

## War and Peace Index

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The protests by the different right-wing groups against the government's decision to freeze construction in the settlements, the ongoing protests by the Left against the building of the separation fence, and the recent instances of politically motivated refusal by soldiers to obey orders, led us to check again in this month's index the public's positions toward different types of protest and their legitimacy.

Regarding civilian protest, we found that compared to the past there has been a considerable increase in the rate of those who think that in extreme circumstances, when citizens believe the government's policy severely harms Israel's national interest or, alternatively, the fundamental rights of the Palestinians, it is warranted for these citizens to take violent action such as forceful resistance to settlement evacuation or to construction of the separation fence. Today that rate comes to 17.5%, compared to about half that total in the various measurements done for the index in the 1990s and at the beginning of the present decade (73% think the use of violence is forbidden in these circumstances and the rest do not have a clear opinion). And not only has there been a significant increase in public support for the resort to violent protest. If the seemingly small percentage that supports violence is translated into absolute numbers, close to a million men and women out of the 19-and-older Israeli Jewish population currently uphold the right to take violent measures against governmental policy when it contravenes their outlooks on the issue of peace and security. This is clearly a red flag for the rule of law and a danger sign for the stability of Israeli democracy.

As for instances of refusal among IDF soldiers, most of the Israeli Jewish public opposes this phenomenon whether it comes from the Right or the Left. Seventy-seven percent deny the right of left-wing soldiers to refuse to serve in the territories because of their opposition to the occupation, and 63% deny the right of right-wing soldiers to

refuse to participate in evacuating Jewish settlements in the territories. Still, one cannot ignore the considerable minority—18% in the case of left-wing refusal and 29% in the case of right-wing refusal—who support such ideological refusal among soldiers in the standing army. Note, though, that there has been no significant increase in support for the right of refusal compared to the past. Also, today as in the past the rate of those opposing refusal by left-wing soldiers is slightly higher than the rate of those opposing refusal by right-wing soldiers. In other words, there is great stability over time in the proportion and structure of the public's opposition to the different kinds of refusal by soldiers.

Looking into the refusal issue according to the degree of interviewees' religiosity, it turns out that a majority among all the groups—haredi, religious, traditional, and secular—denies the right of left-wing soldiers to refuse to serve in the territories. Unexpectedly, though, the rate of support for this right is in fact higher among the haredim (32%) and the religious (31%) than among the traditional (20%) and the secular (12%). The explanation for this seemingly curious finding may lie in findings about the support for the right of right-wing soldiers to refuse to take part in evacuating settlements. Here the rates of support stand at 66% among the haredim, 50% among the religious, 25% among the traditional, and 12% among the secular. It seems, then, that part of the haredi and religious public shows “understanding” for left-wing soldiers' right of refusal as a way of justifying right-wing soldiers' right to refuse to take part in dismantling settlements. In contrast to the gap in rates of support (and opposition) of the haredim and the religious toward the two kinds of refusal, the secular and the traditional show the same extent of support (and opposition) toward refusal by soldiers from both sides of the political map. A segmentation of the positions on the refusal issue by age groups shows that the support for refusal is highest among the youngest interviewees (aged 19-24). This could probably be explained by the closeness in age between the interviewees and the refusers. The fact, however, that those now entering the age of political influence feel less obligated to the rule of law could be a phenomenon with significant implications for the future of Israeli democracy

We also found stability in the public's positions on a question that is currently prominent in the public discourse: whom should a religious soldier obey if there is a contradiction between the army's orders and the rabbinical ruling on the issue of evacuating settlements? The findings of the present survey, which are almost identical to those of previous surveys that asked this question, show a large majority—75.5%—who say the soldier should obey the army's orders, with only 15.5% saying he should uphold the rabbinical ruling. As expected, almost all those who think the soldier should act in line with the rabbinical ruling come from the voters for the haredi and religious parties.

A further issue that we checked this time concerns the controversy over the recently published report that says the human rights organizations receive funding from official European bodies, which support these organizations so as to increase criticism and domestic pressure on the Israeli government. Here too we wanted to know where the public stands on the issue of contributions to such organizations. The findings show that 59% oppose foreign contributions while 28% support them (the rest do not know). A quite surprising finding is that a majority—55% (vs. 35%)—also sees no basic difference on this issue between contributions by Jewish and non-Jewish bodies. At the same time, the public is quite divided on whether there is a fundamental difference between contributions by “official” political bodies, such as the European Union or foreign governments, and contributions by nonpolitical bodies such as American Christian organizations or private contributors. Forty-three percent see a basic difference between these kinds of contributors while 44% do not. Among those who see a basic difference, though, 51%—representing about one-fifth of the entire public—think Israeli organizations should be legally prohibited to receive contributions from official or foreign-government bodies, while 37% would oppose such a law.

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