

Joint Israeli Palestinian Poll, November-December 2010

A majority of Israelis opposes intolerant steps toward Arab citizens. Palestinians incorrectly believe that the majority of Israeli Jews supports such steps

These are the results of the most recent poll conducted jointly by the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah. This joint survey was conducted with the support of the Ford Foundation Cairo office and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Ramallah and Jerusalem.

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In recent months Israel witnessed a wave of intolerance directed toward its Arab citizens. It is expressed by calls of rabbis not to rent apartments to Arab students and by several legislation proposals pending in the Knesset. We included several questions on these issues to examine the degree of support of these expressions in the Israeli public. Our poll indicates that only minorities of Israelis and of Israeli Jews support these steps. Palestinians however err in their assessment of the Israeli sentiment in this regard and believe that the majority of Israelis supports such expressions.

44% of Jews support and 48% oppose the call to avoid renting apartments to Arabs. 40% support a law that would allow small communities to reject admission of new candidates based on social national or economic suitability; 48% oppose it. 41% support and 52% oppose a law that would ban the use of burkas or other face cover of women in public places. However regarding a law that would require candidates for citizenship to pledge allegiance to Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, 27% of Israeli Jews oppose such a law altogether, and 55% support its application to all candidates.

There is a significant increase in support for the Clinton permanent settlement framework among Israelis and a marginal increase among Palestinians compared to 2009. 52% of Israelis support and 39% oppose it; 40% of Palestinians support and 58% oppose it.

The Palestinian sample size was 1270 adults interviewed face-to-face in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip in 127 randomly selected locations between December 16 and 18, 2010. The margin of error is 3%. The Israeli sample includes 511 adult Israeli Jews and 408 Israeli Arabs weighted according to their proportion in the population interviewed by phone in Hebrew Arabic or Russian between November 21 and 29, 2010. The margin of error is 4.5%. The poll was planned and supervised by Prof. Yaacov Shamir, the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University, and Prof. Khalil Shikaki, Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR).

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MAIN FINDINGS

(A) Israeli and Palestinian attitudes regarding the recent wave of intolerance directed toward the Arab citizens of Israel

- 44% of the Israeli Jews support the call to avoid renting apartments to Arab students in the city of Safed (Tzfat or Safad) while 48% oppose such a call. Among Israeli Arabs, 7% support and 90% oppose it. Overall, a slim majority in the general population (52%) opposes such a step. Palestinians (71%) however incorrectly believe that the Israeli majority supports such a step .
- A law considered these days by the Knesset proposes to allow small communities to reject candidates based on social, national or economic suitability. 40% of Israeli Jews 50% of Israeli Arabs oppose the law altogether. 40% of the Jews and 20% of the Arabs support such a law, 3% of the Jews and 22% of the Arabs oppose the law if it facilitates discrimination between Jews and Arabs, 5% of the Jews and 1% of the Arabs oppose the law if it facilitates discrimination between secular and religious. Palestinians (75%) however incorrectly believe that the Israeli majority supports such a law that would allow Israeli communities to reject admission of non-Jewish residents.
- Still another pending law is to ban the use of burkas or other face covers of women in public places. 52% of Israeli Jews and 88% of Israeli Arabs oppose such a law altogether. 10% of Israeli Jews and 3% of Israeli Arabs support the law if it applies only to Muslims, less than 1% of the Arabs and Jews support it if it applies only to Jews, 30% of Jews and 9% of Arabs support the law if it applies to all. Palestinians (78%) however incorrectly believe that the Israeli majority supports such a law.
- As to a law that would require candidates for citizenship to pledge allegiance to Israel as a Jewish and Democratic state, 6% of the Jews and 3% of the Arabs support such a law if it applies only to non- Jews; 9% of the Jews and 8% of the Arabs support the law if it applies only to Jews. 55% of the Jews and 17% of the Arabs support a law that would apply to all candidates for citizenship. 27% of Jews and 69% of Arabs oppose such a law altogether. Palestinians (71%) correctly perceive that the Israeli majority supports such a law.

(B) Negotiation Tracks on the Agenda

The Saudi Plan

- 61% of the Israelis oppose and 32% support the Saudi initiative which calls for Arab recognition of and normalization of relations with Israel after it ends its occupation of Arab territories occupied in 1967 and after the establishment of a Palestinian state. The plan calls for Israeli retreat from all territories occupied in 1967 including Gaza the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and the establishment of a Palestinian state. The refugee's problem will be resolved through negotiation in a just and agreed upon manner and in accordance with UN resolution 194. In return, all Arab states will recognize Israel and its right to secure borders, will sign peace treaties with her and establish normal diplomatic relation. In our October 2010 poll 56% of the Israelis opposed the plan while 33% supported it. Among Palestinians, 54% support the plan and 42% oppose it; 57% supported it in October and 39% opposed it.

Clinton/Geneva Parameters

The Clinton parameters for a Palestinian-Israeli permanent settlement were presented by President Clinton at a meeting with Israeli and Palestinian officials ten years ago, on December 23, 2000, following the collapse of the July 2000 Camp David summit. The Geneva Initiative, along similar lines, was made public around the end of 2003. These parameters address the most fundamental issues which underlie the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: (1) Final borders and territorial exchange; (2) Refugees; (3) Jerusalem; (4) A demilitarized Palestinian state; (5) Security arrangements; and (6) End of conflict. We addressed these issues several times in the past since December 2003, and in the current poll we revisited these crucial issues following the intensified diplomatic activity of the US with regard to the conflict and the efforts to resume the peace talks between the parties.

- The findings indicate that support for the overall package and most of its components on both sides increased compared to August 2009.
- 52% of the Israelis support the overall package and 39% oppose it. This level of support is significantly higher than in 2009. It is similar to the levels of support we observed in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008, but represents a significant decline compared to the close to two thirds majority support for the package among Israelis in 2004 and 2005.

- Among Palestinians 40% support the overall package in the current poll, compared to 38% support in August 2009.
- Since we have been tracking these issues in 2003, there was only once majority support for this package on both sides, in December 2004, shortly after the death of Arafat which was followed by a surge of optimism and considerable moderation in both publics.

Below we detail support and opposition to the individual items in the Clinton permanent status package.

(1) Final Borders and Territorial Exchange

Among Palestinians 49% support or strongly support and 50% oppose or strongly oppose an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with the exception of some settlement areas in less than 3% of the West Bank that would be swapped with an equal amount of territory from Israel in accordance with a map that was presented to the Palestinian respondents. The map was identical to that presented to respondents in August 2009, when support for this compromise, with its map, stood at 49% and opposition at 50%.

Among Israelis 49% support and 43% oppose a Palestinian state in the entirety of the West bank and the Gaza Strip except for several large blocks of settlements in 3% of the West Bank which will be annexed to Israel. Israel will evacuate all other settlements, and the Palestinians will receive in return territory of similar size along the Gaza Strip. In August 2009 47% of the Israelis supported this component while 48% opposed it.

(2) Refugees

Among Palestinians 41% support and 57% oppose a refugee settlement in which both sides agree that the solution will be based on UN resolutions 194 and 242. The refugees would be given five choices for permanent residency. These are: the Palestinian state and the Israeli areas transferred to the Palestinian state in the territorial exchange mentioned above; no restrictions would be imposed on refugee return to these two areas. Residency in the other three areas (in host countries, third countries, and Israel) would be subject to the decision of these states. As a base for its decision Israel will consider the average number of refugees admitted to third countries like Australia, Canada, Europe, and others. All refugees would be entitled to compensation for their “refugeehood” and loss of property. In August 2009, 37% agreed with an identical compromise while 61% opposed it.

Among Israelis 36% support such an arrangement and 52% oppose it. In August 2009, 36% supported it and 58% opposed.

(3) Jerusalem

In the Palestinian public 36% support and 63% oppose a Jerusalem compromise in which East Jerusalem would become the capital of the Palestinian state with Arab neighborhoods coming under Palestinian sovereignty and Jewish neighborhoods coming under Israeli sovereignty. The Old City (including al Haram al Sharif) would come under Palestinian sovereignty with the exception of the Jewish Quarter and the Wailing Wall that would come under Israeli sovereignty. In August 2009, an identical compromise obtained 31% support and 68% opposition.

Among Israelis, 38% agree and 58% disagree to this arrangement in which the Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem including the old city and the Temple Mount will come under Palestinian sovereignty, the Jewish neighborhoods including the Jewish quarter and the Wailing Wall will come under Israeli sovereignty, East Jerusalem will become the capital of the Palestinian state and West Jerusalem the capital of Israel. In August 2009, 34% supported this arrangement and 62% opposed it.

(4) Demilitarized Palestinian State

Among Palestinians 24% support and 74% oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state that would have no army, but would have a strong security force and would have a multinational force deployed in it to ensure its security and safety. Israel and Palestine would be committed to end all forms of violence directed against each other. A similar compromise received in August 2009 24% support, and opposition reached 76%.

This item receives the lowest level of support by Palestinians. Unlike the refugees and Jerusalem components, this issue has not received due attention in public discourse, as it should, since it may become a major stumbling block in the efforts to reach a settlement.

Among Israelis 62% support and 34% oppose this arrangement compared to 56% support and 40% opposition obtained in August 2009.

(5) Security Arrangements

In the Palestinian public 38% support and 61% oppose a compromise whereby the Palestinian state would have sovereignty over its land, water, and airspace, but Israel would have the right to use the Palestinian airspace for training purposes, and would maintain two early warning stations in the West Bank for 15 years. A multinational force would remain in the Palestinian state and in its border crossings for an indefinite period of time. The task of the multinational force would be to monitor the implementation of the agreement, and to monitor territorial borders and coast of the Palestinian state including the presence at its international crossings. In August 2009, 34% of the Palestinians supported this parameter while 64% opposed it.

In the Israeli public 52% support and 39% oppose this arrangement compared to 49% who supported it and 44% who opposed it in August 2009.

(6) End of Conflict

In the Palestinian public 58% support and 41% oppose a compromise on ending the conflict that would state that when the permanent status agreement is fully implemented, it will mean the end of the conflict and no further claims will be made by either side. The parties will recognize Palestine and Israel as the homelands of their respective peoples. In August 2009 55% supported and 44% opposed this item.

In the Israeli public 68% support and 25% oppose this component in the final status framework. In August 2009, similarly, 68% of the Israelis supported it while 28% opposed it.

The Whole Package

Among Palestinians 40% support and 58% oppose the whole package combining the elements as one permanent status settlement. In August 2009, 38% supported and 61% opposed such a package.

Among Israelis 52% support and 39% oppose all the above features together taken as one combined package. In August 2009 46% supported and 46% opposed such a package.

It is important to see that the pattern of support for the overall package is more than the sum of its parts, suggesting that people's calculus is compensatory and trade-offs are considered. Despite strong reservations regarding some of the components, the overall package always receives greater support in both publics, where the desirable components and the chance of reaching a permanent status agreement seem to compensate for the undesirable parts.

- 32% of the Israelis estimate that a majority in their society supports the Clinton parameters as a combined final status package; 51% believe that the majority opposes it. These perceptions tap the normative facet of public opinion and indicate that the package has not acquired widespread normative legitimacy in the Israeli public. Among Palestinians 40% believe now that a majority in their society supports the Clinton parameters as a combined final status package and 51% believe that the majority opposes it.
- A majority among Palestinians (53%) incorrectly assumes that the majority of Israelis oppose the package, The assessment of Israelis of the Palestinian majority is split: 40% of Israelis think that a majority of Palestinians supports the parameters, 41% think that a majority opposes them.

Summary Table: Support for Clinton's Permanent Settlement Framework 2003-2010

		Dec	Dec	Dec	Dec	Dec	Dec	Aug	Dec
		03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
1) Borders and Territorial Exchange	ISR	47%	55%	53%	44%	46%	46%	47%	49%
	PAL	57%	63%	55%	61%	56%	54%	49%	49%
2) Refugees	ISR	35%	44%	43%	38%	44%	40%	36%	36%
	PAL	25%	46%	40%	41%	39%	40%	37%	41%
3) Jerusalem	ISR	41%	39%	38%	38%	36%	40%	34%	38%
	PAL	46%	44%	33%	39%	36%	36%	31%	36%
4) Demilitarized State	ISR	61%	68%	69%	62%	61%	64%	56%	62%
	PAL	36%	27%	20%	28%	23%	27%	24%	24%
5) Security Arrangements	ISR	50%	61%	62%	51%	53%	56%	49%	52%
	PAL	23%	53%	43%	42%	51%	35%	34%	38%
6) End of Conflict	ISR	66%	76%	80%	68%	66%	67%	68%	68%
	PAL	42%	69%	64%	62%	66%	55%	55%	58%
Overall Package	ISR	47%	64%	64%	52%	53%	52%	46%	52%
	PAL	39%	54%	46%	48%	47%	41%	38%	40%

(C) Conflict management and threat perceptions

- Given the stalemate in the direct negotiations, 10% of the Israelis and 19% of the Palestinians expect that negotiations will continue and armed confrontations will stop, 46% of the Israelis and 42% of the Palestinians believe that negotiations will continue but some armed attacks will continue as well, 36% of the Israelis and 35% of the Palestinians think that armed attacks will not stop and the two sides will not return to negotiations.
- 54% of the Israelis support and 41% oppose talks with Hamas if needed to reach a compromise agreement with the Palestinians. However 57% think that the majority of the Israeli public opposes such negotiations and only 24% think a majority supports it.
- 27% of Israelis support full construction freeze in all settlements, 37% support the continuation of construction only in the settlement blocks which will remain under Israeli rule in a future agreement, and 29% support unlimited construction in all settlements. This distribution of opinion is quite similar to that obtained in October 2010.
- In our poll we also examine periodically Israelis' and Palestinians' readiness for a mutual recognition of identity as part of a permanent status agreement and after all issues in the conflict are resolved and a Palestinian State is established. Our current poll shows that 63% of the Israeli public, Jews and Arabs alike, support such a mutual recognition; 29% of the Jews and 32% of the Arabs oppose such a mutual recognition of identity. Among Palestinians, 49% support and 49% oppose this step. In October 2010, 64% of the Israelis supported and 24% opposed this mutual recognition of identity, among Palestinians, the corresponding figures were 49% and 48%.
- Among Israelis, 54% are worried and 43% are not worried that they or their family may be harmed by Arabs in their daily life, just like in our previous poll in October. Among Palestinians 75% are worried and 25% are not worried that they or a member of their family might be hurt by Israelis or that their land might be confiscated or homes demolished. In October 76% of the Palestinians were worried and 24% were not worried.
- Neither Palestinians nor Israelis consider it likely that an independent Palestinian State will be established next to the State of Israel in the next five years. 71% of the Palestinians and 66% of the Israelis think that chances for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State next to the State of Israel are non-existent or low; 29% of Israelis and 27% of Palestinians believe the chances are medium or high. In October 2010, two thirds of the Palestinians and 60% of the Israelis thought that chances for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State next to the State of Israel are non-existent or low.

- Now that the US has stopped to demand an Israeli settlement freeze as a condition for returning to direct negotiations and after Israel has resumed settlement construction, 67% of the Palestinians oppose and 30% support Palestinian entry into indirect negotiations with Israel through American mediation. Despite this, 59% of the Palestinians believe that Israel would come out the winner if the Palestinian side did not return to indirect negotiations with Israel through American mediation. While only 13% believe the Palestinians will come out the winner, 16% believe both sides will come out losers and 9% believe both sides will come out winners.
- In the absence of negotiations, going to the UN Security Council to obtain recognition of a Palestinian state is the option receiving the greatest level of support among Palestinians (31%) followed by the option calling for a return to armed confrontations and attacks against Israel (29%), and organizing widespread peaceful and nonviolent confrontations and dissolving the PA (16% each).

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