

Poll: 85 Percent of Israelis Have Little or No Trust in Regime

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The public opinion poll by Israel's Yediot Ahronoth media outlet and the Institute for Freedom and Responsibility of Reichman University suggests 85 percent of Israelis have little or no trust in their regime.

About 64 percent of respondents believe Zionist troops an existential threat, and 65 percent have not been sleeping well since the outbreak of the war, it said.

At least 73 percent of Israelis have grown anxious in the past six months.

As Israel continues its military onslaught on the Gaza Strip, Netanyahu's party popularity continues to decline, with a recent opinion survey favoring the National Unity Party led by Benny Gantz to take over the Knesset, the parliament.

A poll published in early April by the Israeli daily newspaper Maariv highlights a consistent decline in the Likud Party's popularity, led



Demonstrators burst into a meeting of the Knesset Finance Committee to call for regime action to free their relatives held captive in Gaza, January 22, 2024.

by Netanyahu, similar to previous polls conducted after Oct. 7, 2023, the date the devastating war on Gaza commenced.

The latest poll, conducted by Lazar Institute on a random sample of 528 Israelis with an estimated error rate of 4.4%, showed that if elec-

tions were held today, the so-called National Unity party would secure 32 seats in the 120-seat Knesset up from its current 12 seats.

In contrast, the poll indicated that the Likud party would only secure 17 seats, down from its current 32 in the parliament.

The opposition Yesh Atid party led by opposition leader Yair Lapid would obtain 15 seats, the poll said.

The opinion poll showed the group supporting Netanyahu would win 44 seats, while the group against him would win 66 seats.

Given Netanyahu's reluctance to hold early elections, there is no imminent prospect of a vote in Israel.

The poll also showed that 42% of participants support holding elections now, while 50% say that elections must be held after the war.

Regarding the protests demanding a captives exchange deal with Hamas, 46% of the participants considered that the escalation of protests "does not promote" the return of Israeli captives, while 31% of the protests supported the escalation, at a time when 23% did not specify their opinions.

Lapid has recently labeled Netanyahu and his cabinet as an "existential threat" to Israel.

Columbia University Cancels In-Person Classes After Pro-Palestinian Protests

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – Columbia University students attended classes virtually on Monday as school officials hope to de-escalate tensions on the New York City campus after pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested last week, Reuters reports.

In a statement, Columbia President Nemat Minouche Shafik said the university was cancelling in-person classes.

More than 100 pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested on Thursday on the campus after Shafik authorized New York police to clear an encampment set up by students demonstrating against the Zionist regime's bombing campaign in Gaza.

The protests at Columbia, reminiscent of the demonstrations against the Vietnam War at Columbia more than 50 years ago, are the latest in a series of protests disrupting university campuses, bridges and airports since Israel launched its genocidal war on Gaza in October 2023.

The protests against Israeli onslaught continues around the world.

Thousands of pro-Palestine demonstrators marched through Madrid on Sunday to demand an end to Israel's war on Gaza, while holding banners calling on the Spanish government to halt arms sales to the regime.

Activists also called for an im-

mediate ceasefire and the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

"You can stop selling arms to Israel, [and impose] economic boycott. Peacefully you can do many things to force ... Israel to change its attitude," said protester Carlos Calamita.

A huge Palestinian flag and a balloon in the shape of a zeppelin with the slogan "end the arms trade with Israel" led the demonstration.

"We demand that the government put an end to the arms trade with Israel. If European governments and the United States would stop selling arms to Israel in only three days, it would no

longer have ammunition to kill the Palestinian civilian population," another pro-Palestinian activist said.

Israel launched its brutal onslaught on the Gaza Strip, targeting hospitals, residences, and houses of worship after the territory's resistance movements launched a surprise attack, dubbed Operation al-Aqsa Storm, against the usurping regime on October 7, 2023.

At least 34,097 Palestinians have been killed, most of them women and children, and 76,980 others sustained injuries in the regime's genocidal war. More than 1.7 million people have been internally displaced as well.

Assad: U.S. Capitalizing on Israel's Genocidal War on Gazans

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian President Bashar al-Assad says the United States and the entire West benefit from the Zionist regime's genocidal war in the Gaza Strip by supplying arms and weapons to the occupying regime to prolong its aggression against the besieged Palestinian territory.

Assad made the remarks in an interview with Russia's TV Channel One on Sunday while elaborating on Washington's role in the decades-long conflict between Palestinians and the illegal entity.

"When we say 'America,' we mean the entire West because it is totally controlled by the United States. America preys on any conflict and then steps aside to watch the growing havoc, waiting for a moment to deal a knockout blow," the Syrian president said. "They capitalize on any conflict," he added, stressing that the U.S. policy rests on the divide-and-rule principle.

"This is their method of control, a kind of black-

mail," Assad said. "Such behavior is immoral. America turns any conflict into a dangerous chronic illness, some sort of diabetes or cancer. While the warring parties face the consequences."

The Syrian leader also underscored Washington's main role in the months-long Israeli war against Palestinians in Gaza.

"The United States plays the main role in the genocidal war in the Gaza Strip by unquestioningly supporting the Zionist regime and sending weapons to it," Assad said.

"In an attempt to improve its tarnished image before the eyes of the world, this country insists on the need to send humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, but in practice, it fuels the propagation of such crimes by vetoing UN resolutions in favor of the occupation regime."

Over the past months, the administration of US President Joe Biden has on multiple occasions ve-

toed UN resolutions demanding the Israeli regime stop its brutal aggression on Gaza.

On Thursday, the United States predictably cast its veto against a bid by the Palestinian Authority (PA) for Palestine to be recognized as a full member of the United Nations.

Washington's latest veto came amid the Israeli regime's war on the Gaza Strip that has increased sympathy towards Palestinians and international calls for the recognition of the State of Palestine.

The Zionist regime waged the genocidal war on the besieged Gaza on October 7 after Palestinian resistance groups carried out a historic operation against the occupying entity in retaliation for the regime's intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people.

The Tel Aviv regime has so far killed at least 34,049 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 76,901 others.

UK Labour Peer Calls for Inquiry Into MoD Over Saudi Bribe Allegations

LONDON (Middle East Eye) – Labour peer Peter Hain has called for a "timely and targeted" investigation into alleged Ministry of Defense (MoD) involvement in bribes paid to senior Saudi Arabia officials.

Two men were acquitted in March of paying seven and eight-figure bribes to high-ranking Saudi officials after their lawyers argued that the British government had long known about and authorized the payments to secure a huge UK arms deal, known as Sangcom. Allegedly, at least £10mn

(\$12.3mn) was paid to the head of the Saudi Arabian national guard, Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah, to secure a contract for military communication networks as part of the deal.

Internal MoD documents disclosed at the trial revealed a slew of other undisclosed financial arrangements and arms deals, including the MoD's involvement in multimillion-pound payments to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, as part of the al-Yamahah fighter jet deal. In a letter to the National Audit

Office, Hain urged government auditors to "rigorously review" government department financial practices "so that the lessons can be learned, both to protect public taxpayers' money in the defense sector and to ensure that government departments are rigorously reviewed for how they handle contracting arrangements and funds on government-to-government contracts.

"It is imperative that the National Audit Office conduct a timely, targeted investigation to establish and report on the facts, and for

parliamentarians and the public to understand the MoD's role in this national scandal and any ongoing corruption risks," he said.

Prince Mutaib, a son of the late Saudi King Abdullah, was stripped of his ministerial portfolio and arrested in November 2017, as part of an ostensible crackdown on royal corruption by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

He secured his freedom after reportedly paying Saudi authorities a settlement worth billions of dol

Promoting...

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"At the time when Iran's tension with the Israel is at its peak, for the president of Iran to come to Pakistan shows his confidence, both as a leader and as a nation, on us being a good neighbor and they consider Pakistan as their great friend," she added.

Former Pakistani ambassador to Iran, Riffat Masood, said Raisi's visit was important in the backdrop of recent hostilities between Israel and Iran.

"And, of course, when the leadership of the two countries meet, they will definitely discuss the way forward in trying to bring an end to or at least reduce the hostilities," she told Arab News.

She said Raisi's visit would also further enhance security and economic cooperation between Pakistan and Iran.

"The recent border issues are not expected to have a significant impact," Masood said, "as both countries swiftly addressed them before any negative consequences could affect bilateral relations."

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with the neighborhood policy ... is interested in promoting relations with Pakistan and during this trip, various issues including economic and commercial issues, energy and border issues will be discussed with the government of Pakistan," a statement by the Iranian presidential office said.

In a statement, Pakistan's ministry of foreign affairs called for improving bilateral ties.

"The two sides will have a wide-ranging agenda to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties and enhance cooperation in diverse fields including trade, connectivity, energy, agriculture, and people-to-people contacts," the statement said.

Foreign policy analysts in Pakistan have backed re-engagement with Iran.

"Pakistan has troubled borders with India as well as with Afghanistan. And therefore, to have a normal, stable relationship with Iran has been of utmost importance for Pakistan, and it remains so," veteran Pakistani diplomat Maleeha Lodhi told Al Jazeera.

Islamabad and Tehran have been aiming to boost bilateral trade, which currently stands at more than \$2 billion.

Muhammad Faisal, a PhD Scholar at the University of Technology Sydney who specializes in Pakistan's foreign policy, told Al Jazeera that there is a sizable informal trade between the two countries, including liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and crude oil. He added that Iran also provides electricity to Balochistan province and other border areas in Pakistan.

In May 2023, Sharif and Raisi inaugurated the first border market at the Mand-Pishin border crossing.

Moreover, the two neighbors have close cultural and religious ties, with tens of thousands of Shia minority people from Pakistan going to Iran every year on pilgrimage.

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is close to achieving an imminent victory in its ongoing war in Gaza for over six months, according to Israeli Channel 13.

The poll also found that 63 percent of respondents support holding early elections, while 33 percent prefer holding the vote as scheduled in October 2026.

According to Haaretz and other Israeli media, Israeli helicopters and tanks, in fact, killed many of the 1,139 soldiers and other Zionists claimed by Israel to have been killed by the Palestinian Resistance.

Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which, in January, issued an interim ruling that ordered it to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

Speaking to Al Jazeera, political analyst Yossi Mekelberg said as the conflict drags on with no end in sight, Haliva's move to quit seemed inevitable. "Something is rotten in the kingdom of Israeli intelligence," Mekelberg, associate fellow at the British think tank Chatham House, said.

"The pressure on Haliva was immense," he said, adding, not just for the October 7 failures, but also for failing to gauge the Iranian response to the Israeli attack on its consular building in the Syrian capital, Damascus, which pushed the region to the brink of war.

"It seems that no one warned of the possibility of more than 300 missiles, including ballistic, being launched against Israel," Mekelberg added.

Hezbollah...

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The airstrike martyred two senior Iranian military personnel who were on an advisory mission to Syria as well as five of their accompanying officers. Safieddine described Israel as the outward symbol of cruelty and criminality in the world.

He said the United States and the Zionist regime have clinched an agreement in order for the latter to be given carte blanche for genocide against Palestinians.

"Nowadays, tyrants have gained control over world affairs, and are trying to impose their hideous culture on nations. What we are seeing these days proves the rightness of the mottos of the resistance front. These mottos emphasize the great and titanic struggle against the evil and oppressive Zionist enemy.

"We are witnessing the daily massacre of innocent people, most of whom are women and children, in Gaza. These crimes are being carried out in Gaza by Israeli occupation forces whilst the world's conscience is asleep," the top Hezbollah official said.

He termed the Axis of Resistance as the only force which can stand up to aggressors, and never allow oppression to take root.

Meanwhile, Lebanese lawmaker Muhammad Raad, head of Hezbollah's Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc in the parliament, stated that Iran's Operation True Promise shattered the deterrent power of the Israeli military.

"It is over seven months that the Zionist enemy is bogged down in Gaza quagmire, and caught in conflict with steadfast local residents and heroic resistance fighters. Gazans have demonstrated unprecedented levels of courage, strength and strategic and tactical initiatives in their battles," Raad said.

He noted that the situation has reached a tipping point, where the Zionist enemy is trying to escape from confrontation due to increased pressure from Lebanon and Gaza fronts.

Raad underscored that Israel made a huge mistake by targeting a number of Iranian military advisers in Syria and prompting Tehran to respond.

"The most important thing concerning Iran's response was that the deterrence power of Iran was maintained, while that of the Zionist enemy was wrecked. This has strategic importance at the level of regional conflicts," the senior Lebanese legislator said.