



SUPPORTERS STAND with a sign that reads 'Dreyfus Trial 2: Mandelblit Version' outside the Jerusalem District Court on Sunday. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

Dreyfus relative: PM's trial is nothing like his

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Alfred Dreyfus's trial is nothing like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's trial, the French-Jewish officer's great-granddaughter said in response to Yair Netanyahu's comparison.

"I'm shocked because if we examine the historical facts there is no place to compare the Dreyfus affair to the current affairs in Israel," Yael Perl Ruiz said.

"What's going on today is that the Dreyfus affair is systematically brought up whenever a murder case or an incident of corruption is discussed, which cheapens the symbolic strength of the Dreyfus affair," she said on Tuesday in an interview with i24News' French channel.

She pointed out her great-grandfather was an innocent man who was sentenced and found guilty for something he did not do. "I think Benjamin Netanyahu still has not received his sentence, so that comparison can not be made," she said.

Dreyfus was a French-Jewish military officer who was found guilty of treason in 1894. The

case was highly political and his Jewishness came into a great deal of focus during the public debate over the incident. French society was deeply divided and the famous author Emil Zola took a public stand supporting the wronged officer in his 1898 open letter 'J'accuse!'

The Dreyfus affair became synonymous with an unjust legal persecution of an innocent person, which is why Netanyahu's son made the comparison that Ruiz feels is unjustified.

The prime minister's trial began on Sunday, May 24. He is charged with corruption and breach of trust. Protesters who support Netanyahu also compared his trial to Dreyfus' and raised Hebrew signs stating the comparison on Sunday outside the court.

Dreyfus was eventually declared not guilty and fully rehabilitated in 1906, six years after his death.

The Dreyfus affair inspired Zionist leader Theodor Herzl, then an Austrian reporter covering French issues, to come to the conclusion Jewish assimilation would not put an end to antisemitism and that the Jewish people needed a country of their own.