

# THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

## 60% of Americans back reevaluating ties with Israel if judicial reform passes – poll

Similar figure thinks Washington should critique Jerusalem over planned legislation; Israelis acknowledge need to consider US opinions on some matters, but not all

By [TOI STAFF](#) May 23, 2023



Anti-overhaul protesters gather in Tel Aviv, May 20, 2023. (Amir Goldstein/ Courtesy)

Most Americans think that Washington should reassess its ties with Israel if Jerusalem passes a controversial, drastic overhaul of the judiciary, according to a survey that examined opinions in both countries on the ties between them.

According to the poll, presented at the Herzliya conference by Amnon Cavari of The Institute for Liberty and Responsibility at Reichman University on Monday, 60 percent of Americans back a reevaluation of the bilateral relationship if the overhaul is legislated.

A similar number said the US should critique Israel over the plan, though there were sharp divisions between Republicans and Democrats on the issue.

The Gallup poll found that while most Israelis accept that Jerusalem should take into consideration Washington's opinion on some matters, that does not extend to all issues, including military operations.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is pushing the overhaul plan, which it says is needed to rein in an over-intrusive High Court of Justice. Critics say the reforms will sap the court of its ability to act as a check and balance to the executive and legislative branches, dangerously damaging Israel's democratic character.

Americans see Israel's democracy as an important reason for maintaining its relationship with the country but would reevaluate those ties if the planned judicial reforms contradict US values, Reichman University said in a statement about the poll results. The statement did not say when the poll was conducted or how many people participated.

Israelis, for their part, see the US as a strong and important ally and accept that Jerusalem should consider Washington's opinion on some issues.



President Isaac Herzog hosts delegations from Likud, Yesh Atid and National Unity for judicial overhaul negotiations at his residence in Jerusalem, March 28, 2023. (Kobi Gideon/GPO)

Among Americans, 71 percent agreed that Israel being a democratic state is a significant factor in relations between the countries. There was greater consideration given to Israel being an ally (81%) and its position as a strategic asset (80%), with just over half, 51%, linking relations to Israel being the Holy Land and the cradle of Christianity.

The poll found that 60% of Americans (70% of Democrats and 50% of Republicans) think it is important to critique Israel on the planned judicial overhaul and to intervene if Israel's democratic values are harmed.

Around 60% agreed that the US should reevaluate relations with Israel if the reform passes.

Among Israelis, 90% see the relationship with the US as important and 51% said the US has a legitimate right to critique the overhaul plan.

Around 60% said Israel should consider America's opinion on its relations with Arab countries, but less than 50% thought so regarding policies toward minorities in Israel, the judicial overhaul, settlement construction, and military operations.

Those opinions were divided between those who voted for parties in the current coalition and those who voted for opposition parties. Among opposition voters, over 50% believe Israel should take US opinions into consideration regarding relations with Arab countries, minorities, the judicial overhaul, and settlements, but less than half held such views regarding military operations. Among coalition supporters, less than half backed consideration of US opinions on any of those topics.

Overall, 56% of Israelis believe the judicial reform, if passed, will harm relations with the US. Among coalition voters it was just 30%, and among opposition voters 70%.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets with a group of visiting US members of Congress in Jerusalem on May 4, 2023. (Haim Zach/GPO)

The poll found that general support for Israel in the US was becoming “extremely polarized,” the statement said.

“The American audience is becoming divided and generational characteristics are influencing,” it said. “The American public expresses great importance to democratic values as a basis for partnership between the countries and raises questions about the relations between the countries and the extent to which these values will be harmed.”

While the survey found sympathy among Americans for both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, with a “clear preference” for the Jewish state, the gap is closing, indicating a drop in sympathy for Israel compared to the Palestinians. Among respondents, 75% said they favor Israel and 25% the PA, while just over 50% sympathize with Israel compared to about 30% for the PA. Still, sympathy for the PA has been steadily climbing since the early 2000s, while for Israel it rose to a high of 60% around 2015 and then dropped to more or less the same level as it was in the early 2000s.

The poll also found that 42% of Israelis think that Israel should get closer to China. That was a decline from 59% in 2021.

Facing mass protests since January over the judicial overhaul, Netanyahu in April announced a pause in the legislation for negotiations with opposition parties, mediated by President Isaac Herzog. So far, no definitive progress has been announced in the talks.