

## Kadima: We're winning Russian voters

Gil Hoffman, THE JERUSALEM POST

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Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union will support Kadima more than any other party, according to a poll that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's adviser Eyal Arad presented to the Kadima faction on Wednesday.

Russian immigrant voters have played a key role in deciding every Israeli election since the wave of immigration began in 1989. They supported winners Yitzhak Rabin in 1992, Binyamin Netanyahu in 1996, Ehud Barak in 1999 and Sharon in 2001 and 2003.

The poll found that 38 percent of Russian immigrants intended to vote for Kadima, 25% for Avigdor Lieberman's Israel Beiteinu Party and just 12% and 6% respectively for the two parties that received the most support from Russian immigrants in the last election, Likud and Shinui.

Israel Beiteinu chairman Avigdor Lieberman responded that his party would be the most successful among Russian immigrants and "no Israeli spin doctor could change that."

Sharon intends to add more Russian immigrants to the Kadima faction next week, joining MKs Marina Solodkin and Michael Nudelman.

Two new additions to the party participated in Wednesday's Kadima faction meeting for the first time: former Shin Bet chief [Avi Dichter](#) and Jewish Agency treasurer Shai Hermesh.

Hermesh, 61, first met Sharon when Hermesh served under him in the Yom Kippur War, and their families have been friends ever since. Hermesh resigned from the Labor Party on Wednesday after Sharon told him he wanted him to be a Kadima MK.

The faction, as expected, approved a diplomatic platform that called for the creation of a "demilitarized Palestinian state that will fight terror" via the internationally brokered road map peace plan.

According to the plan, Israel's final borders will include an undivided Jerusalem as Israel's capital, other Jewish holy sites, regions necessary to guarantee Israel's security such as the Jordan Valley, and settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria.

The road map calls for the Palestinians to fight terrorism and Israel to uproot illegal settlement outposts in its first stage.

In the second stage of the plan, the Palestinians can form a state with provisional borders. Israel and the Palestinian state will then negotiate the final borders as part of an effort to reach a real peace between the two states.

Transportation Minister Meir Sheetrit plans to present the party's social affairs platform next week and the platform for reforming the government and the education system is expected to follow.

Kadima wants to have an in-depth platform to counter critics who say that the party is only a one-term wonder.

"We want our principles in key issues to be as clear as possible," Sharon told the faction.

Sharon decided to turn down a recommendation from Kadima director-general Avigdor Yitzhaki to give financial rewards to party activists based on how many voters they bring to polling stations. The proposal was intended to make up for the lack of formal branches and activists in the new party.

The proposal raised a political storm and was criticized by MKs from across the political spectrum.

Complaints to the central elections committee were filed by Agriculture Minister Yisrael Katz of the Likud, Labor MK Ophir Paz-Pines and Meretz MK Zehava Gal-On. Meretz MK Avshalom Vilan complained to Attorney-General Menahem Mazuz.

"Kadima is jealous of the Likud," Katz said. "This is proof that all the activists and the branches of the Likud have stayed intact despite the efforts of people in Kadima, who have made a serious investment in trying to take away our activists. The Likud is our home and no one in the Likud must pay anyone for votes."

Labor MK Matan Vilna'i said, "The evils of the Likud central committee are now in Kadima in a more extreme way and this proves more than ever that Kadima is a one-term wonder."

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