

Polls show broad support in Israel for Gaza's destruction and starvation



Tel Aviv, February 11 (RHC)-- In a shocking revelation, a new survey taken in Israel shows overwhelming support for the genocidal war against Gaza -- including the opinion that not enough destruction and bloodshed is being carried out. Nearly 58 percent of respondents in one poll said they think the IDF is using "too little firepower" in Gaza.

In November 2023, the International Program in Conflict Resolution and Mediation at Tel Aviv University released the results of a poll conducted in late October. By this time, the world was being inundated with images of the horrors of the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip: block after block of destroyed buildings, grim-faced men lifting the bloodied corpses of their family members from the rubble, children with stumps in place of limbs lying on hospital beds, a man sitting in front of the remains of his house with his head in his hands.

Israeli Jews, however, seem unperturbed by the scale of the suffering, if the polls are any indication. One of the questions in the Tel Aviv University poll deals with the amount of force the Israeli army is using in Gaza. Less than 2 percent of the respondents said they believed the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was using too much firepower. Perhaps even more horrifyingly, nearly 58 percent said they were using too

little firepower.

What do we make of these results? How do we interpret them? The results of any poll must be taken skeptically. Do we trust the pollsters? Was the sample sufficiently large and sufficiently random?

In a poll conducted by the Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute between December 11–13, 2023, Israeli Jews were asked “To what extent should Israel take into consideration the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza when planning the continuation of the fighting there?” Over 80 percent responded with “to a very small extent” or “to a fairly small extent.”

Over 27,000 Palestinians have died (including 11,500 women and 8,000 children), over 8,000 are missing and over 66,000 are injured (cf. Al Jazeera). According to the Norwegian Research Council, 1.9 million people — more than 80 percent of Gaza’s population — have been internally displaced. The damage to the enclave’s infrastructure has been devastating — over 360,000 residential units (more than half of the housing in Gaza) destroyed or damaged, and 370 educational facilities damaged.

The intensive bombing campaign shows no signs of letting up, and as it continues, starvation and the presence of waterborne and respiratory disease increase. Half a million Gazans are now suffering from acute hunger. Gaza’s health system is completely overwhelmed, and the supply of medicines is so low that some 1000 children reportedly were forced to endure the amputation of their limbs without anesthesia. During these winter months, individuals who have spent weeks on the streets will experience increased vulnerability.

In a poll taken by the Israeli Channel 12 in the last week of January, 72 percent of Israelis said “the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip must be stopped until the Israeli prisoners are released.” On February 1st, hundreds of Israelis blocked a convoy of aid trucks headed for Gaza.

Several years ago, journalist Gideon Levy, who writes for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz as a trenchant critic of the occupation, argued that three factors are at play: chosenness, victimhood and dehumanization.

“Most Israelis believe deeply that we are the chosen people,” said Levy, “and we have the right to do whatever we want.”

Polls seem to offer confirmation of this statement. A 2013 survey showed that over half of Israeli Jews believe “very strongly” that Jews are the chosen people and that nearly two-thirds believe this statement either “very strongly” or “quite strongly.”

In a January 2023 poll, 93 percent of Israeli Jews said that all of the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River belongs to them. The justification for this belief is not discussed in the poll.

Interestingly, a 2016 poll reveals that only 30 percent of Israeli Jews say religion plays a very important role in their lives. Nevertheless, 61 percent believe that God gave the land of Israel to the Jews. As the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé famously wrote, “We do not believe in God, but he nevertheless promised us Palestine.”

Resolution and Mediation at Tel Aviv University, a staggering 80 percent of Israeli Jews say their people’s suffering is unique in human history; 84 percent believe their victimization is worse than all other people that have suffered from persecution and injustice; and perhaps most troubling, 63 percent believe their victimhood grants them the moral entitlement to take any action in order to survive.

“There have been more brutal occupations in history, and there have been longer occupations in history,” said Levy, “but there was never an occupation in history in which the occupier presented himself as the

victim. Not only the victim, but the only victim around. This enables us to live in peace, because we are the victims.”

It is not difficult to find evidence of the Israeli dehumanization of Palestinians, especially in the statements made by politicians since October 7.

“This is the most dangerous one,” said Levy. “The systematic dehumanization of the Palestinians.... If they are not human, then there is no question of human rights. If you scratch under the surface of every Israeli, you will find that almost no one treats the Palestinians as human.”

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said on October 9 that “we are imposing a complete siege on Gaza. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we will act accordingly.” (He later said that those Gazans who could help the hostages would be protected, but “the rest deserve to die.”) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s wife Sara went a step further. “I don’t call them human animals,” she wrote on X, “because that would be insulting to animals.” Galit Distel Atbaryan, a member of parliament, tweeted that Israel should erase “all of Gaza from the face of the earth.” Israeli Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu, who has since been suspended, said that Israel should consider using nuclear weapons in Gaza. Ariel King, the deputy mayor of Jerusalem, called for Palestinian civilians to be buried alive.

Journalists have gotten into the act, as well. TV journalist Zvi Yehezkeli, speaking on Tel Aviv-based Channel 13, said, “In my opinion, the IDF should have launched a more fatal attack, with 100,000 killed in the beginning.”

Israeli leaders have regularly described Palestinians as “a cancer,” “vermin,” “dirty,” “primitive” and called for them to be “annihilated,” language that journalist Chris McGeal, who covered the Rwandan genocide, writes reminds him of the terms used by Hutus to describe Tutsis.

Jewish Israelis’ view of Palestinian citizens of Israel have been recorded in opinion polls. A 2016 survey showed that nearly half of Israeli Jews wanted the 1.6 million Palestinian citizens of Israel to be transferred from the country. Fifty-five percent of Israeli Jews say they would not want to live in the same building as an Arab, while 93 percent would feel uncomfortable or afraid to hear Arabic spoken around them in Israel.

In any settler-colonial project, the colonial power must develop both an origin myth and a narrative that dehumanizes and demonizes the Indigenous population in order to legitimate the settlers’ claim to the land. Discourse that presents the settler as superior is propagated throughout society using children’s books and education, the media (as we have seen above) and, most powerfully in the case of Israel, the armed forces.

The opinion polls and statements made by politicians and journalists discussed above reveal the low regard in which most Israeli Jews hold Palestinians. It is clear that these attitudes are an inevitable consequence of Zionism’s nature as a settler colonial project.

For decades Israeli leaders have been open about their attitudes towards the establishment of a Palestinian state. In Likud’s 1999 charter, for example, it states that “the Government of Israel flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan river.” As Israel pursues policies that make a Palestinian state less and less viable — such as aggressive settlement construction in the West Bank — it will on occasion make token statements about the pursuit of peace, but this is done only to appease the United States and its other international backers.

For years, Israeli politicians have used the “no partner for peace mantra” as justification for their obstinance. In reality it is the Israeli government that is not a partner for peace; evidence in public opinion strongly suggests that Jewish Israelis will never pressure their government to become one. The sole possibility for change then, must originate outside of Israel. This can only come in the form of

international pressure, such as the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, which has already achieved some modest success. But the most powerful pressure can only be exerted by the United States. A few years ago that would have been unthinkable, but Israel's overwhelming brutality during the current assault has pushed American public opinion in favor of Palestinian rights more than ever. One hopes this will eventually push the U.S. government to pursue a more just course of action.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/346918-polls-show-broad-support-in-israel-for-gazas-destruction-and-starvation>



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