

## The Impact of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Israel's Foreign Relations

Summary of a public panel event of the Mitvim Institute and the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 13 June 2017



On 13 June 2017, the [Mitvim Institute](#) and the [Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations](#) explored the extent to which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict effects Israel's foreign relations and interests. The event was based on research by the Mitvim Institute, including [guiding principles for a new Israeli foreign policy](#), Ms. Yael Patir's paper on [a pro-peace Israeli foreign policy](#), and a recent [public opinion poll](#) on Israel's relations with the Middle East, Europe, and the US in light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The event included an expert workshop, and a public panel with Prof. Elie Podeh, Board Member at the Mitvim Institute and Professor at the Hebrew University; Ms. Ghaida Rinawie-Zoabi, Director of Injaz - The Center for Professional Arab Local Governance; Ms. Talia Sasson, President of the New Israel Fund; and former Member of Knesset Nitzan Horowitz, Policy Fellow at the Mitvim Institute. The panel was moderated by Mr. Yigal Palmor of the Jewish Agency, former spokesperson of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Panel participants discussed the necessity of a new Israeli foreign policy paradigm. Prof. Podeh spoke of the need to view Israel as part of the Middle East, and not as an external actor to the region. He called for a more creative and proactive foreign policy that actually advances peace, instead of simply discussing its necessity. He explained that Israel has almost never initiated its own peace plan, and that there is currently an

opportunity to do so. Podeh cautioned that Israel's current attempts to secure normalization with the Arab world without progress with the Palestinians will not work.



On the issue of inclusion, Ms. Rinawie-Zoabi described a new, civilian Israeli identity developing within Arab society in Israel, and a growing desire to support democracy and regional belonging. Palestinian citizens of Israel are uniquely positioned to contribute to Israel's regional belonging, she said, by acting as messengers between Israel and the Arab world. However, this requires equality for them within Israel. Rinawie-Zoabi described an Israeli public that has become indifferent to

the conflict, and a Palestinian public that is in despair, largely due to the expansion of settlements within the West Bank that makes an implementable Israeli-Palestinian agreement unlikely.



Ms. Sasson described the "known price" of peace - withdrawal from the territory occupied in 1967. If Israel builds settlements in the territories designated for a Palestinian state, she said, the world understands that Israel does not want peace, and this affects Israeli foreign relations. Sasson warned that Israel cannot be a democracy as long as it continues to control three million Palestinians, and that while the two-state solution serves

national interests, Israelis might understand the need for a Palestinian state only when the price of maintaining the status quo becomes higher.



Mr. Horowitz claimed that the EU has a deep interest in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but is not making a major impact. The European offer to establish a Special Privileged Partnership with Israel in return for peace is an important opportunity that Israel should stop ignoring, and reply positively to. Horowitz underscored that the Israeli Left should not expect the EU to pressure Israel, as change must come from within. Israel needs a pro-peace foreign policy, he said, but it will only be possible after political change, under a new Israeli leadership.

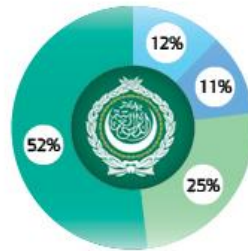


**Finding from a Mitvim Institute public opinion poll June 2017**

The poll was conducted on June 6, 2017, by the Rafi Smith Institute and in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, among a representative sample of Israel's adult population

**To what extent does the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict damage Israel's foreign relations?**

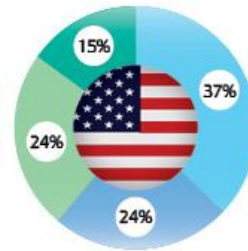
- To a large extent (Rank of 8-10)
- To a moderate extent (Rank of 6-7)
- To a limited extent (Rank of 4-5)
- To a small extent (Rank of 1-3)



Israel-Middle East relations



Israel-Europe relations



Israel-United States relations

Average ranking between 1 and 10	7.16	6.65	4.72
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