

Israel protesters draft list of demands ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Representatives of an Israeli social protest movement that has swept the country and rattled the government were meeting at Tel Aviv University Tuesday to draft a joint list of demands, activists said.

"I'm sure that we shall be able to reach agreement and formulate a joint document," protester Saguy Yaakobi told military radio, referring to the differing priorities in an ad hoc movement that includes students, housing activists and those seeking reforms in child care, health and education.

"The responsibility we bear is to unite all the players around one common document because this is an authentic struggle," national student union leader Itzik Shmuli told the radio. "I believe that we can create such a document."

On Tuesday morning, demonstrators kept up the pressure on the government, staging a protest in front of government offices in Tel Aviv, Israeli news site Ynet reported.

The protesters carried bales of hay to illustrate they are "the state's donkeys," the website reported, and chanted "Bibi it's over, my back is broken!" using the nickname for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In Jerusalem, disabled people gathered near the Supreme Court to demand their rights, state radio said.

And at Tel Hashomer hospital near Tel Aviv, nurses staged a strike in sympathy with doctors who have stepped up their long-running protest in recent weeks, staging hunger strikes and work stoppages to call for better pay and conditions for more than three months.

Another demonstration was planned in Jerusalem on Tuesday evening in protest over a bill that would set up a national subcommittee to streamline planning procedures and housing construction.

Its opponents fear it will mainly encourage developers to build luxury projects rather than affordable housing.

The protest movement has snowballed since it leapt last month from a call on Facebook onto the streets of Tel Aviv and across the country, tapping into deep frustration over the cost of living and income disparity.

Local authority workers staged a one-day strike on Monday, and on Saturday, an estimated 100,000 Israelis took to the streets nationwide in some of the largest protests ever seen in the Jewish state.

The burgeoning protest movement, which is calling for reductions in the cost of everything from cheese to petrol, has stung Netanyahu's government into a response.

He has pledged to appoint a team of ministers and experts to meet protest leaders, listen to their grievances and come up with a plan to address them

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