

## Israel's interior minister again seeks to end conversions outside of state's Chief Rabbinate

June 18, 2020 By Marcy Oster



Aryeh Deri leads a meeting at the Knesset in Jerusalem, June 26, 2017. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

JERUSALEM ([JTA](#)) — Two years after his bill trying to negate all conversions outside of the state's Chief Rabbinate stalled in the Knesset, Shas party head Aryeh Deri is trying again.

Deri, now the interior minister, has asked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to float a bill to government coalition members that would only recognize conversions approved by the Chief Rabbinate, which is controlled by the haredi Orthodox, Israel's Walla News [reported](#). His party is Sephardi Orthodox.

The measure would end all private conversions in Israel, including those approved by the Conservative and Reform movements. It also would circumvent a 2016 Supreme Court decision that allows non-citizens who were converted by a private Orthodox rabbinical court to apply for Israeli citizenship.

A network of private Orthodox conversion courts began a year before the Supreme Court decision.

Avigdor Liberman, head of the Yisrael Beiteinu party largely supported by immigrants from the former Soviet Union like himself, had opposed Deri's 2018 bill. The Chief Rabbinate often calls into question the Jewishness of these immigrants, which can prevent them from marrying in the country, among other things.

Liberman told Walla that the new proposal "comes as a direct continuation of harassment to immigrants from the former Soviet Union by the Interior Ministry headed by Deri." Liberman said he would work to prevent the haredi parties from serving in the next government.

"The Minister of Interior's attempt to circumvent the Supreme Court ruling and strengthen the Rabbinate's monopoly over conversion will violate the already fragile balance in place and lead to yet another crisis between the State of Israel and the Jewish communities of the Diaspora," Dr. Shuki Friedman, director of the Israel Democracy Institute's Center for Religion, Nation and State, said in a statement Thursday.