

Orly Benny Davis Interviews Ophir Pines-Paz of Israel's Labor Party

In the celebration of 60 years to Israel how do you see the future of the labor party? What roll it should take?

The Labor Party is at a crossroads, it can choose to stay within the Olmert government and have no real influence on events in Israel, which will make it almost politically irrelevant in the next general election and will most probably lead to its defeat to the Likud Party, or it can stand up for its values: achieving a viable peace with the Palestinians, managing a serious social policy, and making sure the Israeli democracy and legal institutions remain strong.

Do you believe that PM Olmert is a stable leader to stay in the coalition with?

PM Olmert can not function well because he has lost the confidence of the Israeli public. He has lost this confidence during the Second Lebanon War, during his refusal to leave office despite the harsh findings of the Winograd Commission, and because of the numerous criminal investigations into his affairs.

What kind of improvement you see in the Israeli Palestinian relationship?

I think the current process is not serious. There are a lot of meetings and negotiations, but on the ground we only see that Hamas is getting stronger, that the Palestinians moderates are getting weaker, that none of the core issues have been resolved, and that the settlements are only growing in size and number.

Last when do you think we will have new elections?

I believe that the current government will not last a year from today. There is a chance that it will be removed from office much sooner. There is also a chance someone from inside Kadima will replace Olmert, and then the government could last longer.