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Subject: Israeli police seek fraud charges for foreign minister

JERUSALEM, Aug 2 (Reuters) - Israeli police recommended on Sunday that state prosecutors charge Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman for bribery, fraud and money laundering. Lieberman, whose ultranationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party is a key partner in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition, accused police of waging a "campaign of persecution" against him and said their allegations were unfounded. In a statement, police said a nine-year investigation found "a basis of evidence" against Lieberman of bribe-taking, fraud, violation of public confidence and obstruction of justice with regard to suspected money laundering. The investigation, conducted mostly while Lieberman held other government posts, focused on the transfer of millions of Israeli shekels to shell companies and accounts belonging to people close to him, the statement said. Lieberman, in a statement released by his spokesman, said there was "no basis for the police recommendation" and expressed confidence he would not be indicted. Police handed their recommendation to state prosecutors who have to decide whether to charge Lieberman, the latest in a line of Israeli public figures to face police questioning. Ehud Olmert was forced to resign as prime minister a year ago over a corruption probe, though he has denied any wrongdoing. The Moldavan-born Lieberman has been denounced by Israeli Arabs as a racist for his party's introduction of legislation to curb the liberties of citizens deemed as disloyal to the state, moves widely seen as targeting Israel's Arab minority.

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