

## Peace Index, November 2017

**Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann**

In November the public discourse revolved around a wide variety of domestic and foreign issues, and so the present survey addresses more issues than usual. We will begin with the debate on the “recommendations law.”

**Against the recommendations law:** A bill has been submitted to the Knesset stipulating that at the end of the investigation of a case, the police will submit to the state attorney only the findings of the investigation but not their opinion on whether or not the person under investigation should be indicted. We asked: “In your opinion, is it right to limit the police or should the current situation continue in which it also submits its opinion on whether or not to indict the person under investigation?” We found that a majority of the Jewish public (59%) supports continuing the current situation, and so does a majority - even larger - of the Arab public (62%). A segmentation of the Jewish respondents by self-location on the right-left spectrum revealed that only among those defining themselves as on the right did the rate of supporters of the law exceed the rate of opponents (46.5% vs. 35%). In all the other groups - moderate right, center, moderate left, and left - the rate of opponents exceeded the rate of supporters of the law.

**Against removing Member of Knesset Begin from the Interior Committee:** In this context, we gauged what the public thinks of the ousting of Member of Knesset Benny Begin from the Interior Committee on grounds that his position, which is that the law should apply only to investigations that have not yet begun, contravenes the position of the Likud Party. We asked: “In your opinion, in the context of the debate on the bill, should members of Knesset express their opinion or stick to the position of the party they belong to?” The Jewish public takes a strong position on this question: a clear majority (67%) thinks members of Knesset should express their opinion and not just stick to their party’s position. Among the Arab interviewees the majority on this question was even larger: 85% think members of Knesset should express their own opinion.

We then moved to the second issue that has roused passions recently: Israel's relations with the American Jewish community.

**There is more that unites than separates Israeli Jewry and American Jewry:** Close to half of the Jewish public (47.5%) thinks that what unites Israeli Jews and American Jews is stronger than what separates them. Only a tiny minority (12.5%) considers that what separates them is greater than what unites them, while about one-fourth think that the uniting and separating factors are equally strong. In the Arab public the highest rate (37.5%) think that what unites the two communities is greater than what separates them, 21% see the separating factors as greater, and 22% regard the uniting and separating factors as equally strong. Somewhat surprisingly, we did not find a difference on this question among the Jewish interviewees who located themselves on the right, in the center, or on the left.

**The relations are more important to Israel:** To the question "To whom is it more important that the relationship between Israel and American Jewry should be close and good - to Israel or to American Jewry?" the Jewish interviewees gave the following pattern of responses: the highest rate (49%) responded that the relationship is more important to Israel, 12% thought it was more important to American Jewry, and 35% answered that it was equally important to both sides. In other words, there is a numerical advantage, though not a large majority, for those who believe that the relationship with American Jewry is more vital from Israel's standpoint than from the American Jewish community's standpoint. Here we found significant gaps between the political camps: among those defining themselves as on the right, only 42% thought the relations were more important to Israel, while in the center and on the left a majority thought so (56% and 63% respectively). In the Arab public we found a large majority (65%) saying that the relationship is more vital to Israel than to American Jewry.

**When making policy on intra-Israeli issues, American Jewry should not be taken into account:** Despite the prevailing assessment of the importance of the relationship with American Jewry, to the question of to what extent, if at all, the Israeli government should take into account the opinion of American Jewry when making decisions on domestic issues, such as the religious status in Israel of Reform and Conservative Jews, a majority (55%) of the Jewish interviewees

responded in the negative. Only 39% favored the view that it should take their opinion into account on such matters. A segmentation of the responses by self-location on the right-left spectrum revealed that on the right, a majority thinks the position of American Jewry on intra-Israeli questions should not be taken into account, while in the center and on the left a majority believes it should be taken into account. The Arab public was divided in its opinions on this issue, with a slight advantage for those who thought Israel should take into account the positions of American Jewry: 48% were in favor of doing so and 46% were against it. This is probably related to the liberal positions of many American Jews and their organizations, who in recent years have devoted great attention to the Israeli Arabs and have even invested heavily in developing educational and other facilities in the Arab sector.

**Was Hotovely right?** A more specific indication of the complexity of the relations between the two communities can be found in the public's reactions to Deputy Foreign Minister Hotovely's recent statements that most American Jews do not understand Israel because they "never send their children to fight for their country" and because they do not know what it is "to actually experience what Israel is dealing with on a daily basis." Fifty-one percent of the Jewish interviewees agreed with her words while 45% disagreed. A distribution by self-location on the right-left spectrum showed, as expected, a majority siding with Hotovely among the right-wing groups and a majority not taking her side in the center and on the left. The Arab interviewees were divided on this question, with a high rate for those who did not have a clear opinion on the issue.

**Don't fire Hotovely:** A large majority of the Jewish interviewees (71%) think Netanyahu should not accede to American Jewish leaders' demand to dismiss his deputy from her post. In other words, the Jewish public mostly opposes the intervention of American Jews in Israeli domestic affairs even on matters not connected to religion. We did not find a majority that favored complying with the American Jewish leaders' demand to fire Hotovely in any of the political camps, with the opposition to it especially strong among those defining themselves as politically right-wing.

The third issue we looked into in this month's survey was Netanyahu's policy toward Iran.

**There is still an Iranian threat:** A large majority of the Jewish public (77%) concurs with Netanyahu's warnings that even after the signing of the agreement with the Western countries that limits Iran's nuclear development, Iran is close to developing a nuclear capability that will threaten Israel's existence. Among the Arabs a small majority, 53%, disagrees with this position of Netanyahu's.

**Putin is not taking Israel's security into account:** An overwhelming majority of the Jewish public (87%) holds the view that Putin, despite the purportedly close ties between him and Prime Minister Netanyahu, did not take into account the issue of Israel's security when he planned and signed the agreement at the summit on Syria's future that he held with the presidents of Iran and Turkey, an agreement stipulating among other things that Iranian-linked forces can be located not far from the border between Syria and Israel. In the Arab public a small majority (51%) thinks Putin does take Israel's security into account (on this question as well, a large number chose the "Don't know" option).

**The presence of Iranian forces close to the border endangers Israel:** We asked: "How dangerous is the presence of forces linked to Iran close to the Syria-Israel border?" Again a very large majority of the Jewish interviewees (86%) responded that such a presence endangers Israel's security. The Arab interviewees were divided on this question.

**Has Netanyahu failed or succeeded in dealing with the Iranian threat?** The Jewish public is divided between those who agree that Netanyahu has failed in his policy, the evidence being the agreement that was signed with Iran in the past and the agreement signed just now under Putin's tutelage (47%), and those who do not agree that the policy has failed (45%). A segmentation by self-location on the right-left spectrum revealed that only about one-third of those on the right think Netanyahu has failed, compared to a majority of two-thirds and more in the center and on the left. In the Arab public about three-fourths assess that Netanyahu has failed on this issue.

The fourth issue we explored this month concerns President Rivlin's rejection of the pardon request by Elor Azarya, a rejection that sparked a wave of vituperation of the president.

**Opposed to the president's decision to reject Azarya's pardon request:** In the opinion of the majority (53%) of the Jewish public, the president's decision to reject Azarya's pardon request was not right, while 38% think it was right. A segmentation by political camps showed that among those defining themselves as on the right, a huge majority held this view compared to only a minority in the center and on the left.

**Some objections to the decision exceed the boundaries of freedom of expression:** Even though, as noted, the majority of the Jewish public thinks the president's decision was not right, a larger majority (62%) holds the view that posts on the social networks by some of those who were incensed by the decision, such as pictures of Rivlin wearing an Arab keffiyeh and statements such as "Rivlin is a traitor," were not within the boundaries of freedom of expression. In all the political camps the rate of those who thought so exceeded the rate of those who saw these as still being permissible within the boundaries of the democratic freedom of expression. In the Arab public, too, a majority (56%) responded that these expressions against Rivlin crossed the permissible limits of the democratic freedom of expression.

**Who got carried away by whom - the ministers or the public?** In this context, we asked which of the following two claims is more right: the claim that those who made the harsh expressions against Rivlin got carried away by the harsh things that ministers and members of Knesset said against him, or the claim that it was the ministers and members of Knesset who got carried away by the harsh expressions against Rivlin of parts of the public. The responses reveal a wide distribution of positions on this question among the Jewish public: 20% answered that the public got carried away by the politicians, 22% that the politicians got carried away by the harsh expressions of parts of the public, 39% that the effect was mutual, and 19% did not know. Among the Arabs 44% claim that the public got carried away by the members of Knesset, 15% claim the opposite, and 25% consider that the effect was mutual.

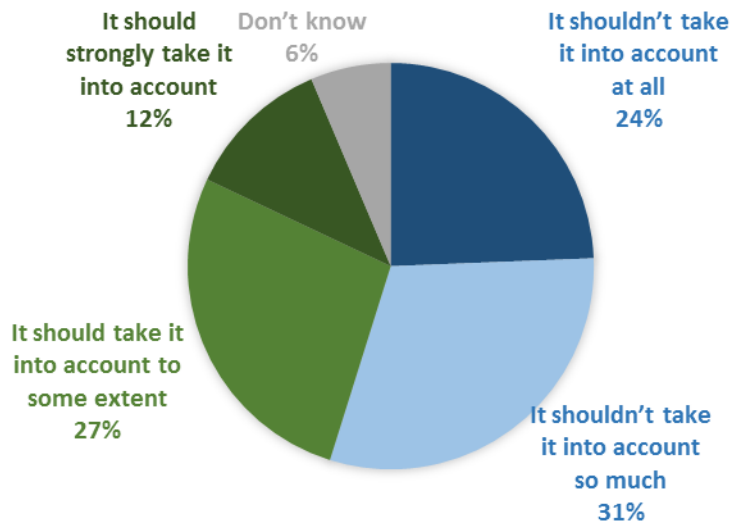
**The authority to pardon should remain only in the president's hands:** A majority of the Jewish public (61%) opposes the initiative of some members of Knesset to submit a bill stipulating that not only the president will be authorized to grant a pardon to someone sentenced to prison, as is the practice today, but also that the Knesset will have such authority. In other words, the public makes a clear distinction between its attitude toward the institution of the presidency and its attitude toward specific decisions that the president makes.

The fifth and last issue we dealt with in this survey is the confrontation between the organization Breaking the Silence and the state attorney.

**More people believe the state attorney:** To the question "Whom do you believe more: the spokesman for Breaking the Silence, Dean Issacharoff, who testified that while serving as a soldier in the territories he severely beat a Palestinian for no reason, or the state attorney, who investigated the issue and came to the conclusion that this was a false testimony?" the majority of the Jewish interviewees (61%) responded that they believe the state attorney more. Only 9%, the overwhelming majority of them as expected locating themselves on the left, answered that they believe Issacharoff more. Sixteen percent answered that they do not believe either side in the controversy. Among the Arabs the higher rate (44%) believe Issacharoff more while only 24% believe the state attorney more.

**The state attorney's investigation was not intended to vilify Breaking the Silence:** We asked: "Some claim that under pressure from political elements from the right, the state attorney did not fully investigate Issacharoff's testimony, seeking to create a general impression in the public that the testimonies of Breaking the Silence are false testimonies. In your opinion, is this claim about the quality of the investigation conducted by the state attorney right or not right?" A majority of the Jewish interviewees (49%) responded that this claim was not right while 28% said it was right. We did not find a clear connection between the response to this question and placement on the right-left spectrum.

**Diagram of the month: To what extent if at all should the Israeli government take into account the opinion of American Jewry when it makes decisions on domestic issues, such as the religious status in Israel of Reform and Conservative Jews? (% , Jews)**



**Negotiation Index: 47.5 (Jews 46.5)**

*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 on November 28-29, 2017, 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>*