

Arab Opinions on President Obama's First 100 Days: A 6 Nation Survey

Submitted by:

Zogby International

John Zogby, President and CEO

Dr. James Zogby, Senior Analyst

May, 2009

Methodology

Results for this survey are based on face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of Zogby International. All surveys are based on urban samples except in Lebanon where the sample was nationwide.

The tables below show the margin of sampling error based on all interviews conducted in that country. For results based on the full sample in a given country, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus the margin of error. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

| Country | Sample Size | Dates | MOE (%) |
|---------|-------------|-------------------|---------|
| Egypt | 853 | 4/21/09 – 5/6/09 | +/- 3.6 |
| KSA | 760 | 4/21/09 – 5/6/09 | +/- 3.6 |
| UAE* | 500 | 4/21/09 – 5/11/09 | +/- 4.5 |
| Morocco | 774 | 4/21/09 – 5/6/09 | +/- 3.6 |
| Lebanon | 600 | 4/24/09 – 5/8/09 | +/- 4.1 |
| Jordan | 600 | 4/24/09 – 5/8/09 | +/- 4.1 |

*Includes only Arabs in the UAE.—349 Natural Citizens and 151 Arab expatriates.

Executive Summary

Among the Key Findings:

- **On Attitudes toward President Obama and the United States:** Since President Barack Obama's election, there has been a change in Arab attitude toward the United States. In Saudi Arabia (KSA), the UAE, Lebanon and Morocco, over 50 percent of the public polled say their attitude toward the United States is more positive as a result of Barack Obama being elected President. In Jordan and Egypt, a majority remains neutral with only about one-in-four saying their attitude has changed for the better. The UAE, however, is the only Arab country where a majority of respondents hold a favorable opinion of the United States overall.
- **On the Obama Administration Bringing Positive Change to U.S. Arab Relations:** There is a significant difference in public opinion of President Obama's ability to bring positive change to U.S.-Arab relations—optimism is nearly twice as high in Saudi Arabia (74%) and the UAE (64%) than compared with Egypt (37%) and Jordan (31%). Egyptians are divided on the question between those who believe he can bring positive change (37%), those who disagree (32%) and those who believe no President can bring positive change (27%). While Jordan and Egypt are neighboring countries to Israel and while each has a peace agreement with Israel, they are also the least optimistic that the Obama administration can bring positive change to U.S.-Arab relations.
- **On President Obama's Most Positive Actions toward the Arab World:** The President's announcement to withdraw from Iraq rates highest on a list of positive actions taken in five of the six countries surveyed. Withdrawal from Iraq is followed closely by the announced closing of the Guantanamo Bay Detention camp and the ban of torture. The President's first exclusive interview with Al-Arabiya ranked third in most countries. Sending diplomats to Syria rates high in Lebanon while the appointment of former Senate Leader George Mitchell rates high in Jordan. Still, some believe that there has been no positive action by the President during his first 100 days, including one-in-four Jordanians (26%).
- **On the Greatest Obstacle to Peace:** The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the greatest obstacle to peace in the Middle East according to the majority of the people in the region. Although some governments have raised concerns about Iran, in terms of Arabic public opinion, Iran is non-factor.

- **On Lebanon: A Breakdown by Religion:** The overall opinion of the United States in Lebanon has improved since President Obama's election. When results are broken down by religion, however, there is a significant divide. Christians (52%) and Sunni (42%) are twice as likely to rate the United States favorably than are Shi'a (18%). When asked about the President's first three months in office, more than a third of Lebanese Sunni (35%) and Christians (39%) rate the President's job performance during that time as positive (excellent or good). Only 13 percent of Lebanese Shi'a share that view. Still, the Israeli-Palestinian issue remains the most significant obstacle to peace among all three groups.
- **The Bottom Line: "It's a Good Start, but There's a Long Way to Go":** If we were to study the results country by country and compare this poll to our previous polls in the region, we would see an uptick in favorable attitude toward the United States and matching downturn in unfavorable ratings. This shift is most dramatic in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Lebanon and as Dr. James Zogby noted at the poll's release at the Brookings Institution—"it's a good start, but there's long way to go."

Survey Findings

1. Has your attitude toward the United States changed as a result of Barack Obama being elected President?

| | Egypt | Jordan | KSA | Lebanon | Morocco | UAE |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------|-----|---------|---------|-----|
| Yes, it has improved as a result | 29 | 25 | 61 | 54 | 58 | 58 |
| Yes, it is worse as a result | 6 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 1 |
| No, it has not changed | 60 | 69 | 35 | 44 | 28 | 27 |
| Not Sure | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 14 |

2. Generally speaking, is your attitude the United States very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or are you not familiar enough to make a judgment?

| | Egypt | Jordan | KSA | Lebanon | Morocco | UAE |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Favorable | 1 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 9 |
| Somewhat Favorable | 13 | 17 | 25 | 31 | 9 | 43 |
| POSITIVE | 14 | 25 | 27 | 38 | 15 | 52 |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | 27 | 24 | 41 | 29 | 35 | 28 |
| Very Unfavorable | 51 | 49 | 32 | 32 | 42 | 12 |
| NEGATIVE | 78 | 73 | 73 | 61 | 77 | 40 |
| Not Familiar | 5 | <1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| Not Sure | 3 | 2 | -- | <1 | 2 | 7 |

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Obama administration will bring positive change to U.S. – Arab relations.

| | Egypt | Jordan | KSA | Lebanon | Morocco | UAE |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 2 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 15 |
| Somewhat Agree | 35 | 24 | 64 | 43 | 45 | 49 |
| AGREE | 37 | 31 | 74 | 49 | 54 | 64 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 24 | 13 | 15 | 11 | 10 | 10 |
| Strongly Disagree | 8 | 26 | 1 | 20 | 7 | 4 |
| DISAGREE | 32 | 39 | 16 | 31 | 17 | 14 |
| No President can bring positive change | 27 | 26 | 10 | 12 | 25 | 18 |
| Not Sure | 5 | 4 | <1 | 8 | 5 | 4 |

4. How would you rate President Obama's actions toward the Arab World during his first 3 months in office?

| | Egypt | Jordan | KSA | Lebanon | Morocco | UAE |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Excellent | 3 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| Good | 15 | 19 | 43 | 24 | 28 | 38 |
| POSITIVE | 18 | 26 | 51 | 29 | 35 | 50 |
| Fair | 30 | 18 | 37 | 35 | 44 | 41 |
| Poor | 46 | 57 | 12 | 35 | 18 | 7 |
| NEGATIVE | 76 | 75 | 49 | 70 | 62 | 48 |
| Not Sure | 6 | 1 | <1 | <1 | 3 | 2 |

5. Of the following actions, what are the two most positive things President Obama has done to improve U.S. – Arab relations?

| | Egypt | Jordan | KSA | Lebanon | Morocco | UAE |
|---|--------------|---------------|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Announced the withdrawal from Iraq | 85 | 55 | 79 | 44 | 67 | 25 |
| Announced the closing of the Guantanamo Bay Detention facility and signed an executive order banning torture. | 55 | 57 | 76 | 68 | 53 | 49 |
| Appointed former U.S. Senator Majority Leader George Mitchell as a Special Envoy to the Middle East | 7 | 19 | 4 | 21 | 4 | 28 |
| Sent two diplomatic emissaries to Syria | 8 | 9 | 11 | 18 | 15 | 23 |
| Sent a Nowruz diplomatic message to the Iranian government and people | 3 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 5 | 12 |
| Used his first international interview to speak directly to the Arab and Muslim people | 37 | 13 | 26 | 11 | 40 | 54 |
| President Obama has taken no positive actions to improve U.S.-Arab relations | 1 | 26 | 1 | 19 | 12 | 2 |
| None of the above | <1 | 17 | <1 | <1 | 1 | -- |
| Not Sure | 2 | 2 | <1 | 7 | 5 | 8 |

6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Obama administration will be even handed when dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

| | Egypt | Jordan | KSA | Lebanon | Morocco | UAE |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 3 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 14 |
| Somewhat Agree | 16 | 19 | 27 | 26 | 25 | 42 |
| AGREE | 19 | 25 | 33 | 30 | 29 | 56 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 30 | 17 | 43 | 30 | 40 | 12 |
| Strongly Disagree | 35 | 36 | 16 | 28 | 10 | 7 |
| DISAGREE | 65 | 53 | 59 | 58 | 50 | 19 |
| No U.S. President can be even handed | 10 | 19 | 7 | 8 | 15 | 15 |
| Not Sure | 6 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 11 |

7. Of the following, what do you believe is the greatest obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East?

| | Egypt | Jordan | KSA | Lebanon | Morocco | UAE |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| U.S. Interference in the Middle East | 37 | 9 | 40 | 10 | 38 | 10 |
| Lack of democracy | 5 | 15 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 7 |
| Economic inequality | 3 | 4 | 6 | 11 | 4 | 11 |
| The Israeli-Palestinian conflict | 54 | 69 | 47 | 58 | 53 | 59 |
| Iran | <1 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 12 |
| Religion | 1 | 1 | -- | 2 | <1 | 2 |
| Not Sure | 1 | 1 | -- | 2 | 1 | -- |

Appendix A: Opinion of the United States by Country over Time

Egypt

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Favorable | ** | 2 | -- | 3 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| Somewhat Favorable | ** | 10 | 4 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 13 |
| FAVORABLE | 15 | 13 | 4 | 14 | 14 | 9 | 14 |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | ** | 20 | 19 | 14 | 20 | 15 | 27 |
| Very Unfavorable | ** | 58 | 76 | 71 | 53 | 73 | 51 |
| UNFAVORABLE | 76 | 79 | 95 | 85 | 73 | 87 | 78 |
| Not Familiar Enough | ** | 4 | -- | 1 | 9 | 3 | 5 |
| Not Sure | ** | 4 | 1 | -- | 4 | 1 | 3 |

Jordan

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Favorable | ** | 1 | 4 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Somewhat Favorable | ** | 5 | 12 | 25 | 4 | 15 | 17 |
| FAVORABLE | 34 | 6 | 15 | 33 | 5 | 16 | 25 |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | ** | 17 | 30 | 35 | 17 | 61 | 24 |
| Very Unfavorable | ** | 63 | 48 | 28 | 73 | 23 | 49 |
| UNFAVORABLE | 61 | 80 | 78 | 63 | 90 | 84 | 73 |
| Not Familiar Enough | ** | 10 | 4 | 3 | 4 | -- | <1 |
| Not Sure | ** | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | -- | 2 |

Lebanon

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Favorable | ** | 10 | 5 | 9 | 9 | 4 | 7 |
| Somewhat Favorable | ** | 22 | 15 | 23 | 18 | 17 | 31 |
| FAVORABLE | 26 | 32 | 20 | 32 | 28 | 21 | 38 |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | ** | 19 | 35 | 16 | 14 | 26 | 29 |
| Very Unfavorable | ** | 40 | 34 | 50 | 53 | 53 | 32 |
| UNFAVORABLE | 70 | 59 | 69 | 66 | 68 | 79 | 61 |
| Not Familiar Enough | ** | 6 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Not Sure | ** | 3 | 5 | -- | 2 | -- | <1 |

KSA

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Favorable | ** | | | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Somewhat Favorable | ** | 4 | 4 | 8 | 8 | 11 | 25 |
| FAVORABLE | 12 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 27 |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | ** | 27 | 29 | 34 | 15 | 14 | 41 |
| Very Unfavorable | ** | 68 | 64 | 56 | 67 | 73 | 32 |
| UNFAVORABLE | 87 | 95 | 94 | 89 | 82 | 87 | 73 |
| Not Familiar Enough | ** | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | -- | 1 |
| Not Sure | ** | -- | 1 | -- | 1 | -- | -- |

UAE

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Favorable | ** | 1 | 2 | 12 | 13 | 8 | 9 |
| Somewhat Favorable | ** | 7 | 12 | 16 | 22 | 15 | 43 |
| FAVORABLE | 11 | 9 | 14 | 28 | 34 | 22 | 52 |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | ** | 55 | 27 | 32 | 28 | 35 | 28 |
| Very Unfavorable | ** | 31 | 46 | 37 | 33 | 36 | 12 |
| UNFAVORABLE | 87 | 86 | 72 | 69 | 61 | 71 | 40 |
| Not Familiar Enough | ** | 3 | 7 | 1 | 4 | -- | 2 |
| Not Sure | ** | 2 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 7 |

Morocco

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Favorable | ** | 1 | 1 | 12 | -- | 10 | 6 |
| Somewhat Favorable | ** | 4 | 10 | 22 | 6 | 16 | 9 |
| FAVORABLE | 38 | 6 | 11 | 34 | 7 | 26 | 15 |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | ** | 24 | 35 | 19 | 26 | 22 | 35 |
| Very Unfavorable | ** | 67 | 53 | 45 | 61 | 49 | 42 |
| UNFAVORABLE | 61 | 91 | 88 | 64 | 87 | 71 | 77 |
| Not Familiar Enough | ** | 3 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Not Sure | ** | 1 | -- | -- | 1 | -- | 2 |

Appendix B: Opinion in Lebanon By Religion

1. *Has your attitude toward the United States changed as a result of Barack Obama being elected President?*

| | Lebanon | Shi'a | Sunni | Christian |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Yes, it has improved as a result | 54 | 41 | 59 | 63 |
| Yes, it is worse as a result | 2 | 1 | -- | 2 |
| No, it has not changed | 44 | 57 | 41 | 35 |
| Not Sure | 1 | 1 | -- | 1 |

2. *Generally speaking, is your attitude the United States very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or are you not familiar enough to make a judgment?*

| | Lebanon | Shi'a | Sunni | Christian |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Favorable | 7 | -- | 12 | 9 |
| Somewhat Favorable | 31 | 18 | 30 | 43 |
| POSITIVE | 38 | 18 | 42 | 52 |
| Somewhat Unfavorable | 29 | 31 | 36 | 22 |
| Very Unfavorable | 32 | 49 | 22 | 26 |
| NEGATIVE | 61 | 80 | 58 | 48 |
| Not Familiar | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Not Sure | <1 | 1 | -- | -- |

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Obama administration will bring positive change to U.S. – Arab relations.

| | Lebanon | Shi'a | Sunni | Christian |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 6 | -- | 9 | 8 |
| Somewhat Agree | 43 | 27 | 47 | 54 |
| AGREE | 49 | 27 | 56 | 62 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 11 | 11 | 14 | 8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 20 | 30 | 14 | 16 |
| DISAGREE | 31 | 41 | 28 | 26 |
| No President can bring positive change | 12 | 18 | 10 | 10 |
| Not Sure | 8 | 14 | 6 | 4 |

4. How would you rate President Obama's actions toward the Arab World during his first 3 months in office?

| | Lebanon | Shi'a | Sunni | Christian |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Excellent | 5 | -- | 8 | 7 |
| Good | 24 | 13 | 27 | 32 |
| POSITIVE | 29 | 13 | 35 | 39 |
| Fair | 35 | 32 | 39 | 36 |
| Poor | 35 | 54 | 27 | 26 |
| NEGATIVE | 70 | 76 | 66 | 62 |
| Not Sure | <1 | 1 | -- | 1 |

6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Obama administration will be even handed when dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

| | Lebanon | Shi'a | Sunni | Christian |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 4 | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| Somewhat Agree | 26 | 13 | 23 | 41 |
| AGREE | 30 | 14 | 29 | 46 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 30 | 32 | 37 | 23 |
| Strongly Disagree | 28 | 40 | 19 | 22 |
| DISAGREE | 58 | 72 | 56 | 45 |
| No U.S. President can be even handed | 8 | 10 | 7 | 8 |
| Not Sure | 5 | 4 | 8 | 2 |

7. Of the following, what do you believe is the greatest obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East?

| | Lebanon | Shi'a | Sunni | Christian |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-----------|
| U.S. Interference in the Middle East | 10 | 14 | 12 | 5 |
| Lack of democracy | 11 | 4 | 14 | 13 |
| Economic inequality | 11 | 4 | 12 | 14 |
| The Israeli-Palestinian conflict | 58 | 74 | 48 | 51 |
| Iran | 7 | 1 | 13 | 8 |
| Religion | 2 | 1 | -- | 5 |
| Not Sure | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 |