

Mitvim Institute Survey Findings: A Month into the Fighting - Public Attitudes Regarding the Day After

Conducting a survey among Israeli citizens during wartime is like building bridges during an earthquake, given the seismic mood swings and constantly shifting public attitudes. Nonetheless, understanding public perceptions is imperative in light of the critical military and political decisions being made by policy makers in the campaign against Hamas, Iran and its proxies.

To understand how the public views the core issues related to the fighting and its aftermath, and especially the sea change in Israeli perceptions wrought by the events of Oct. 7, the Mitvim Institute commissioned a survey one month to the day the war broke out. The November 6-7 survey was carried out by the Smith Institute, in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, among a representative sample of Israel's adult population.

- A majority of the Israeli public (**52%**) **supports political measures at the end of the military campaign that entail a degree of recognition of independent Palestinian sovereignty**. While **27%** support a two-state agreement within the framework of the normalization process with the Arab world, **25%** favor unilateral separation from the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. In contrast, **28% of the public** (including a third of the Jewish public) supports Israeli annexation of Gaza and the West Bank. Only **5%** support the pre-Oct. 7 policy of “managing” the conflict with Hamas and Hezbollah.
- **The percentage of Israelis who see the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a hostile entity has surged. Almost one-third (31%)** see its continued existence as harmful to Israeli interests – compared to only 13% who held this view in a survey Mitvim conducted six months ago (July 2023). Only **32% view the PA** as serving Israeli interests or critical to them, compared with **43%** in July. Some **21%** of the public has no opinion on the matter.
- **Respondents are unanimous in rejecting continued Hamas rule (even if weakened) of the Gaza Strip**. Less than **1%** support this option, while **39%** want an international force managing Gaza's affairs the day after the war, but **37%** only trust sole Israeli control of Gaza. Only **13%** prefer Palestinian Authority (PA) control of Gaza after the war.
- **Sixty percent** of the public favor the deployment of **foreign forces in Gaza for an initial, transitional phase following the fighting**, with a distinct preference (**37%**) for a force comprised solely of **Western countries** rather than a combined force comprising Western and regional states (**18%**). Only **22%** oppose the deployment of foreign forces.
- Only **26% of the public** agrees with the view that resolving the conflict with the Palestinians is necessary for an effective struggle against Iran and its proxies, compared with **60%** of the public who disagree or tend to disagree with this view.

- A majority of respondents (**55%**) think **the most effective way to deal with the military threat posed by Iran and its proxies in the region** is by building a regional coalition under American sponsorship. **Fewer than one-fifth** of the respondents want Israel to go it alone militarily against Iran and Hezbollah, while just **9%** support continuing managing the conflict with Hizballah and Hamas as Israel did prior to October 7th. Nearly one-fifth of respondents have not yet formulated an opinion on the issue.
- **The survey found a complete reversal of public attitudes toward the war in Ukraine in light of Russia's conduct vis-à-vis Hamas.** In our July survey, a majority of the public (**44%**) advocated Israeli neutrality compared to **33%** who strongly supported standing by the West and Ukraine. Now, **50%** of respondents favor standing with the West, while only **25%** support continued neutrality. **Six percent** favor easing friction and strengthening relations with Russia.

A. The political purpose of the military campaign

The Israeli government has yet to discuss the political purpose of the military campaign in Gaza. What do you think should be the long-term purpose of the war?

| | Jews | Arabs | Total |
|---|------|-------|------------|
| Reaching Israeli-Palestinian agreement on a two-state solution within the framework of a comprehensive regional normalization deal | 21% | 55% | 27% |
| Annexing the territories and imposing Israeli sovereignty over Gaza, Judea and Samaria | 33% | 7% | 28% |
| Continuing to manage the conflict with Hamas and Hezbollah as Israel did prior to Oct. 7 | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| Unilateral separation from the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank | 28% | 10% | 25% |
| Don't know | 13% | 23% | 15% |

Among Jewish respondents, two solutions drew relatively significant support: "annexation of the territories and application of sovereignty over Gaza, Judea and Samaria" (**33%**) and "unilateral separation from the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank" (**28%**).

Among Arab respondents, support of "Israeli-Palestinian agreement on a two-state solution within the framework of a comprehensive regional normalization deal" was particularly notable (55%).

B. Israel's interest in the continued existence of the Palestinian Authority

Government officials have questioned Israel’s interest in the continued existence of the Palestinian Authority. To what extent do you see the PA’s existence as serving Israeli interests?

| | Jews | Arabs | Total |
|--|------|-------|------------|
| Its continued existence runs counter to Israeli interests | 34% | 14% | 31% |
| Its continued existence is not significant to Israeli interests | 16% | 14% | 16% |
| Its continued existence serves Israeli interests | 23% | 31% | 24% |
| Its continued existence is crucial to Israeli interests | 8% | 8% | 8% |
| Don’t know | 19% | 33% | 21% |

Among Jewish respondents, a majority (34%) said “the PA’s continued existence runs counter to Israeli interests”, while a similar percentage of Arab respondents said “its continued existence serves Israeli interests” (31%).

Compared to Mitvim’s July 2023 Foreign Policy Index (total)

| | July 2023 Survey | Current Wartime Survey |
|--|------------------|------------------------|
| Its continued existence runs counter to Israeli interests | 13% | 31% |
| Its continued existence is not significant to Israeli interests | 17% | 16% |
| Its continued existence serves Israeli interests | 32% | 24% |
| Its continued existence is crucial to Israeli interests | 11% | 8% |

| | | |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Don't know | 27% | 21% |
|-------------------|------------|------------|

Compared to Mitvim's July 2023 Foreign Policy Index – by sector

| | Jews | | Arabs | |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| | July 2023 Survey | Current Survey | July 2023 Survey | Current Survey |
| Its continued existence runs counter to Israeli interests | 12% | 34% | 18% | 14% |
| Its continued existence is not significant to Israeli interests | 18% | 16% | 17% | 14% |
| Its continued existence serves Israeli interests | 32% | 23% | 26% | 31% |
| Its continued existence is crucial to Israeli interests | 11% | 8% | 12% | 8% |
| Don't know | 27% | 19% | 27% | 33% |

C. Control of the Gaza Strip after the war

Who would you like to see running Gaza after the war?

| | Jews | Arabs | Total |
|----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| A weakened Hamas | 0% | 2% | 0% |
| Israel | 41% | 15% | 37% |
| The Palestinian Authority | 10% | 27% | 13% |
| A Multinational Force | 41% | 28% | 39% |
| Don't know | 8% | 28% | 11% |

Among Jewish respondents, opinions were evenly divided between "Israel" (41%) and "a multinational force" (41%). **Among Arab respondents**, the Palestinian Authority (27%) and a Multinational Force (28%) stand out, **with a high percentage not expressing an opinion** (28%).

D. Attitudes towards deployment of a multinational force in the Gaza Strip

Israeli and foreign leaders are discussing a possible multinational force deployment in Gaza as an interim short-term measure. Do you support the introduction of a multinational force into Gaza?

| | Jews | Arabs | Total |
|---|------|-------|-------|
| Yes, as long as the force is comprised of Western countries, such as France, Ireland, Spain and Germany | 38% | 31% | 37% |
| Yes, as long as the force is comprised of moderate Arab states, such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt | 5% | 6% | 5% |
| Yes, if the force is combined to include both Western countries and moderate Arab states | 19% | 13% | 18% |
| No, such a force would be detrimental to Israel's security and sovereignty | 23% | 13% | 22% |
| Don't know | 15% | 37% | 18% |

Both Jewish and Arab respondents expressed a preference for "an international force comprised of Western countries, such as France, Ireland, Spain and Germany"

E. Advancing an arrangement with the Palestinians to deal with the Iranian threat

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "In order to mount an effective struggle against Iran and its proxies, Israel must promote an arrangement with the Palestinians"?

| | Jews | Arabs | Total |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| Disagree | 51% | 11% | 44% |
| Tend to disagree | 17% | 8% | 16% |
| Total of those who disagree and | 68% | 19% | 60% |

| | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| tend to disagree | | | |
| Agree | 15% | 31% | 18% |
| Agree to a large extent | 5% | 23% | 8% |
| Total of those who agree and agree to a large extent | 20% | 54% | 26% |
| Don't know | 12% | 27% | 14% |
| Gap between those who agree and disagree | 48%- | 35%+ | 34%- |

Most Jewish respondents disagreed, while most Arab respondents agreed.

F. Israel's Strategy for Dealing with Iran

Iran is working to mount a multifront threat to Israel – from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Gaza, the West Bank and Yemen. What leading strategy should Israel adopt to deal with this challenge?

| | Jews | Arabs | Total |
|--|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| An independent military campaign against Iran and its proxies | 20% | 9% | 18% |
| Managing the conflict with Iran and Hezbollah as Israel did before Oct. 7 | 8% | 13% | 9% |
| Building a regional US-sponsored coalition to deal with Iran | 58% | 39% | 55% |
| Don't know | 14% | 39% | 19% |

Both Jewish and Arab respondents opted for "building a regional US-sponsored coalition to deal with Iran" as their first choice. **Among Arab respondents,** a high percentage (**39%**) did not express an opinion.

G. Israel's Policy on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Israel previously sought to bolster relations with Russia while maintaining its strong ties with the US, even after Russia invaded Ukraine. Given Russia's stand on the war in Gaza and its increased cooperation with Iran, should Israel update its strategy, and if so, how?

| | Jews | Arabs | Total |
|--|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Full support for the US, West and Ukraine | 55% | 21% | 50% |

| | | | |
|---|-----|-----|------------|
| Continued attempt to appease both sides and avoid full commitment to either one | 24% | 26% | 25% |
| Strengthening relations and easing friction with Russia | 6% | 10% | 6% |
| Don't know | 15% | 43% | 19% |

Over half of the Jewish respondents advocated "full support for the United States, the West and Ukraine." **Among Arab respondents**, over **40%** did not express an opinion.

Compared to Mitvim's July 2023 Foreign Policy Index

In the July survey, the question was phrased differently. The percentage of Jewish respondents who favored "walking between the drops" plunged from **46%** in July to **24%** now.

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