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21% of Israelis Have Taken Part in an Act of Protest and two thirds of these Worry About Civil War

The March 2023 edition of the Israeli Voice Index, a monthly survey conducted by the Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research, finds that participation in the protests against the government's plan to overhaul the judicial system continues to rise. This month's Index found that 21% Israelis have participated in at least one act of protest compared to just 13% in January and 18.5% in February; 47% of Israelis think the Israeli government should take into consideration the view of the US administration regarding the judicial changes it is pursuing, 37% think they should not.

This unrest comes amidst rising concerns about the likelihood of civil war. While the majority (51%) still think such a scenario is unlikely, 41% of Israeli now think that there is a high likelihood of violence breaking out between the two sides, as opposed to 31% who thought this way in January.

Main findings:

Protests

Participation - 21% of Israelis (23% among Jews, 11% among Arabs) have participated in one or more of the protest activities against the reform to the justice system – up from 13% in January 2023. Participation rates of those who associate themselves with the left and center camps are much higher than with the right, but in the three camps (Jews) an increase can be pointed out throughout the period. (left – from 46% to 70%` Center – from 18% to 29%, Right – from 6% to 9%).

Impact – 32% of Israelis think that the public protests influenced the judicial changes being advanced by the government, 56% think they did not (even among the protesters only 41% think that the protest influenced the legislation).

Police – on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent) – 30% of Israelis gave the police a poor grade for its functioning at public protests in recent months, 26% gave a medium score

and 33% gave the police a good grade. It is interesting to note that those who participated in the protests gave the police a higher grade than those who did not participate (41% compared to 31%).

Civil War – 41% of Israelis think there is a high likelihood that Israel is on the brink of a civil war due to the deep political differences between sections of society (which includes violence between the different sides), 50% think there is a low likelihood. Segmentation along political self-identification found that 57% among the Left, 48% among the Center and 31% among the Right this there is a high likelihood for civil war.

An External Perspective

Protests abroad – 41% of Israelis support holding protests abroad against the judicial overhaul being advance by the government, 44% oppose it (Among coalition voters 12% support those protests, among opposition voters – 72%)

US Administration – 47% of Israelis think the Israeli government should take into consideration the view of the US administration regarding the judicial changes it is pursuing, 37% think they should not.

Should the Israeli government take into consideration the view of the US administration regarding the judicial changes it is pursuing, or should it not?

		Should take into consideration	Should not take into consideration	Don't know
Total Respondents		47%	37%	16%
Nationality	Jews	44%	42%	14%
	Arabs	61%	13%	26%
Voted in last elections	Coalition	23%	66%	11%
	Opposition	80%	10%	10%
Protests against the reform	Participated in the protests	84%	11%	5%
	Did not participate in the protests	38%	44%	18%

National Mood - This month saw a decline in optimism regarding both the future of democratic rule in Israel (from 38% to 32% in the total sample) and the future of national security (from 31% to 30% in the total sample). Taken together, these findings produce the lowest combined optimism score since we began our measurements in April 2019, reflecting the gloomy national mood at the current time.

Democratic Rule- 57% of Israelis agree that the system of democratic rule in Israel is in grave danger (53% among Jews - 93% among Left, 71% among center 33% among Right, 74% among Arabs).

“Palestinian People” - half of Israelis disagree with Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich’s recent statement in a speech he gave in France where he said that “there is no such thing as a Palestinian people.” 40.5% agree with Minister Smotrich’s statement.

84% of Arab Israelis disagree with the statement. Segmentation by political affiliation found that 83% among the Left, 56% among the Center and only 21% among the Right disagree with Smotrich’s statement.

Military Service in the IDF (Jewish respondents)

How legitimate is it in the eyes of the Jewish public to refuse to serve in the IDF?

	Forbidden	Permissible
Refusal to be drafted to the IDF due to opposition on principle to military service (pacifism or religious reasons)	59.5%	26%
Willingness to be drafted, but refusal to serve in the occupied territories	62%	24.5%
Refusal to participate in certain activities on grounds of conscience (such as guarding illegal settlements in the territories, or dismantling such settlements)	55%	26%

In the context of IDF reserve duty, is it permissible or forbidden to pursue each of these courses of action, as part of the protests against the legislation currently being advanced by the government

	Forbidden	Permissible
Refusing to show up for routine military training	64%	24%
Refusing to volunteer for service that is part of the IDF’s routine operational activities (e.g., IAF pilots)	59%	29%
Declaring an intention not to show up if mobilized during time of war	77.5%	11%

Protest by IDF reservists – 47% of Jewish Israelis think that the protest of IDF reservists in recent weeks on its own **doesn’t** have much influence on the government and the legislative overhaul it is advancing, 39% think it can have on its own much influence.

Refusal to serve by IDF reservists – 28% of Jewish Israelis think there is a high likelihood that there will be a mass refusal by IDF reservists who **support** the legislative changes to serve, 53% think there is a low likelihood, 19% don’t know.

The Israeli Voice Index for March 2023 was prepared by the Viterbi Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute. In the survey, which was conducted on the internet and by telephone (supplements of groups that are not sufficiently represented on the network) from 26 to 30 March 2023, 602 men and women were interviewed in Hebrew and 130 in Arabic, constituting a representative national sample of the entire adult population of

Israel aged 18 and older. The maximum sampling error for the entire sample was $.359\pm\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. The fieldwork was done by the dialogue Institute. For the full data file see: <https://dataisrael.idi.org.il>