Ruderman Family Foundation Survey: 91% of Israelis believe Biden will support Israel

The survey results were revealed at the Knesset Caucus for Israel-American Jewry Relations, where former White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer warned of more friction between US and Israel in a Biden administration.

JERUSALEM, November 16, 2020 — In a new post-election survey commissioned by the Ruderman Family Foundation, 91 percent of Israelis believe Biden will support Israel.

The survey was based on responses by 1,000 Israeli adults and was conducted under the supervision of Tel Aviv University’s Prof. Camille Fuchs. Further, seventy one percent reported being satisfied with the U.S. election results, including a combined 32 percent to a “very large” or “large” extent and 15 percent to a “low” extent; 20 percent were “not satisfied at all.”

The survey was released during a panel discussion in the Knesset Caucus for Israel-American Jewry Relations, co-hosted by the Caucus’ Co-Chairs Mickey Levy (Yesh Atid) and MK Keren Barak (Likud) as well as the Ruderman Family Foundation, which helped establish the Knesset Caucus in 2013.

Among the speakers at the caucus event was former White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer, who warned that despite President-elect Joe Biden’s affection for Israel, the relationship between Israel and the United States will be more fraught, especially when compared to the Trump administration.

“With Biden, the high-water mark of the Trump administration will recede,” said Fleischer. “Even if Biden on major issues has a history of being a friend of Israel, I don’t see that translating throughout the [other echelons of the US] government. We saw this with President Obama,” he said.

Fleischer pointed to his time serving under Bush, who he said was very pro-Israel, but had difficulty enacting pro-Israel policies because the State Department, US Embassy and other government bodies didn’t share his vision.

Fleischer also singled out Senator Bernie Sanders who, in his view, would have been “one of the biggest troublemakers” for Israel. “If Sanders would have become president it would have been terrible news for Israel. The fact that someone is Jewish doesn’t necessarily translate into pro-Israel policy,” he said.

In order for Israel to reach out to the liberal base like Sanders and his ilk within the Democratic party, Fleischer suggested playing up recent peace agreements signed with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain for future pro-Israel advocacy work on the grassroots level.

Also speaking on Monday’s panel was the Foundation’s Executive Director Shira Ruderman and Jodi Rudoren, editor in chief of The Forward and former Jerusalem bureau chief at The New York Times.

Rudoren, on the other hand, suggested that Trump’s pro-Israel policy may actually harm Israel’s strategic interests in the long run.
“I think it’s important to hear the analysts who say that progress doesn’t come from places of comfort but rather from places of discomfort and fear. Trump’s close friendship with Israel removed any pressure and tension. The core challenge to Israel’s long-term survival has not moved forward in the Trump era and may have even moved backwards,” she said.

As for the survey findings, approximately half (49 percent) of Israelis believe the tenure of President-elect Biden will keep Israel’s relations with American Jewry “the same.” Eighteen percent of respondents said Biden’s election will strengthen Israeli relations with American Jews and 23 percent said the onset of the new U.S. administration will weaken that relationship. Seventy three percent expressed some degree of concern with the “continued distancing between Israel and American Jews” given the discrepancy between the Israeli government and popular support for President Trump and American Jewish support for Biden.

“Our survey results reflect that the Israeli people still overwhelmingly believe in the enduring power of the U.S.-Israel relationship regardless of the occupant in the White House,” said Jay Ruderman, President of the Ruderman Family Foundation. “The divisiveness of the US election is also evident inside of the Jewish community, both in Israel and the United States. It will continue to be a top communal priority to bridge these divisions for the next four years and beyond.”

In advance of this month’s election, the Ruderman Family Foundation had published a position paper together with award-winning American presidential historian Prof. Gil Troy, titled “The Jewish Vote 2020: More Empowered Than Powerful,” which described the 2020 race as a “watershed seemingly dividing pro-Trump Israeli Jews from anti-Trump American Jews.”

“Talk of this split emphasizes the growing perception that most American Jews are becoming more distant from Israel — whereas, in fact, they remain pro-Israel,” the paper states. “It highlights the widespread impression among some Jews and non-Jews that American Jews are single-issue voters, always voting for the most pro-Israel candidate—whereas in the voting booth most American Jews are actually more pro-choice and anti-Trump than pro-Israel.”

**About the Ruderman Family Foundation**

The Ruderman Family Foundation is a private philanthropic foundation established in 2002 managed by the Ruderman family. The Foundation operates in the United States and Israel in two main areas: Inclusion of people with disabilities in society and in strengthening the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community. In the field of Israel-American Jewish relations, the foundation focuses on fostering a sense of mutual commitment between the State of Israel and the Jewish community in the United States. The Foundation aims to raise awareness, generate and disseminate knowledge, and promote positive attitudes among the Israeli public towards the American Jewish community. We believe that the partnership between Israel and the American Jewish community is a strategic asset to the strength and prosperity of Israel and the entire Jewish people.