

Ep. 36: The Ultra-Orthodox Draft, UNRWA & the Battle for the Israeli Right: With MK Dan Illouz

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<https://youtu.be/CFRyiBKafeU>

Is Israel becoming a regional superpower, or is it facing an internal ideological crisis?

In this episode of Mideast Horizons, hosts Lahav Harkov and Asher Fredman are joined by Member of Knesset Dan Illouz (Likud) for a candid discussion on the campaign to end UNRWA's operations, the impact of the Iran war on UAE-Israel ties, the polarizing debate over the ultra-Orthodox draft, and the struggle within the Likud party between classical liberals and socialist populists.

Illouz offers a candid look inside Israeli politics at a pivotal moment. He explains why the Haredi draft crisis is not merely a political dispute, but an existential issue for Israel's security, economy, and future as a strong Jewish and democratic state. He discusses the pressure of taking principled positions inside his own party, the internal battle over the soul of the Likud, and whether Israel's right can remain committed to free markets, equality before the law, and national responsibility.

The conversation also explores Illouz's legislation targeting UNRWA, why he believes the agency perpetuates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and how Israel's move to restrict UNRWA's operations is being implemented on the ground. As co-chair of the Knesset Abraham Accords Caucus, Illouz also analyzes the future of Abraham Accords 2.0, the impact of Iran's attacks on Gulf states, and the potential for deeper regional cooperation between Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the Middle East.

In the opening segment, Asher and Lahav break down the latest developments on Iran, Washington-Tehran negotiations, the Strait of Hormuz, Israel-UAE security cooperation, Ukraine's accusations regarding Russian grain shipments, and the political maneuvering ahead of Israel's next elections.

Key Topics Discussed:

- The Haredi Draft Crisis: Why Illouz believes ultra-Orthodox enlistment is an existential issue for Israel after October 7.
- Inside the Likud: The struggle between free-market Zionism, populism, interest groups, and coalition politics.
- UNRWA Under Pressure: How Israel's anti-UNRWA legislation is being implemented — and why Illouz says the agency must be replaced.
- Abraham Accords 2.0: How Iran's attacks on Gulf states could strengthen Israel-Arab security cooperation.
- Aliyah and Public Service: Illouz's advice to new immigrants who want to make a real impact in Israeli society.

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