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OneVoice Poll: Civic Engagement Key To Two State Solution



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POSTED APRIL 22, 2009 - 9:46AM

We're one third of the way through 2009, but we can already say it has been a hard year for those who want to see two states living in peace, side by side: in the wake of a war that devastated Gaza but failed to stop rocket attacks, as we watch continued fractures between the Palestinian leadership, after Israeli elections which brought a right-wing coalition into power, and amidst talk of the demise of the two state solution, we find ourselves on shaky ground, looking toward a blurry and uncertain horizon.

George Mitchell, US Special Envoy to the Middle East, visited Israel and Palestine last week, trying to jump-start a stalled peace process. He carries with him the weight of the Obama Administration's stated commitment to brokering a two state agreement, but what sort of mandate does he have from those on the ground, those who will be most affected by the outcome of his efforts – the Israeli and Palestinian peoples?

A new poll released by the OneVoice Movement (www.OneVoiceMovement.org) fills in some of the answers – providing a snapshot of where we are, and where we should be going.

Building off of some of the public opinion and public diplomacy methods employed in the peace process in Northern Ireland, the poll was designed to engage Israelis and Palestinians on final status issues and procedural processes, with questions meant to push beyond the usual, intransigent 'yes' or 'no' responses and get to the heart of what people on the ground are willing to accept and how they think the process should play out.

At the macro level, the findings indicate that despite fears to the contrary, the two state solution remains the *only* resolution that is acceptable to the majority of both Israelis and Palestinians: [74% of Palestinians and 78% of Israelis would be willing to accept a two state solution](#), while 59% of Palestinians and 66% of Israelis find a single, bi-national state to be unacceptable.

What's more, Israelis and Palestinians are as convinced as ever that negotiations are the way to get there: [77% of Israelis and 71% of Palestinians find a negotiated peace to be either "essential" or "desirable."](#)

Of course, that's the macro view, and it's not the whole story. There are significant gaps in public opinion on the toughest final status issues: Jerusalem, settlements, refugees. And there are even wider gaps on national priorities: the findings imply that mainstream Israeli and Palestinian populations still have yet to acknowledge the significant concerns on the other side.

While the issue of greatest significance for Palestinians is freedom from occupation ([94% deem it a 'very significant' problem in the peace process](#), ranking it the primary issue on the Palestinian side), only 30% of Israelis find it to be 'very significant,' ranking the issue 15th on the Israeli side. Similarly, the primary issue on the Israeli side is stopping attacks on civilians ([90% rate it a 'very significant' issue](#)). This issue meets with 50% approval on the Palestinian side, and ranks as 19 in a list of 21 issues.

So how do we push past the impasse? How do we build consensus? And – perhaps most important – how do we ensure that this process isn't subject to the same failings of all the others? The poll gives us some interesting answers here, as well.

First and foremost, there is a clear desire for civic engagement in the peace process: [ordinary Israelis and Palestinians not only want to be informed on negotiations progress, they desire greater involvement in the process.](#)

Progress at the negotiating table is only one step in the process of reaching an agreement that can be implemented. An end to the conflict which satisfies the primary needs of both Israelis and Palestinians – end to occupation and assurance of security – will only come when the leaders come to an agreement that their peoples are ready to understand, accept, and support. And this means civic education, true engagement of the grassroots.

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Dynamite. US Getting Ready To Push Its Own Israeli-Palestinian Plan

BY **MJ ROSENBERG**

Washington Director of Policy Analysis, Israel Policy Forum

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009 - 10:28AM

The Obama administration does not intend to wait forever for Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas to agree on a peace plan. If they can't agree, the United States will put its own plan on the table, an eventuality the Israelis have always resisted. So says General David Jones, President Obama's NSC adviser and top foreign policy aide.

This is in today's *Washington Post* and, no doubt, it is shaking up the Netanyahu government especially because the source of the story is columnist David Ignatius, a very authoritative voice here in Washington.

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The Only Country We Have

BY **ROBERTA FAHN SCHOFFMAN**

IPF Jerusalem Representative; former Advisor to Ehud Barak for Diaspora Affairs

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009 - 10:14AM

There is no better time to contemplate the miracle of this tiny country than the back-to-back national holidays of the state: Memorial Day and Independence Day. Neither the terrible sacrifice of life that has been made here nor the enduring imperative to achieve peace can minimize that miracle. Jerusalem, the bustling capitol set against the walls of the old city and across seven hills, brings to life a rich history emanating from ancient stones. Tel Aviv, now celebrating its centennial, is the Hebrew city on the sea that grew out of barren sand into a thriving Mediterranean metropolis.

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Governments alone can't take this on. They need to work in tandem with civil society groups and grassroots organizations to ensure true connection between the top level negotiations process and the will of the majorities on the ground.

As part of this effort, OneVoice is launching a Town Hall Meetings series throughout Israel and Palestine, which will start in May and continue throughout 2009. The meetings will use the results of the poll to start critical discussions on final status and mutual recognition issues – to highlight consensus where it already exists, and work toward consensus where there is none.

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not impossible – failure is not a foregone conclusion. The shape of an agreement is there, and there is genuine possibility to work toward compromise on even the toughest of final status issues.

But without more attention to the process – without a genuine engagement of the people on the ground, who will have to live with whatever agreement is put down on paper – we will inevitably fall victim to the shortcomings and failures of the past.

And our children will have to pay the price.

[Download full polling report here.](#)

About the poll. *This poll was commissioned by OneVoice Israel and OneVoice Palestine in collaboration with Dr. Colin Irwin of the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool. The fieldwork to develop the questionnaires was undertaken by the research team in Israel and Palestine in November and December 2008. The fieldwork for the public opinion polls was undertaken by Nader Said at Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) of Ramallah and Mina Zemach at Dahaf Institute of Tel Aviv following the elections in Israel in February 2009. Five hundred interviews were completed in Israel and six hundred in the West Bank and Gaza to produce representative samples of both populations in terms of age, gender, social background and geographical distribution. Publication of the results of the polls has been timed to provide the new administration in the US and new government in Israel with information to assist them in developing their policies for peace in the Middle East.*

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Obama Aide: We Won't Push For Peace At All Costs

BY THE PULSE

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009 - 10:04AM

Yitzhak Benhorin reported in *Ynet* today that "The United States does not plan to pressure Israel for peace at all costs."

This message was relayed Wednesday night by Larry Summers, the American president's chief economic advisor, during an event marking the Jewish state's 61 Independence Day organized by the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

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