Netanyahu wants pardon – opponents speak of “attack on the judiciary”

Benjamin Netanyahu submitted a request for clemency to President Isaac Herzog on November 30, 2025. Israel’s opposition is sharply critical.

Netanyahu, who is accused of corruption (bribery, fraud and embezzlement), has officially asked the President of his country for a pardon. According to Reuters, the justification states that a pardon is necessary because the proceedings are affecting his ability to govern and an end to the negotiations would serve Israel’s “national interest”.

Sharp criticism from the opposition and legal experts

Opposition politicians are demanding an admission of guilt and Netanyahu’s withdrawal from politics: Yair Lapid, for example, argued that no one can be pardoned who does not acknowledge their guilt. The chairman of the “Democrats” party, Yair Golan, opposed the request with the words: “Only the guilty seek a pardon”. In other words: only the guilty seek a pardon.

According to legal experts, Netanyahu’s request is a “direct attempt to circumvent the courts” – a precedent that undermines long-standing norms, writes The Jerusalem Post. They also emphasize that pardons before a conviction are “rare and unusual” in Israel. Such a step could permanently damage democratic norms and the independence of the judiciary. Critics see this as a threat to the rule of law – and warn of a signal that powerful politicians are above the law.

Demonstrations in Israel

The night after the request, numerous demonstrators gathered in front of President Herzog’s house in Tel Aviv to protest against a pardon – with the banana as a symbol: they warned that a successful pardon would degrade Israel into a “banana republic”.

Civil society organizations also warned that a pardon in the middle of the trial – without an admission of guilt – would set a dangerous precedent and undermine the principle of “equal justice for all”.

Support from parts of the government and abroad

However, support and solidarity came from Netanyahu’s camp: for Defense Minister Israel Katz, the request was “essential for Israel’s national security”. US President Donald Trump also sent a letter to Herzog urging him to pardon Netanyahu – he

described the charges as politically motivated

Sources:

Reuters, The Jerusalem Post, AP News, i24NEWS and others