Peace Index column, October 2015

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Not surprisingly, this month’s Peace Index survey focused on the ongoing wave of terror attacks and how they are affecting the feelings and behaviors of the Israeli public. Overall we found a Jewish public that is tense but not hysterical; holding firm yet in certain regards prepared, under the pressure of the incidents, to overturn democratic values; and that does not greatly esteem the policy and statements of the prime minister. We found, at that same time, an Arab public that is quite frightened and shows a high level of identification with the Palestinian issue.

The attacks and Palestinian despair: Despite the statements by the chief of Military Intelligence, Maj. Gen. Herzi Halevi, who recently pointed to the connection between Palestinian despair and the attacks, the Jewish public has a hard time understanding the present situation from the Palestinian standpoint. The overwhelming majority (74%) does not agree with the claim that the current wave of attacks stems from the Palestinians’ despair over the lack of progress in talks on a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In the Arab public, the highest rate, 50%, do make a connection between the Palestinian feeling of a cul-de-sac and the resort to terror attacks as a tool in the struggle against Israel.

A considerable fear of attacks: A certain majority, not large, of the Jewish public (57%) fears that they themselves or someone important to them will be harmed in the current wave of attacks. A thought-provoking finding—taking into account that these are attacks with knives and not with explosives, which do not distinguish among passersby or bus passengers by national affiliation—is that the fear is a good deal greater in the Arab public, where 78% answered that they are apprehensive of being harmed; this may imply that what they fear is attacks by Jews.
The attacks’ impact on daily life: A majority of the Jewish public (64%) reports that they have not changed their daily habits, such as using public transportation less or altering their shopping routines. In line with the previous finding, a majority of the Arab public (53.5%) did report a change in their daily habits.

Lynch: These fears of the Arab public have a basis. The Jewish public is showing a very high and worrisome level of support for attacks on Arab perpetrators, and as we have already had occasion to realize, in moments of anxiety and confusion there is no great ability to distinguish between a perpetrator and a nonperpetrator. A 53% majority(!) of the Jewish interviewees agreed with the statement that “any Palestinian who has perpetrated a terror attack against Jews should be killed on the spot, even if he has been apprehended and no longer poses a threat.” A segmentation of the group agreeing with the statement by political camps revealed a certain degree of support in all the camps, though it is much higher among those defining themselves as right-wing than among those who say they are in the center or on the left (right 76%, moderate right 58.5%, center 37%, moderate left 28%, left 23%).

Equal treatment of Palestinians and Jews who have carried out murderous attacks on a nationalist background?: There is wide agreement in the Jewish public (80%) that the home of the family of a Palestinian who has murdered Jews on a nationalist background should be demolished. Regarding a Jew who has murdered Palestinians on a nationalist background, the pattern of responses is the opposite: the majority (53%) does not agree that his family’s home should be demolished, while 41% say otherwise. The Arab public shows greater consistency on this issue, though there is a certain tendency to favor the Palestinian side: the majority does not agree that the family home of a Palestinian perpetrator should be demolished (77%), but a large majority (67%) also opposes demolishing the family home of a Jewish

1 This question was not presented to the Arab interviewees.
perpetrator. Apparently demolishing a family home is an unacceptable act for the Arab public, without connection to who and what is involved.

**Adjusting the punishments that the courts mete out to perpetrators:** In a similar vein of leniency toward Jewish perpetrators and harshness toward Arab ones, 70% of the Jewish public thinks the punishments Israeli courts levy on Palestinians who have carried out terror attacks are too light. Only 35% said the punishments meted out to Jews who have done so are too light. At the same time, note that this rate is higher than the rate of those who thought the punishments imposed on Jewish perpetrators were appropriate (28%) or too heavy (21%). In the Arab public the picture is, as expected, the opposite: the majority (60%) thinks that the punishments the courts impose on the Palestinian perpetrators are too heavy, while 52% view the punishments given the Jewish perpetrators as too light.

**Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount:** Over half the Jewish respondents (58%) consider that in the current state of affairs, Jews should not be allowed to pray on the Temple Mount. At the same time, Netanyahu’s policy on this issue does not get much support. To the question “In your opinion, is Netanyahu’s policy toward the conflict with the Arab world over the question of prayer on the Temple Mount good or poor from Israel’s standpoint?,” 49% responded that it is very poor or moderately poor while slightly over one-third (35.5%) saw it as very good or moderately good. The Arab public shows broad agreement (83.5%) that, in the current situation, Jews should not pray on the mount. About two-thirds (65.5%) defined Netanyahu’s policy on the issue as very poor or moderately poor.

**The authorities’ response to the current wave of attacks.** We asked: “What grade, in your opinion, should each of the following institutions or groups be given for how it has dealt with the current terror wave?” The highest rank went to the IDF, with 93% of the Jewish public giving it grades of very good or moderately good. In second place came the police, to which 84.5% of the Jewish respondents awarded grades of very good or moderately good. In third place among the security arms was
the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency), to which less than three-fourths (72%) gave a grade of very good or moderately good (about one-fifth of the Jews did not know what grade to give the Shin Bet). Far behind came the Israeli government, with only 39% of the Jews assigning it grades of very good or moderately good for how it has dealt with the current wave of attacks. To themselves, that is, to the Jewish public, exactly three-fourths of the Jewish respondents gave the grades of very good or moderately good. Only a minority of the Jewish interviewees (19.5%) gave a grade of very good or moderately good to how the Arab public has dealt with the situation, and at the bottom of the ladder are the Arab members of Knesset, with just 4% of the Jewish interviewees giving them a grade of very good or moderately good. For the Arab public, the interesting findings on this issue are the majority (53%) that graded themselves very good or moderately good on how they have dealt with the situation, and the relatively low rate (38%) who gave a positive grade to the Arab members of Knesset.

**Netanyahu, the Palestinian mufti, and the Holocaust:** To the question “Were you persuaded or not persuaded by Netanyahu’s assertion that the Palestinian mufti was significantly responsible for the annihilation of the Jews in the Holocaust?,” a majority of 62% of the Jewish interviewees answered that they were not persuaded. At the same time, a large majority (73%) does not agree that Netanyahu’s statement that Hitler began the annihilation of the Jews only under the Palestinian mufti’s influence basically belittles the Germans’ responsibility for the Holocaust.

**Negotiations index: 44.7** (Jewish sample 42.4)
Has the current wave of terror attacks caused you to change your daily behavior?*

- 46.6% I've changed my daily behavior
- 25.6% I've changed it somewhat
- 14.2% I almost haven't changed it
- 12.7% I haven't changed it at all
- 0.4% Don't Know/Decline to Answer

*General Public

The Peace Index is a project of the Evens Program for Mediation and Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University and the Guttman Center for Surveys of the Israel Democracy Institute. This month’s survey was conducted by telephone on October 28-29, 2015, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 600 respondents, who constitute a representative national sample of the entire adult population aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is ±4.1% at a confidence level of 95%. Statistical processing was done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay. [include?—not in the Hebrew column for this month] http://www.peaceindex.org