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## **AJC Survey Shows U.S. Jews Sharply Divided Over Obama Approach on Iran**

April 9, 2010 – New York – As President Obama prepares to host the leaders of more than 40 countries at a nuclear summit in Washington, a new AJC survey shows that a majority of American Jews are deeply divided over how the president is handling the threat of Iran’s nuclear program. According to the just-concluded AJC 2010 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, 47 percent approve the president’s strategy, 42 percent disapprove, and 11 percent are unsure.

A full 68 percent of U.S. Jews believe there is either “little” or “no” chance of sanctions and diplomacy curbing Iran’s nuclear ambitions. Fifty-three percent would support, and 42 percent oppose, U.S. military action to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, while 62 percent would support, and 33 percent oppose, Israeli military action.

President Obama’s overall performance as president won an approval of 57 percent, with 38 percent disapproving, a little more than a year after he assumed office. Exit polls in the 2008 election showed that President Obama won 78 percent of the Jewish vote.

Conducted annually since 1990, AJC’s surveys often are cited as the most authoritative barometer of American Jewish opinion on a range of issues.

“If past is prologue, some ideologically-driven groups will cherry pick the results that buttress their particular claims, but the richness and depth of the survey data offers a multifaceted – and, therefore, complex – picture of American Jewish thinking on the key international affairs and domestic policy challenges facing the United States,” said AJC Executive Director David Harris. “While some issues generate a strong consensus, others reveal deep divisions, a pattern that has emerged consistently in these AJC surveys over the years.”

On the economy, health care, and homeland security, Obama scores somewhat higher ratings among Jews than the general American population. Fifty-five percent approve, and 42 percent disapprove, of the president’s handling of the economy; 50 percent approve, while 48 percent disapprove, of his handling of health care; and, on his handling of homeland security, 62 percent approve, and 33 percent disapprove.

Regarding the Obama Administration’s handling of U.S.-Israel relations, 55 percent approve and 37 percent disapprove. In the 2009 AJC Annual Survey, 54 percent approved and 32 percent disapproved. On a related question, 57 percent approve of the Netanyahu government’s handling of Israel-U.S. relations, while 30 percent disapprove.

Asked to characterize U.S.-Israel relations today, 63 percent answered “somewhat positive,” with a further 10 percent describing them as “very positive.” In the 2009 survey, 70 percent said “somewhat positive” and 11 percent “very positive.”

In terms of the wider region, there is majority support – 62 percent – for President Obama’s decision to deploy an additional 30,000 troops in Afghanistan.

### ***Arab-Israeli Peace Process***

On the Arab-Israeli peace process, the AJC survey reveals near unanimity among American Jews in insisting that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state in any permanent peace agreement. As in 2009, 94 percent of those surveyed favor that proposition. The new survey shows support is firm across all denominations -- 90 percent among Orthodox Jews, 99 percent among Conservative Jews, 98 percent among Reform Jews, and 93 percent among those who describe themselves as “just Jewish.”

American Jews are almost evenly split on the establishment of a Palestinian state, with 48 percent in favor and 45 percent opposed.

On the future of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, 8 percent say all, and 56 percent say some, should be dismantled as part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians. The remaining 34 percent say none of the West Bank settlements should be removed.

Regarding the future of Jerusalem, 61 percent believe that Israel’s capital should remain a united city under Israeli sovereignty, while 35 percent say Israel should be willing to compromise in the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians.

The survey shows deep suspicion of Arab intentions remains widespread among American Jews. Seventy-five percent of respondents agreed that the “goal of the Arabs” is the destruction of Israel. Eighty percent rejected the proposition that Israel could achieve peace with a Hamas-led Palestinian government.

### ***American Jews and Israel***

In terms of personal feelings, a clear majority of American Jews have a strong bond with Israel. Those who feel “very close” make up 30 percent of respondents, while a further 44 percent feel “fairly close.” In all denominations, well over 50 percent say they are either “very” or “fairly” close to Israel. The attachment is particularly pronounced among Orthodox Jews, 77 percent of whom define themselves as “very close” to Israel.

Interestingly, given the widespread discussion of a generational divide on Israel, the AJC survey shows that younger American Jews feel a greater closeness toward Israel when compared to their elders. Forty percent of those under the age of 40 feel “very close” and 30 percent feel “fairly close.” Among those aged between 40 and 59, 24 percent feel “very close” and 46 percent feel “fairly close.” And, among those aged over 60, 34 percent feel “very close” and 47 percent feel “fairly close.”

### ***Global Anti-Semitism***

The survey also revealed an acute concern among U.S. Jews of anti-Semitism:

- 98 percent believe it to be a problem in the Muslim world, the overwhelming majority – 87 percent-- defining it as “very serious.”

- 95 percent of respondents believe anti-Semitism to be a problem in Europe, with more than half – 51 percent -- defining it as “very serious.”
- 91 percent think anti-Semitism is a problem in the United States, with 25 percent defining it as “very serious” and 66 percent as “somewhat of a problem.”
- 91 percent of respondents believe that over the next several years, anti-Semitism will either remain at current levels or increase.

The full survey, which contains additional policy questions and tracks American Jewish perceptions of key countries, is available at [www.ajc.org/survey2010](http://www.ajc.org/survey2010) . For comparative purposes, past AJC surveys can be accessed at [www.ajc.org/survey](http://www.ajc.org/survey).

The 2010 survey was conducted for the AJC by Synovate (formerly Market Facts), a leading research organization. Respondents were interviewed by telephone between March 2 - March 23, 2010; no interviews took place on the Sabbath. The sample consisted of 800 self-identifying Jewish respondents selected from the Synovate consumer mail panel. The respondents are representative of the United States adult Jewish population on a variety of measures. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is plus or minus 3 percentage points.