

**The Doha Debates:  
Should the U.S. ‘Get Tough with Israel’**

*A Doha Debates – Zogby International Survey  
Of Adult Americans*

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## Methodology and Sample Characteristics

### Methodology

Zogby International was commissioned by the Doha Debates to conduct an interactive survey of 4,340 American adults between April 1<sup>st</sup> and April 4<sup>th</sup>. A sampling of Zogby International's online panel, which is representative of the adult population of the US, was invited to participate. Slight weights were added to region, party, age, race, religion, gender, education to more accurately reflect the population. The margin of error is +/- 1.5 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	4340	100
18-29	870	20
30-49	1740	40
50-64	1000	23
65+	739	17
Catholic	1137	27
Protestant	2233	53
Jewish	84	2
Other/None	758	18
Born Again – Yes	1026	24
Born Again – No	1180	27
Male	2120	49
Female	2207	51
Liberal	1173	28
Moderate	1074	26
Conservative	1931	46
Democrat	1658	38
Republican	1352	31
Independent	1222	28

\* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

## Executive Summary

This survey of 4,340 adult Americans covers three topics—(1) the overall view of Israel and Palestine, (2) opinions on key policy issues in the conflict and (3) the relationship between the U.S. and Israel.

### Opinion of . . .

	Israelis	Palestinians	Prime Minister Netanyahu	President Abbas
Very Favorable	34	4	24	2
Somewhat Favorable	37	21	29	18
<b>FAVORABLE</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>19</b>
Somewhat Unfavorable	15	35	16	31
Very Unfavorable	6	31	14	28
<b>UNFAVORABLE</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>59</b>
Not Familiar Enough	2	2	7	10
Not Sure	6	7	10	12

- Americans surveyed hold Israelis and their Prime Minister in much higher regard when compared with their opinions of Palestinians and their President.

### Overall View of the Conflict

		2009
A resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	<i>Important</i>	<b>89</b>
	<i>Not Important</i>	<b>8</b>
Israelis and Palestinians are entitled to equal rights	<i>Agree</i>	<b>84</b>
	<i>Disagree</i>	<b>10</b>
There should be an independent Palestinian State	<i>Agree</i>	<b>67</b>
	<i>Disagree</i>	<b>17</b>

- Nearly all respondents feel that a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is important and the vast majority agree both parties are entitled to equal rights. Two-in-three (67%) agree there should be an independent Palestinian State.
- Eighty-four percent agree the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict negatively impacts U.S. interests in the Middle East. Americans are evenly divided over whether the Bush administration acted as an honest broker in the Middle East. Forty-six percent agree the Bush administration did act as an honest broker, while 43 percent disagree.

## Direction Taken by Presidents

	The Bush Administration <i>Did</i>	The Obama Administration <i>Should</i>
Lean toward Israel	71	33
Lean Toward Palestine	3	9
Steer a middle course	15	49
Not Sure	11	9

- While 71 percent of respondents believe the Bush administration leaned more toward Israel in its handling of the conflict, nearly half (49%) believe the Obama administration should steer a middle course.

## Policy Issues

**Issue 1: Right of Return:** “The Right of Return refers to the status of Palestinians and their families who left or were forced to leave Israel as a result of the 1948 war.

**Statement A:** Palestinians who left or were forced to leave as a result of the 1948 war should not be allowed to return to Israel to live and should not be compensated for the land that was lost.

**Statement B:** Palestinians who left or were forced to leave as a result of the 1948 war should be allowed to return to Israel to live or should be compensated for the land that was lost.”

### Right of Return

	2009
Statement A	31
Statement B	42
Neither	15
Not Sure	13

- On the question of right of return respondents are divided, with a slight plurality in favor of a right of return.

**Issue 2: Status of Jerusalem:** “Currently the status of Jerusalem is disputed with both sides claiming the city as their capital. The city has strong religious significance for Christians, Jews and Muslims.

**Statement A:** The city of Jerusalem should be partitioned with one part of the city as the Israeli capital and one part as the Palestinian capital. Division should be based both on the local population and the location of and access to holy sites.

**Statement B:** The city of Jerusalem should remain under the control of the Israeli government with the Israeli government controlling access to the city. Palestinians currently living in the area of East Jerusalem would be allowed to remain in the city but their access to holy sites would be controlled by Israelis.”

**Status of Jerusalem:**

	2009
Statement A	31
Statement B	33
Neither	22
Not Sure	14

**Issue 3: Settlements:** “The Israeli government and Israeli citizens have built settlements or outposts in the Palestinian West Bank.

**Statement A:** The settlements are necessary for the security of Israel and Israeli citizens have the right to build on land in the Palestinian West Bank.

**Statement B:** Israeli settlements are built on land confiscated from Palestinians and should be torn down and the land returned to Palestinian owners.”

**Settlements**

	2009
Statement A	30
Statement B	40
Neither	13
Not Sure	17

#### Issue 4: Hamas

“The organization Hamas won control of the Palestinian Authority legislature in a democratic election in 2006. After the election, the United States and the European Union suspended aid to the Palestinian Authority unless Hamas: recognized Israel, renounced violence, accepted all existing agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Do you support this position?”

##### **Palestinian Authority Aid**

	<b>2009</b>
Suspend Aid	<b>67</b>
Don't Suspend Aid	<b>16</b>
Not Sure	<b>17</b>

“Hamas is designated by the U.S. as terrorist organization, yet as a political party, they won a substantial number of seats in the Palestinian parliament. Do you support the U.S. policy of refusing to talk to Hamas or should the U.S. engage them as they would other democratically elected groups?”

##### **Engaging Hamas**

	<b>2009</b>
Engage	<b>41</b>
Don't Engage	<b>45</b>
Not Sure	<b>14</b>

- While a majority support suspending aid to the Palestinian Authority as a result of the electoral victory of Hamas, respondents are evenly divided over whether or not the United States should engage Hamas.

## Relations with Israel

### U.S. Should Get Tough With Israel

Strongly Agree	17
Somewhat Agree	27
<b>AGREE</b>	<b>45</b>
Somewhat Disagree	17
Strongly Disagree	27
<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>44</b>
Not Sure	12

- Respondents are again evenly divided when asked if the United States should ‘get tough with Israel.’ Forty-four percent of respondents believe that support for Israel makes the United States less respected across the globe.

### U.S. Support for Israel Makes U.S. . . .

More Respected	<b>13</b>
Less Respected	<b>44</b>
Has No Impact	<b>18</b>
Not Sure	<b>25</b>

### U.S. Relationship with Israel

		<b>2009</b>
Which is more important – relations between . . .	<i>US and Israel</i>	<b>25</b>
	<i>US and Arab Nations</i>	<b>10</b>
	<i>Both</i>	<b>59</b>
U.S. Interests and Israel’s interests are identical	<i>Agree</i>	<b>51</b>
	<i>Disagree</i>	<b>39</b>
Does U.S. support for Israel . . .	<i>Strengthen U.S. Security</i>	<b>44</b>
	<i>Weaken U.S. Security</i>	<b>33</b>
	<i>Have No Impact</i>	<b>8</b>
Have Pro-Israel interest groups had . . . on American foreign policy	<i>A Large Influence</i>	<b>43</b>
	<i>A Moderate Influence</i>	<b>36</b>
	<i>Little to No Influence</i>	<b>9</b>

### Did the Recent War in Gaza Make You...

More Supportive of Israel	36
Less Supportive of Israel	29
No Impact	24
Not Sure	11

- As a result of the recent war on Gaza, 36 percent of respondents are now more supportive of Israel. Twenty-nine percent are less supportive and for one-in-four respondents (24%) the war had no impact.

### Amount of Foreign Aid – If You Knew . . .

	<b>\$30 Billion to Israel in Military Aid Over 10 years</b>	<b>\$900 Million to Palestinians in Humanitarian/Development Aid Over Next Year</b>
Just Right	20	16
Too Much	47	47
Too Little	9	16
Not Sure	23	21

- When told that the United States has pledged \$30 billion in military aid to Israel and \$900 million in humanitarian and development aid to the Palestinians, nearly half (47%) of respondents say both amounts are too much.



## Conclusion

While overall responses to the survey show a fairly even divide in American opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there exists a strong partisan split across nearly every aspect of the issue. There is a wide gulf in opinion between Republicans and Democrats and only the split among political Independents makes the overall data appear evenly divided.

One question in particular highlights the divide in opinion. Respondents were told that while the United States has expressed public opposition to the expansion of settlements in the West Bank those settlements continue to expand. Respondents were then asked if the United States should 'get tough with Israel' in order to stop the expansion and act more forcefully to back up their publicly stated position. Exactly half of all respondents (50%) believe the United States should, while the rest are divided among 'doing nothing' (19%), 'none of the above' (18%) or are not sure (14%).

"For decades the U.S. has called on Israel to stop expanding settlements in the West Bank, and yet the settlements continue to grow. If Israel continues to build settlements, should the United States:"

### U.S. Policy toward Settlements

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>GOP</b>	<b>Ind</b>
Get tough with Israel and attempt to stop expansion	<b>50</b>	68	29	49
Do nothing and allow the settlements to continue to expand	<b>19</b>	6	32	22
None of the above	<b>18</b>	11	25	19
Not Sure	<b>14</b>	16	14	10