

# **American attitudes on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

## **(October 2016)**

**Shibley Telhami**  
**Principal Investigator**

**A survey sponsored by**  
**University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll**  
**fielded by Nielsen Scarborough**

### **Survey Methodology**

The survey was conducted October 5-14, 2016 with a panel consisting of a probability-based representative sample. The panel was recruited by Nielsen Scarborough from its larger probability-based national panel, which was recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households. A total of 1528 panelists completed the survey. Responses were weighted by age, gender, income, education, race, and geographic region using benchmarks from the US Census. The survey was also weighted by partisan identification.

The margin of error is 2.5%

Note: These questions were fielded as part of a larger poll on foreign and domestic issues. Participants in this study were provided by Nielsen from Nielsen's sample of respondents.

Q2a: Please name a national or world leader you admire most? [**Open-ended text box**]

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Angela Merkel	1%	5%	1%	3%
2. Pope Francis	5	2	6	4
3. Nelson Mandela	<1	1	1	1
4. Barack Obama	1	50	11	25
5. Benjamin Netanyahu	11	1	2	5
6. Ronald Reagan	18	<1	2	8
7. Jimmy Carter	1	1	1	1
8. Paul Ryan	2	0	0	1
9. George W. Bush	4	0	0	2
10. Vladimir Putin	3	<1	3	2
11. Bill Clinton	<1	2	1	1
12. Queen Elizabeth/British Royal Family	2	1	2	1
13. John F. Kennedy	1	2	1	1
14. Bernie Sanders	<1	3	1	2
15. Justin Trudeau	1	4	0	2
16. Donald Trump	4	0	1	2
17. Margaret Thatcher	1	<1	1	1
18. Hillary Clinton	0	2	1	1
19. Winston Churchill	1	<1	3	1
20. Other	19	15	28	18
21. No one	9	3	17	7
22. Refused/Don't know	17	7	19	13

Now, we're going to ask you about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:**

Q53. Thinking about U.S. interests, how important of an issue is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. The single most important issue for the U.S.	5%	1%	1%	3%
2. Among the top three issues	23	16	12	18
3. Among the top five issues	41	41	44	41
4. Not among the top five issues	29	38	39	34
Refused	3	4	4	3

**Q62. [PIPE IN ALL ISSUES FROM Q61 IF >1 ][MAINTAIN ORDER FROM Q61][SKIP QUESTION AND AUTOCODE ISSUES FROM Q61 IF ONLY ONE OR TWO ISSUES ARE >1 IN Q61] Which of the following issues should be America's top global priorities?**

Please select two.

	<b>Total</b>
The rise of China	11%
The assertiveness of Russia	14
North Korea	15
Iran	4
Trade deficit	22
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict	4
The war on ISIS	53
The war on al-Qaeda	6
The civil war in Libya	1
The civil war in Yemen	<1
U.S. immigration policy	38
U.S. relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia	2
Other	18

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### **Survey Methodology**

The survey was conducted November 18-23, 2016 with a panel consisting of a probability-based representative sample. The panel was recruited by Nielsen Scarborough from its larger probability-based national panel, which was recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households provided by Survey Sampling International. A total of 1,042 panelists completed the survey. Responses were weighted by age, gender, income, education, race, and geographic region using benchmarks from the U.S. Census. The survey was also weighted by partisan identification. The margin of error is 3.04%

Valuable assistance was provided by Neil Schwartz, Scott Willoth, and Jordan Evangelista from Nielsen Scarborough. Brittany Kyser, Rachel Slattery, and Anne Peckham were particularly helpful.

Note: Percentages may not always add to one-hundred due to rounding.

\*The November 2016 data is from a larger University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll with Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse as principal investigators.

## MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

Now we would like to ask you specifically about American foreign policy toward the Middle East.

Q46. How much influence do you believe the Israeli government has on American politics and policies?

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Too little influence	22%	9%	14%	15%
2. Too much influence	22	55	36	39
3. About the right level of influence	54	35	44	44
Refused	2	1	5	2

Q47a. In general, what role do you want the new Trump administration to play in mediating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Should the new Trump administration:

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Lean toward Israel	56%	17%	29%	35%
2. Lean toward the Palestinians	<1	11	2	6
3. Lean toward neither side	42	69	66	57
Refused	2	3	4	2

Q47b. If the new Trump administration engages in mediating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, what do you believe it will, in fact, do?

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Lean toward Israel	62%	55%	46%	57%
2. Lean toward the Palestinians	<1	14	10	8
3. Lean toward neither side	35	27	42	32
Refused	3	4	3	3

Q48. As you may know, there have been suggestions that the UN Security Council should endorse the establishment of a Palestinian state. This idea has received some support in Europe, but opposition in Israel. If the UN Security Council considers such a plan, what do you think the U.S. should do as a member of the UN Security Council?

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Vote in favor of endorsing the establishment	17%	51%	22%	34%

of a Palestinian state

2. Vote against endorsing the establishment of a Palestinian state including using America's veto power to prevent such an endorsement	51	16	17	31
3. Abstain from voting	29	29	59	32
Refused	3	4	2	3

Q49. One of the issues of tension between the United States and Israel has been its construction of Israeli settlements in the territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war. These settlements are considered illegal by most of the international community and have been opposed by every U.S. administration, both Republican and Democratic. The Israeli government has continued to build settlements arguing that they have the right to do so, or that these are not obstacles to peace. How do you believe the U.S. should react to new settlements?

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Do nothing	34%	13%	34%	24%
2. Limit U.S. opposition to words, but take no other action	34	24	20	28
3. Impose some economic sanctions, either through the United Nations or unilaterally	22	42	35	33
4. Take more serious action	9	18	7	13
Refused	2	2	5	2

Q52. The Obama administration is reportedly considering taking action on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the hope that it would preserve the two-state solution that the U.S. supports as a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Two options are reportedly being considered. One is a UN Resolution stating the parameters of a solution. The other is to take steps to limit the Israeli settlement buildup in the West Bank that both Republican and Democratic administrations have opposed. I would like to ask you the following questions related to these proposals.

Now tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of the following:

Q52a. It's wrong for Obama to act on such an important issue during the transition. The decision on this issue should be left to President Trump to deal with, regardless of the complexity of our political system. Besides, it's not up to the United States and the international community to decide the final parameters of the political solution on this issue. This should be left first and foremost to the parties themselves. In addition, the Israeli government has opposed such steps

and we must be mindful not to alienate them.

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Strongly agree	45%	9%	23%	26%
2. Somewhat agree	27	13	22	20
3. Neither agree nor disagree	19	24	37	23
4. Somewhat disagree	4	27	10	15
5. Strongly disagree	1	26	6	13
Refused	4	2	2	3

Q52b. One reason the United States has been ineffective in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that American Presidents face domestic political constraints in Congress, campaign contributions, and lobbies. Presidents have an opportunity to act effectively to advance the national interest during the Presidential transitions when they face fewer constraints. President Ronald Reagan did this before he left office in starting a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization that may have helped bring the PLO and Israel together five years later. The US has a stake in this issue and it's clear the parties have not been able to resolve it on their own. Obama should seize the opportunity.

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Strongly agree	7%	41%	14%	23%
2. Somewhat agree	14	30	21	22
3. Neither agree nor disagree	28	19	38	25
4. Somewhat disagree	21	5	7	12
5. Strongly disagree	28	3	20	16
Refused	3	2	1	2

Now tell me how you feel about the following possibilities:

Q53a. President Obama's support or sponsorship for a United Nations resolution that outlines the parameters for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before he leaves office.

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Strongly Oppose	37%	5%	18%	20%
2. Somewhat Oppose	13	2	5	7
3. Neither Oppose nor Support	26	21	38	25
4. Somewhat Support	19	29	21	24
5. Strongly Support	3	41	15	22
Refused	3	2	2	2

Q53b. President Obama's support or sponsorship for a United Nations Resolution to end Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank before he leaves office.

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Strongly Oppose	39%	6%	23%	22%
2. Somewhat Oppose	19	6	10	12
3. Neither Oppose nor Support	23	20	37	23
4. Somewhat Support	14	28	18	21
5. Strongly Support	2	36	11	19
Refused	3	4	2	3

Q54. Generally speaking, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the U.S.-Israeli relationship?

Q54a. Israel is an important ally to the United States as it provides essential military and intelligence cooperation and plays a regional role that's helpful to American interests.

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Strongly Disagree	3%	8%	10%	6%
2. Somewhat Disagree	9	17	16	14
3. Somewhat Agree	36	49	45	43
4. Strongly Agree	49	21	23	33
Refused	3	5	6	4

Q54b. Israel is a burden to the U.S. as Israel's actions in the region generate hostility toward the United States in Arab and Muslim-majority countries.

	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. Strongly Disagree	41%	15%	29%	27%
2. Somewhat Disagree	30	25	23	27
3. Somewhat Agree	19	38	25	28
4. Strongly Agree	5	17	15	12
Refused	5	6	7	6