

RESULTS OF APRIL '98 AL-MAJALLAH/AAI POLL
WITH
RESULTS OF EARLIER AAI POLLS

- 1) Regarding the current impasse in the Middle East peace process:
 Who's to blame? Israel, Palestinian Authority or both?

	<u>June '97</u>	<u>Aug. '97</u>	<u>Jan. '98</u>	<u>April '98</u>
Israel	13%	5.5%	6.7%	6.1%
PA	19%	12.5%	8.2%	9.1%
Both	42%	54.9%	66.8%	62.1%

- 2) Concerning the Clinton Administration's efforts of pursuing peace in the Middle East:
 Which of the following statements do you feel to be the most accurate?

The Clinton Administration mainly...

	<u>Apr. '97</u>	<u>Sept. '97</u>	<u>April '98</u>
leans toward Israel	24%	23%	24.7%
leans towards the PA	3%	4.3%	4.4%
steers a middle course	38%	38%	39.7%

- 3) Which best describes how the Clinton administration should pursue peace?
 It should...

	<u>Apr. '97</u>	<u>Sept. '97</u>	<u>April '98</u>
lean toward Israel	15%	15%	12.2%
lean toward the PA	3%	2%	2.0%
steer a middle course	56%	61%	63.7%

- 4) Whom should the current administration pressure to get the peace process moving again?

	<u>June '97</u>	<u>April '98</u>
Israel	4%	8.0%
PA	4%	6.3%
Both	44.5%	66.1%

- 5) If President Clinton decided to use public diplomacy to pressure Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to
 comply with the peace process, would you...

	<u>Jan. '98</u>	<u>April '98</u>
support Clinton's decision	65.6%	54.4%
oppose Clinton's decision	16.4%	17.9%
not sure	18%	27.8%

- 6) If President Clinton decided to use public diplomacy to pressure Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to comply with the peace process would you...

	<u>Jan. '98</u>	<u>April '98</u>
support Clinton's decision	67.5%	58.2%
oppose Clinton's decision	15.4%	15.3%
not sure	17.1%	26.5%

- 7) Eighty-one senators have signed a letter to President Clinton insisting that he not intervene publicly in the peace process by pressuring Israel. With which of the following statements do you agree...?

a. The Senators are right, Israel should not be publicly pressured.	25.5%
b. President Clinton should do whatever is required to advance the Middle East Peace Process.	51.2%
c. Not sure.	23.3%

**Poll Reveals Americans
Support Balanced Approach to Peace
Process;
Americans Reject
Congressional Attempts to Dictate
Middle East Policy**

Analysis by Dr. James J. Zogby

On April 3, 1998, 81 U.S. Senators (out of 100) sent a letter to U.S. President Bill Clinton insisting that he not use public pressure against Israel in an effort to break the impasse in the Middle East peace process.

A recent poll of U.S. voters, however, demonstrates that this one-sided view held by the U.S. Congress is totally out of touch with U.S. public opinion on Middle East issues.

The poll, commissioned by *Al Majallah* Magazine and the Arab American Institute (AAI) of Washington, D.C., was conducted by the New York firm of Zogby International. From April 19 to April 22 1998 the *Al Majallah*/AAI poll interviewed 969 randomly selected U.S. voters. The poll's findings have a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percent.

On the issue of the Senate letter, the poll found that by a margin of 2 to 1, voters disagreed with the Senator's actions. Voters were first told that "81 Senators have signed a letter to President Clinton insisting that he not intervene publicly in the peace process by pressuring Israel." Only 25.5 percent agreed with the statement "The Senator's are right. Israel should not be publicly pressured." Only the other hand 51.2 percent agreed that "President Clinton should do whatever is necessary to advance the Middle East peace process."

More specifically, on the issue of pressuring Israel, when asked whether they would support or oppose President Clinton "using public diplomacy to pressure Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to comply with the peace process," 54.4 percent said they would support such a move. Only 17.9 percent said they would oppose the President using such pressure.

These figures are similar to the percentage of voters who would support the President should he decide to pressure Palestinian Authority President Yasir Arafat. 58.2 percent would agree with the President in this case, with 15.3 percent opposing such a move.

These virtually identical responses represent a new factor in U.S. public attitudes toward the Middle East and can be observed throughout the poll results.

For example, when asked, "who is to blame for the current impasse in the Middle East peace process?," 6.1 percent say Israel, 9.1 percent say the Palestinian Authority, while 62.1 percent say both parties are equally to blame.

And when asked "whom should the Administration pressure to get the peace process moving again?" eight percent say Israel, 6.3 percent say the Palestinians, while 66.1 percent say that both parties should be equally pressured.

The balance in attitudes is especially dramatic when compared with polls from the 1970s and 1980s when U.S. public opinion favored Israel over the Arab side often times by a margin of eight to one. This shift toward less bias and greater balance is the result of several factors. The movement began during the *Intifada* and continued to gain ground as a result of the peace process. The election of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his anti-peace politics and the continued cool response he receives from the Clinton Administration has also played a role.

A review of polls conducted by AAI during the past year shows how this shift in attitudes has been developing.

In June of 1997, for example, 19 percent of the U.S. public blamed the Palestinians for the impasse in the peace process. This figure dropped to 9.1 percent in the current poll. Meanwhile those blaming Israel in June 1997 numbered 13 percent, while in the current poll the percentage is 6.1 percent.

At the same time, Americans who want to blame both parties equally increased from 42 percent in June of 1997 to 62 percent in the April *Al Majallah*/AAI poll.

In this same context, one of the more interesting findings in the *Al Majallah*/AAI poll

is the public's clear insistence that policy be balanced.

For example, when asked how they view the Clinton Administration's policy, as it is, 24.7 percent say that it favors Israel, 4.5 percent say it favors the Palestinians, with 39.7 percent saying that it "steers a middle course."

But when asked what they feel Clinton Administration policy should be in order to pursue peace, only 12.2 percent say it should lean toward Israel (a difference of 12.5 percent!), while 63.7 percent say that U.S. policy should steer a middle course (a substantial increase of 24 percent!).

These results demonstrate that a sizable majority of U.S. voters reject any policy that they feel favors any party to the conflict, including Israel.

What makes the *Al Majallah*/AAI poll results important is that they reflect strong U.S. public support for a balanced Middle East policy in the face of a massive pro-Israel lobby and congressional effort to steer the Clinton Administration and public opinion in a biased pro-Israel direction.

Despite a campaign by the lobby and Congress to blame Palestinians for the impasse in the peace process and to insist that the Administration pressure only the Palestinian Authority, U.S. voters are moving in the opposite direction.

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This week U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright travels to London to meet with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Yasir Arafat. She will continue efforts to move the parties to accept U.S. bridging proposals designed to restart the stalled talks.

Should her efforts fail to produce any Israeli decisions to make a substantial withdrawal from the West Bank and to honor its obligations to the Oslo Accords, the Clinton Administration has indicated that it would make a public announcement of the result of its efforts. Fearing that such an announcement might find some fault with Israel, is precisely why the pro-Israel lobby and the Senate have been pressuring the Administration to remain silent.

What the *Al Majallah*/AAI poll results demonstrate is that the Clinton Administration can count on strong public support for any decision it may take to move the peace process forward.

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Zogby International of New York conducted the *Al Majallah*/AAI poll. Zogby International has distinguished itself over the years by being the only poll to call the 1996 presidential election accurately, as well as several other high profile political races. It polls U.S. public opinion regularly for Reuters News Agency, Fox Television Network, and several major daily newspapers.

It has polled for Arabic language newspapers and magazines since 1993.

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