

Israeli public supports middle east nuclear free zone: UMD poll

December 1 2011

Nearly two-thirds of Israeli Jews, 64 percent, favor establishing a nuclear free zone in the Middle East - even when it was spelled out that this would mean both Israel and Iran would have to forego nuclear weapons - finds a new University of Maryland poll. The research is a joint project of the Anwar Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland and the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA).

Pressure for such a nuclear free zone has grown with the potential for Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon, possibly leading to a regional arms race, the researchers say. Next year the United Nations will sponsor a conference devoted to the idea. The Israeli government opposes creation of such a zone.

In the new poll, fewer than half, 43 percent, support an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Recently, even leading voices within Israel's defense community have said that such a strike would merely slow, but not stop Iran and that Israeli cities would be vulnerable to [retaliation](#).

At the same time the Israeli public acknowledges Iran's potential for acquiring [nuclear weapons](#). An overwhelming 90 percent say it is likely that Iran will eventually acquire a nuclear capacity.

When asked which would be better - for both Israel and Iran to have nuclear weapons, or for neither to have them - a robust 65 percent say it would be better for neither to have them. Only 19 percent prefer a nuclear armed Israel and Iran.

"I find the results surprising given the long held assumption that the Israeli public is not prepared to even discuss the nuclear issue given their deep seated sense of [insecurity](#)," says Shibley Telhami, the University of Maryland's Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development.

"If Israel and Iran were to indicate a readiness to join a process toward turning the [Middle East](#) into a nuclear free zone this would be a major game changer in negotiations on Iran's [nuclear program](#)," adds Steven Kull, director of PIPA, a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the Center on International Security Studies at Maryland.

The researchers point to another one of their findings as highly significant in terms of future negotiations with Iran: Israeli Jews not only expressed support for the long term goal of eliminating nuclear weapons from the region, but also for an interim step of making their [nuclear facilities](#) transparent together with Iran's.

Asked about having all countries in the region, including [Israel](#) and Iran, "agree to have a system of full international inspections of all facilities where nuclear components could be built or maintained," 60 percent favored it.

Provided by University of Maryland

Citation: Israeli public supports middle east nuclear free zone: UMD poll (2011, December 1) retrieved 22 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-12-israeli-middle-east-nuclear-free.html>

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