

Majority of Israeli Jews Prepared to Support Much Wider Unilateral Withdrawal

Summer 2004 -- Polling conducted by the Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel-Aviv University, in coordination with the University of Maryland, has found that a clear majority of Israeli-Jews (54.42% favor, 29.61% oppose) support a unilateral withdrawal encompassing the West Bank as well as the Gaza Strip, provided that from an international point of view, such a withdrawal ends the territorial dimension of the conflict, with Israel recognized as a Jewish state within a permanent boundary. Such a withdrawal goes well beyond anything contemplated by the current Israeli government.

Respondents were asked:

“ It has recently been reported that the government intends to unilaterally disengage from the Gaza Strip. What is your opinion of a similar unilateral disengagement from the West Bank under the following conditions:

- The new border will approximate the Green Line with minor modifications so that Israeli sovereignty will include territories on which 75% of the Judea and Samaria settlers now live.
- In return for territories annexed to Israel, The Palestinians will receive from Israel territories on the same scale.
- This unilateral action will only take place if the United States is able to obtain from the UNSC recognition of Israel as a Jewish State within these permanent borders.
- Negotiations over Jerusalem, Refugees and other issues will take place at later stage.

Do you support or oppose such a unilateral disengagement from the West Bank under these conditions?”

Results were as follows:

	Israeli Jews
Strongly support	23.5%
Support	30.9%
Oppose	10.4%
Strongly oppose	19.2%
Don't know	16.1%

Further analysis by party affiliation revealed that the proposal had strong support across the Israeli political spectrum except for the far-right. Among Shas supporters 50% supported and 36% opposed, and among Likud supporters 43% supported and 40% opposed. The breakdown was as follows:

	Support	Oppose	Don't Know
Likud	45.7%	37.9%	16.4%
Labor	65.6%	20.3%	14.1%
Meretz	75.7%	11.4%	12.9%
Shinui	65.6%	20.3%	14.1%
Shas	22.7%	59.1%	18.2%
National Religious Party	26.5%	61.8%	11.7%

Dr. Jerome M. Segal of the University of Maryland, who developed the proposal, pointed out that this result is in sharp contrast to the results obtained when Israeli Jews are simply asked about a pull-out from most of the West Bank without Israel getting anything in return. Dr. Segal said, "It is important to recognize that this proposal contained key positive elements not contained in the current disengagement discourse. Specifically,

A) The withdrawal would only occur if the United States was able to obtain United Nations Security Council support;

B) The withdrawal line would be recognized as Israel's permanent border, except for Jerusalem which would be deferred.

C) Within that permanent border Israel would be recognized as a Jewish State."

Dr. Segal went on to say that the response suggests that Israeli Jews are prepared to make far reaching territorial moves, provided Israel receives clear benefits in return, And further, it appears that Israelis may place more value on formal recognition as a Jewish state within permanent boundaries when it comes from the international community than when it comes from the Palestinians.

Polling was conducted June 28-30, 2004 and included 579 interviewees who represent the adult Jewish and Arab population of Israel. The margin of error is 4.5%.

June 2003 -- The Jewish Peace Lobby, in a poll conducted with the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel-Aviv University, found that 65% of Israeli Jews support or very much support an active American effort to formulate detailed peace agreements, not just for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but for the conflict with Syria and Lebanon as well. They want the United States to then recruit international support in an effort to convince the parties to accept these agreements. Only 28% of Israeli Jews opposed this approach.

Similar results were found on the same issue in a poll conducted in September 2002. 67% of Israeli Jews supported the United States formulating detailed peace agreements for the Middle East. Only 28% of Israeli Jews opposed such an American approach. Through further statistical analysis, it was revealed that among those questioned who identified themselves as Sharon voters in the 2001 Israeli elections, 59% supported the approach described above. Among Barak supporters, that support climbs to 80.6%.