this one ended in Agmon's departure from the role rather than reinstatement — Netanyahu's initial instinct to retain him was reversed within days under pressure from Likud's own Mizrahi lawmakers, several of whom publicly stated the remarks reflected genuine views rather than a slip of the tongue.

POLITICAL NETWORK MAPPING AND STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS

The figure below summarizes documented reporting relationships and operational roles referenced in the sources above. It reflects *who reported to whom and in what campaign or staff capacity*, as established in the cited reporting — it is a sourcing map, not a claim of a coordinated or unlawful conspiracy.



PERSON / ENTITY	DOCUMENTED ROLE	FUNCTION PER REPORTING	REPORTED OUTCOME
Natan Eshel	Senior political adviser	Campaign strategy, including base-mobilization messaging	Publicly rebuked by Netanyahu and coalition partners; remained close to the PM's office
Yoav Gallant	2019 campaign operations lead	Directed logistics of the 2019 polling-station camera operation	Operation ruled illegal by CEC; no personal sanction reported against Gallant
Kaizler Inbar (firm)	Contracted PR/strategy firm	Recruited and trained poll-monitoring volunteers	Publicly credited itself with suppressing Arab turnout
Ziv Agmon	Acting chief of staff / spokesperson	Daily media strategy and messaging for the PM's office	Resigned/replaced (Ido Norden) after leaked remarks, Mar–Apr 2026
Itzik Zarka	Grassroots activist	Organized counter-demonstrations	Expulsion ordered by Netanyahu, then reversed by Likud's internal court

TEMPORAL DYNAMICS AND RHETORICAL ACCELERATION

The deployment of exclusionary language in this archive is not constant; it clusters around specific triggers:

- **Electoral mobilization spikes** — demographic-threat messaging (the 2015 "droves" video, the 2019 chatbot) concentrated in the final days before elections.
- **Domestic constitutional crises** — during the 2023 judicial-overhaul protests, rhetoric turned toward intra-Jewish grievance, casting reform opponents as an unrepresentative elite.
- **Security escalation** — during active conflict, some Likud lawmakers have used more extreme rhetorical frames. MK Nissim Vaturi has posted calls to raze Gaza and remove its population; MK Boaz Bismuth has invoked the biblical injunction to "erase the memory of Amalek" regarding Gaza. These statements have drawn both domestic and international criticism, including citation in genocide-related legal proceedings, and remain independently verifiable in the cited reporting.

COMPARATIVE MULTI-PARTY FRAMEWORK

Likud's rhetoric sits within a wider Israeli political spectrum. Ultra-Orthodox Sephardic party Shas ran an explicitly ethnic-baiting 2013 campaign ad targeting Russian immigrants, banned by the CEC. Far-right parties Otzma Yehudit (Itamar Ben-Gvir) and Religious Zionism (Bezalel Smotrich) have made more explicit statements — including Smotrich's remark, made in Jordan, denying Palestinian peoplehood, and Ben-Gvir's calls to expel Arab MKs. Arab-majority parties (Ra'am-Balad, Hadash-Ta'al) and individual candidates have, by contrast, faced disproportionate disqualification scrutiny under Section 7A of the Basic Law, most often overturned only after Supreme Court intervention.

Since 2022, the boundary between Likud's mainstream messaging and the more explicit far-right rhetoric of its coalition partners has narrowed, with Likud MKs increasingly voting alongside Otzma Yehudit and Religious Zionism on measures civil-rights groups have characterized as structurally discriminatory, including expansion of community "admissions committees" and West Bank annexation moves.

CONCLUSIONS

Several patterns emerge from this record:

1. Exclusionary rhetoric recurs too consistently around election cycles to be dismissed as isolated gaffes; it functions, in multiple documented instances, as a turnout-mobilization tool.
2. There is a consistent gap between the party's formal platform commitments and the conduct of decentralized channels — municipal lists, social-media messaging, and grassroots activists — which has repeatedly produced more overtly exclusionary content than official leadership statements.
3. Internal disciplinary outcomes are inconsistent: some figures (Zarka) were reinstated by the party's internal court after public condemnation; others (Agmon) ultimately lost their positions under similar public pressure. This inconsistency is itself a documented pattern, not evidence of a single fixed policy.
4. The integration of further-right coalition partners since 2022 has coincided with more mainstream Likud figures using starker rhetorical frames, particularly regarding Gaza — a trend independently noted by human-rights monitors and, in some instances, cited in international legal proceedings.

This dossier presents a one-sided documentary focus on a single party by design (per the original research brief) and should be read as a compilation of that party's documented record, not as a comparative claim that other Israeli parties are free of comparable rhetoric — see the Comparative Framework section above for contrasting examples.

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