

Peace Index, May 2018

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This month the Peace Index focused on the following issues: the Palestinian demonstrations at the Gaza border and the Israeli Arab demonstrations in support of the Gaza residents; the question of extending the police commissioner's tenure for another year; the degree of danger to Israeli democracy; and the chances of a war with Iran and all that it implies. The last issue we explored was that of voting considerations in case elections are held in the near future.

What causes the Palestinian demonstrations at the Gaza-Israel border? An overwhelming majority of the Jewish public (68%) agrees with the claim that the Palestinian demonstrations at the Gaza border are more a result of Hamas's planning, while only 8% see them as resulting more from the Gaza residents' despair over the living conditions there. Nineteen percent think the two explanations are equally valid. A segmentation of the Jewish sample by political camps reveals that on the right, 78% view the demonstrations as Hamas's doing, as do 64% of those who situated themselves in the center. However, only 37% of those who defined themselves as left-wing had that opinion.

Among the Arabs, the majority (62%) considers that the demonstrations are a result of the residents' despair over their living conditions. Only 2% regard them as Hamas's doing while 29% see both explanations as equally valid.

The IDF's use of force against the Palestinian demonstrations at the Gaza border: In light of the distribution of responses to the previous question, it comes as no surprise that, despite the large number of casualties among the Palestinians, a clear majority of the Jewish public (62%) thinks the IDF's handling of these demonstrations was appropriate in terms of the force that was used and 28% believe the IDF actually used too little force. A segmentation by political camps showed that in all three of them- right, center, and left- the majority's assessment was that appropriate force was used. On the left, however, about one-fourth thought the force was excessive, while on the right about one-third responded that too little was used.

Among the Arabs, a large majority (92%) see the force that the IDF used against these demonstrations as excessive.

Alleviations for Gaza: The Jewish public's positions on whether Israel should or should not provide certain alleviations- for example, regarding the entry of goods and freedom of movement- to make the Gaza residents' lives less difficult are almost evenly split. Exactly half think or are sure that there is no need for such measures, while an only slightly smaller minority (44%) asserts that such alleviations should be provided. This minority is mostly composed of those who defined themselves as on the left or in the center, while about one-third of those who defined themselves as right-wing also hold that view. It should be noted in this context that the support for providing alleviations can be explained by two motives, one humanitarian and one instrumental, that do not necessarily contradict each other: a desire to help a population that is in distress even if it is an enemy, and the notion that providing alleviations will weaken the motivation to continue the demonstrations.

In the Israeli Arab public an almost full consensus believes Israel must provide alleviations that will improve the lives of the Gaza residents.

Israel's status in international public opinion: Forty-five percent of the Jewish public see Israel's situation in this regard as "so-so," with the rest almost evenly divided between those who say it is bad (24%) and those who say it is good (30%). On this issue the differences between the right and the left are as one would expect: on the right the largest rate thinks Israel's international status is good (39.5%); on the left, that its status in this arena is bad (46%). As for the Arab public, a majority (55%) regards Israel's current status in international public opinion as bad.

The police and the Israeli Arab demonstrations: About half of the Jewish public hold the opinion that the way the police handled the demonstrations in support of the Gaza residents was appropriate in terms of the force that was used; another 25% think too little force was used. In a similar vein, but more starkly, some 70% give more credence to the police's claim that these demonstrations were violent and flouted the law, while only 4% give greater credence to the

Arab demonstrators' charge that the police used great force against them even though the demonstrations were quiet and legal. Nineteen percent do not believe either the police or the demonstrators. As for the degree of trust in the Police Investigations Unit to properly investigate what occurred in these demonstrations, two-thirds of the Jewish public believes that the investigation will be thorough and fair.

In the Arab public the positions are the complete opposite: 77% think the police used excessive force against the Arab demonstrators, 74% give more credence to the Arab demonstrators' account of what happened, and 79% do not believe that the Police Investigations Unit will investigate the events thoroughly and fairly.

The future of Police Commissioner Roni Alsheikh: The positions on the question of whether to extend Alsheikh's tenure are not uniform. In the Jewish public the highest rate (46%) prefers for his tenure to be extended by an additional year, as the law permits. Thirty-two percent prefer that his tenure end and a new police commissioner be appointed, and 22% do not know. An interesting finding is that among those defining themselves as on the left and in the center, a majority favors extending Alsheikh's tenure (60% and 64% respectively), while among those defining themselves as on the right only about a third support an extension.

Among the Arabs, the majority (52%) has no position on the issue.

Netanyahu's involvement in choosing the next police commissioner: The Jewish public shows a more clear-cut division of positions concerning the claim that: "If it is decided to appoint a new police commissioner, then in light of the investigations of the prime minister that are being conducted, he cannot be directly or indirectly involved in the decision on whom to appoint." The majority (62%) agrees with the claim. In other words, the majority does not want the prime minister to be involved in appointing the next police commissioner.

The state of Israeli democracy: We asked: "Do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: 'Democratic government in Israel is now in grave danger'?" The answers show that the majority of the public (54%) disagrees with this claim, though one cannot ignore the existence of a substantial minority (41%) that thinks the opposite. As expected, there is a close link between positions on this question and political location: on the right only 28% agree that Israeli

democracy is in grave danger compared to 55% of those who situate themselves in the center and 75% of the left.

In the Arab public 70% see Israeli democracy as being in grave danger.

Are war drums beating? Just as it was a year ago when we first asked this question, at present the Jewish public is almost split between those who see high chances that Israel will be involved in an all-out war with Iran or some other military actor in the coming year (43%) and those who regard the chances of this as low (46%). In the Arab public the majority (52.5%) views the chances of an all-out war with Iran in the foreseeable future as low.

The emergency services' preparedness for an all-out war: A majority of the Jewish public (59%) feels that the country's emergency services are as prepared as possible to protect the citizens if an all-out war erupts in the foreseeable future. Perhaps for that reason, only 33% have personally made the preparations recommended by the Home Front Command to protect themselves and their families in case an all-out war breaks out imminently while 61% have not made the preparations—whether out of confidence in the country's emergency services or because such a war is seen as posing less danger. A certain support for the second explanation emerges from the responses to the following question: "In your estimate, about how many civilians will be killed or wounded in Israel if an all-out war breaks out in the near future?" The highest rate (45%) responded that in their estimate there would be no more than tens of casualties.

In the Arab public the majority (53%) sees the emergency services as unprepared for an all-out confrontation and a huge majority (84%) has not made any preparations personally.

Party loyalty: In light of the possibility that the next Knesset elections will be moved up, we asked if the respondents intended to vote for the same party they voted for in the latest elections in 2015 or for a different party. The responses indicate that a majority (56%) of the Jewish public are sure or think they will vote for the same party while 23% are sure or think they will vote for a different one. These findings raise the question of party loyalty -that is, for which parties do their past voters intend to vote in the next elections as well? The findings reveal that the ladder of loyalty, in descending order, is as follows: Torah Judaism; Likud; Shas; Zionist Union; Meretz;

Yesh Atid; Habayit Hayehudi; Yisrael Beiteinu (lacking a sufficient number of Kulanu voters in the sample, we do not have enough data on the rate who intend to vote for it in the future).

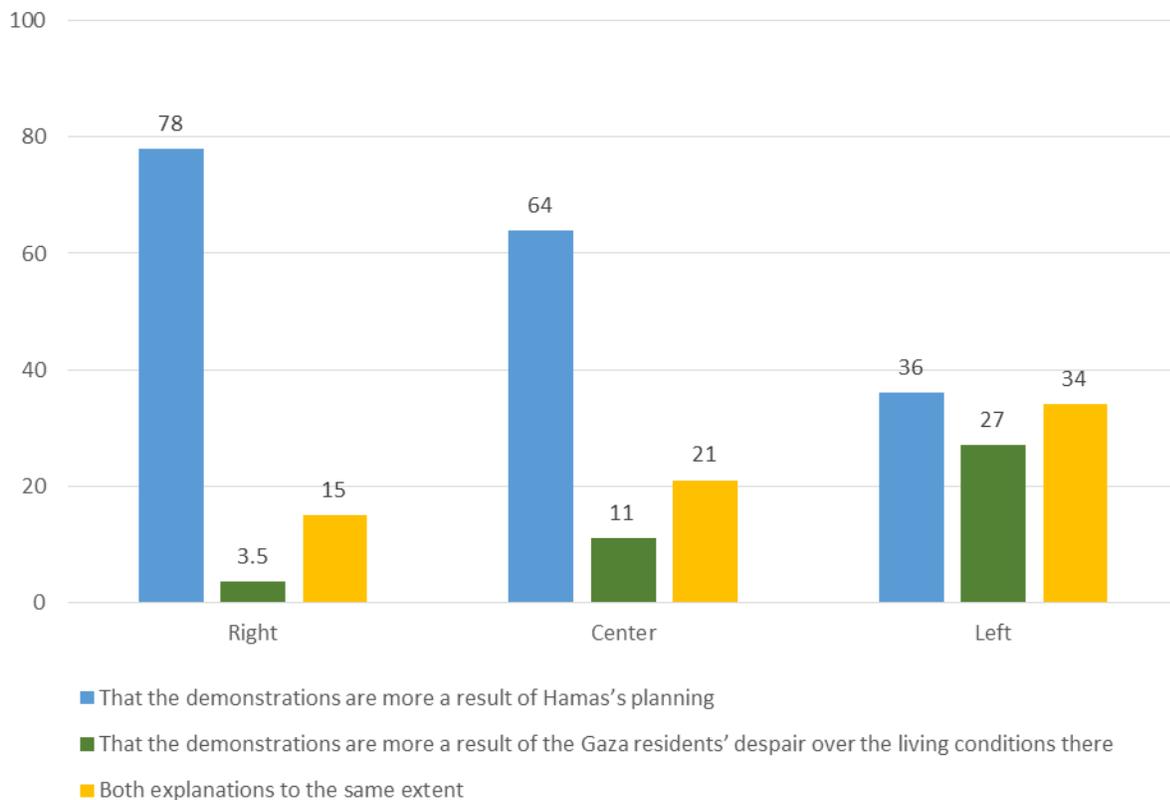
The rate of Arabs who will vote for the same party they voted for in the 2015 elections stands at 51%.

On what basis will they vote? We asked: “If elections are held soon, which among the following is the main factor that will determine which party you vote for?” Out of a list of five factors, it turns out that the first one in importance for the Jewish public is the party’s ideology (37.5%); the next, at a considerable distance, is the party’s leader (28%). Very far behind these two come, in descending order, the following factors: the party’s list of candidates for the next Knesset (13.5%), loyalty to the party (7%), and the party’s chances to form the next government (7%). An inquiry according to voting revealed that among voters for (in descending order) Habayit Hayehudi, Meretz, Torah Judaism, and the Zionist Union, ideology is more salient, while among (in descending order) voters for Shas, Yisrael Beiteinu, and Likud, the leader is more important.

In the Arab public, too, the party’s ideology is in first place (39%) while the party’s list of candidates is in second place (23%).

Negotiations Index: 42.1 (Jews 42.7)

Diagram of the month: “Some claim that the Palestinian demonstrations at the Gaza border are more a result of Hamas’s planning; some claim they are more a result of the Gaza residents’ despair over the living conditions there. Which of the two explanations is more convincing to you?” (% , Jews, by political camp)



The Peace Index is a project of the Evens Program for Mediation and Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University and the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute. This month's survey was conducted by telephone and internet on May 28-30, 2018, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 600 respondents, who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population of Israel aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is $\pm 4.1\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. Statistical analyses were done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay. <http://www.peaceindex.org>

