Peace Index – December 2015

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This month the Peace Index mainly focused on the Israeli public’s positions on aspects of the efforts to prevent terror attacks, and also, to a lesser extent, on issues in the background of the incidents: the current level of support for the two-states-for-two-peoples solution, the relative bond to the land among Jews and Palestinians, and the balance between Israel’s Jewish and democratic components.

Fear of being harmed in a terror attack: In the current survey (conducted before the latest terror attack in Tel Aviv) about 70% of the Jewish respondents said they currently fear that they themselves or someone close to them will be harmed in the terror wave, while 28% feared this not very much or not at all. Note that last month (November) the corresponding rate was 67%, and in October it was 57%. In other words, we see a trend of steadily increasing fear of being harmed by the attacks. In the Arab public the rate of those who fear being harmed stands at 65.5%.

The Shabak’s efforts to prevent terror attacks: The Jewish public agrees almost completely (88%) that the Shabak (Israel Security Agency) is making every possible effort to prevent Palestinian terror attacks against Jews. The agreement on this matter is widespread and crosses political camps, with small disparities between the various subgroups. As for the efforts devoted to preventing Jewish attacks against Palestinians, the agreement that the Shabak is doing its utmost is slightly smaller though still very wide (78%). On this question we found noteworthy gaps. Only one-half of Meretz voters, for example, think the Shabak is making every possible effort in this regard, and only about two-thirds of Zionist Union voters think so. Conversely, for example, the figure for Kulanu and Habayit Hayehudi voters is 88% and for Likud voters, 84%.
In contrast to the relatively wide agreement in the Jewish public on the Shabak’s efforts to prevent attacks against Palestinians, only about one-fourth (24%) of the Arabs think the Shabak is making every possible effort to prevent them.

**Permissible methods of interrogating terror suspects:** Overall, only a tiny minority (6%) of the Jewish public thinks physical methods should not be used in such interrogations, compared to 29% who think the complete opposite—that it is always permissible to use them. The highest rate (a total of 56%) takes intermediate positions: 30% believe it is permissible to use such methods in “ticking bomb” cases, and another 26% think they can be used when senior officials affirm that they will contribute significantly to the investigation. A consensus (83%) of the Arab public considers that physical force should never be used when interrogating terror suspects.

**The appropriateness of the Shabak’s methods when investigating terror attacks:** The findings show that the Jewish public makes a distinction between interrogations of Palestinian suspects and of Jewish suspects. Regarding Palestinians, the highest rate (43.5%) views the Shabak’s methods as appropriate, compared to 21% who see them as too mild and only 7% who consider them too harsh. A higher-than-usual rate (28%) does not know. As for Jewish suspects, here too the highest number sees the methods as appropriate (36%), though it is smaller than the number who think so regarding Palestinian suspects. Moreover, about one-fourth (23.5%) say that methods used against Jewish suspects are too harsh, or three times the corresponding rate regarding Arab suspects. Among Torah Judaism and Shas voters, this rate is much higher—54% and 52% respectively. Out of all the Jewish interviewees, 13% believe that the Shabak’s methods with Jewish suspects are too soft. The exception is Meretz voters, 29% of whom think so. Not surprisingly, among the Arab interviewees who have an opinion, the highest rate (33%) assesses the interrogation methods used with Jewish suspects as too soft.
Interrogation of Palestinian and Jewish suspects: The Jewish interviewees’ tendency to go easier on Jewish suspects also emerged in the responses to a direct question: should Jewish terror suspects be interrogated with less harsh methods than Palestinian suspects? Although the majority (57.5%) says the same methods should be used, more than one-third (36%) assert that less harsh methods should be used with Jews. Among Torah Judaism and Shas voters, a majority (54% and 74% respectively) takes that view.

Punishment of Jewish and Arab terrorists: A similar pattern of positions emerges regarding punishments for Jewish and Palestinian terrorists. While 63% of the Jewish public disagrees that courts should give Jews milder punishments, 30% take the opposite stance, namely, that Jews should be punished more softly. Here too a majority of Torah Judaism and Shas voters favor milder sentences for Jewish terrorists—65% and 62% respectively. Among Yisrael Beiteinu voters 52% think the same.

The Duma attack—Jewish terror?: The Jewish public broadly agrees (81%) that if it turns out the attack at the Duma village was perpetrated by Jews, it should be considered an act of terror for all intents and purposes. However, it is hard to ignore the fact that 13% are not prepared to define this attack—even if it is proved that it was intentionally carried out by Jews—as terror. The highest rates of those not prepared to characterize it as terror were among those defining themselves as ultra-Orthodox (haredi) (27%) and as traditional-religious (22%).

The Jewish terrorists—“marginal groups”?: About three-fourths of the Jewish public (73%) agree that the Jewish groups committing terror attacks against Palestinians are marginal groups representing only a small minority of the national-religious public. Support for that assertion is highest among Kulanu and Habayit Hayehudi voters (about 88% in both cases). Nineteen percent of the Jewish interviewees disagree. The greatest opposition to the “marginal groups” claim is among Meretz voters (69%), the only party a majority of whose voters reject the
assertion. An especially interesting finding is that among the Arab interviewees as well, the majority (60%) agrees that the Jewish groups perpetrating terror attacks are merely marginal in the national-religious camp.

**Israel as a Jewish and democratic state:** The Jewish public is almost evenly split between those who disagree that Israel is becoming more Jewish and less democratic (about 50%) and those who agree that it is (about 45%). Those who most agree are voters for Meretz (100%), the Zionist Union (73%), and Yesh Atid (62%), that is, voters of the center and the left. The lowest agreement was found among Habayit Hayehudi voters (8%). Among those who do agree that this is the trend, a clear majority (75%) are not pleased with this development.

**Two states for two peoples:** At present a small majority (52%) of the Jewish public supports the two-states-for-two-peoples solution while 43% oppose it. It is worth recalling that in previous years the rates of support for the two-state solution came to about two-thirds and even higher. The erosion in support is probably linked to the fact that today only a tiny minority (11%) sees a chance that this solution will be implemented in the coming decade. Furthermore, even if it were to be implemented despite the difficulties, only one-fourth (25%) would want to see an open border between the two states enabling people on both sides to pass freely from one state to the other.

**The bond to the land:** In a wider perspective, a large majority of the Jewish public (72%) sees the Jews’ historical, religious, and cultural bond to the land as stronger than that of the Palestinians. The rate reaches 100% among Torah Judaism voters and 96% among Habayit Hayehudi voters. Meretz is the only party where a majority (81%) of voters believe Jews and Palestinians have a similar religious, cultural, and historical bond to the land.

The Israeli Arabs’ opinions on this matter are totally different. The highest rate (41%) considers that the Jews’ and Palestinians’ bond to the land is of similar strength. A solid majority (80%) supports the two-states-for-two-peoples solution
even though, here too, the majority (75.5%) sees only low chances that it will be implemented in the coming decade. A similar majority (80%) would want to see an open border between the two states for the passage of people and goods, and would want this solution to be enacted despite the difficulties involved.

**Negotiations Index: 44.8 (Jews 41.8)**

Diagram of the month: Is the Jews’ and the Palestinians’ historical, religious, and cultural bond to the land strong to the same extent? (% “The Jews’ bond is stronger,” Jewish sample, by voting)

![Diagram showing the percentage of each party supporting the bond of the Jews and Palestinians to the land.](http://www.peaceindex.org)