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Self-described 'Franglo' running for Likud list

By GIL HOFFMAN
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Emmanuel Navon aims to represent French and English speaking immigrants in the Knesset.

The only "Anglo" candidate for the Likud's next Knesset slate may end up being a "Franglo."

In the 2009 election, no less than seven American-born candidates sought Knesset seats with Likud but either dropped out or failed to win realistic slots. This time around, the only announced candidate so far with connections to an English-speaking country is Emmanuel Navon, who was born and raised in Paris, but married a New Yorker, lives among American immigrants in Efrat, and hopes to represent both English and French speakers in the Knesset.

"Just living in Efrat you get honorary American citizenship," Navon joked in an interview at a popular Jerusalem waffle bar. "I attended a bilingual school, went to England every summer, and then lost my English accent in Israel thanks to my wife. I am not saying I can succeed where other [Anglo candidates] failed but there are a lot of votes if you combine the English and French speakers together. It's time to leverage this political power."

Navon, who earned a doctorate in international relations from the Hebrew University following his aliya in 1993, directs the political science and communications department at Jerusalem Orthodox College and teaches at Tel Aviv University and the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya. After 12 years in academia, he decided to make his political expertise less theoretical.

"As an academic you can promote ideas but you can really only promote them if you have political power," Navon said.

"Political reform in Israel has been discussed for so many years. One of the root causes of so many of our problems is an election system that makes it hard to govern and encourages corruption. I am entering politics to change the system."

Navon also hopes to engage in public diplomacy for Israel around the world and help French immigrants move to Israel. He said French immigrants lack the infrastructure facilitating aliya of Russian and English speakers, and consequently, many newcomers return to France.

"The French community is a large reservoir for aliya," he said. "We are losing quality, professional, motivated immigrants.

Many of them just can't make it. Without political power nothing will be done to encourage French aliya and encourage French integration in Israel."

Navon is seeking one of the slots reserved for immigrants on the Likud list. It is still unclear where on the list the slots will be, but one immigrant slot is always high enough to enter the Knesset.

According to Likud bylaws, the party primary will be held no later than April, regardless of whether Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu initiates an early general election.

It was important to Navon to start campaigning early, acquainting himself with the movers and shakers inside the Likud central committee who hold a lot of sway over the 130,000 party members who will vote for Knesset slate. He has had to persuade them that there is no reason to elect a Russian immigrant to the immigrant slot when Russianspeaking Public Diplomacy Minister Yuli Edelstein and coalition chairman Ze'ev Elkin will be elected high on the list.

"I tell people that 20 years ago Russian immigrants needed a slot but now they are taken care of," he said. "Likudniks have to change the way they think.

There is no point in a third Russian speaker to attract that vote. A Western candidate like me who can represent French speakers and Anglos can bring two or three seats."

Navon is religious Zionist, but he decided not to join Habayit Hayehudi or the National Union because he believes in voting for ruling parties and he does not believe there should be smaller, sectarian factions.

He said he is aware that in Likud, political rules change all the time, and Netanyahu could parachute his own preferred candidate at the last minute.

"Even if they play tricks on me, I will not think that running was a waste of time," Navon said. "I am creating awareness of Anglo-French voting.

You can't use the fact that rules can change as an excuse to be passive.

"Politics has to be a longterm investment. It takes time, but it's doable. Because I'm a Zionist, I never believe in giving up."



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