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NEW SURVEY: SURPRISING POTENTIAL FOR NON-VIOLENT INTIFADA

Two years into the Intifada, groundbreaking survey reveals:

- **80% of Palestinians would support a large-scale non-violent protest movement and 56% would participate in its activities.**
- **78% of Israeli Jews believe that the Palestinians have a legitimate right to seek a Palestinian state, provided that they use non-violent means.**

Jerusalem, August 28, 2002 – Search for Common Ground (SFCG), the world’s largest conflict prevention and resolution NGO, today released a survey conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) of the University of Maryland to determine, for the first time, the attitudes Palestinians and Jewish Israelis publics on the potential for nonviolent methods in the Palestinian Intifada. A Palestinian polling organization, the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC), carried out the poll of 600 Palestinians through face-to-face interviews from August 12-19. An Israeli polling organization, the B.L. and Lucille Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research of Tel Aviv University, carried out the poll of 504 Israeli Jews by telephone interviews from August 12-14. The key findings are as follows:

A strong majority (62%) of Palestinians thinks that a new approach is needed in the Intifada and overwhelming majorities (73-92%) approve of Palestinians using various methods of nonviolent action. Pluralities to majorities of Palestinians express willingness to participate in various specific nonviolent actions, including boycotts and forms of mass civil disobedience—numbers that, if actually mobilized, would amount to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. If a Palestinian were killed in the course of committing nonviolent resistance, a near unanimous 88% would regard that person as a martyr--in most cases, no less than a suicide bomber. However, concurrent with their strong support for nonviolent methods, Palestinians show equal levels of support for violent methods.

On the Israeli side, an overwhelming **78% of Israeli Jews questioned believe that the Palestinians have a legitimate right to seek a Palestinian state, provided that they use nonviolent means.** Likewise 56% feel this way about the Palestinians’ right to oppose the expansion of the settlements. If the Palestinians were to move from violent to nonviolent forms of protest, a majority of Israeli Jews would favor making concessions to the Palestinians, including phasing out the checkpoints between Palestinian towns (70%) and being more flexible in negotiations about the borders of a future Palestinian state—as high as 58%.

Eight out of ten Palestinians said they would approve of a large-scale Palestinian movement based on nonviolent action against Israeli occupation using such methods as demonstrations, boycotts, and civil disobedience, and more than half (56%) said they would be willing to participate in it. **A majority of Israeli Jews (57%) said they would approve of such a movement.** About two-thirds said the Israeli government should not try to stop Palestinians from organizing large nonviolent demonstrations.

An overwhelming majority of Palestinians favors the idea of all Palestinians refusing to work in the construction of settlements, or for businesses located in the settlements. Among Israeli Jews, a strong majority believes that the Israeli government should not crack down harshly on efforts to organize strikes and work stoppages of Palestinian workers in the settlements, but a majority says that the Israeli government should crack down if large groups block construction activity in the settlements or block access to the settlements.

Both Palestinians and Israeli Jews are unsure about the feasibility of a large-scale nonviolent movement. While Palestinian support for mass nonviolent action is strong, majorities have doubts about whether it would be effective. Among Israeli Jews, an overwhelming majority thinks it unlikely that a nonviolent movement will emerge.

“We believe these findings reflect the real, but unrealized, potential that non-violence can play in ending the vicious cycle of bloodshed,” says John Marks, President SFCG. “While non-violence could provide a possible way out, unfortunately, it is not yet seen by most people in both societies as feasible.”

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) was founded in 1982 and is a Washington and Brussels-based NGO, with offices in 13 countries. It is the world’s largest conflict prevention and resolution NGO. SFCG has worked in the Middle East for the past 11 years. Its activities include the Common Ground News Service, the *Bulletin of Regional Cooperation in the Middle East*, and scores of meetings to promote dialogue and joint action among specialists from across the region involved in the fields of security, media, civil society and conflict resolution.

The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) is a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA) and the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland. PIPA was created to help bridge the gap between various publics and policymaking communities on international issues. Drawing on its own data and comprehensive reviews of data from other organizations, PIPA researchers analyze the patterns of majority opinion, looking to identify the potential for public consensus on international policy issues.

The Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC) is the first institution in the Arab world to conduct public opinion surveys methodologically and continuously. The main aim of those regular opinion polls is to enhance public participation in the decision-making process by making the results available to decision makers, and, also to enable academics, researchers and others to use scientifically collected data in their studies and policy projects.

The B.L. & Lucille Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research is the only public opinion research institute located in a university setting in Israel. As such, it is charged with the task of pursuing theoretical and methodological capabilities that will contribute to the study of attitudes and opinions in Israeli society. Its objectives are to develop a survey program on attitudes concerning Israeli polity and society; assemble trend information in order to follow the dynamics of public opinion in Israel; and experiment with survey methodology in order to improve survey techniques.