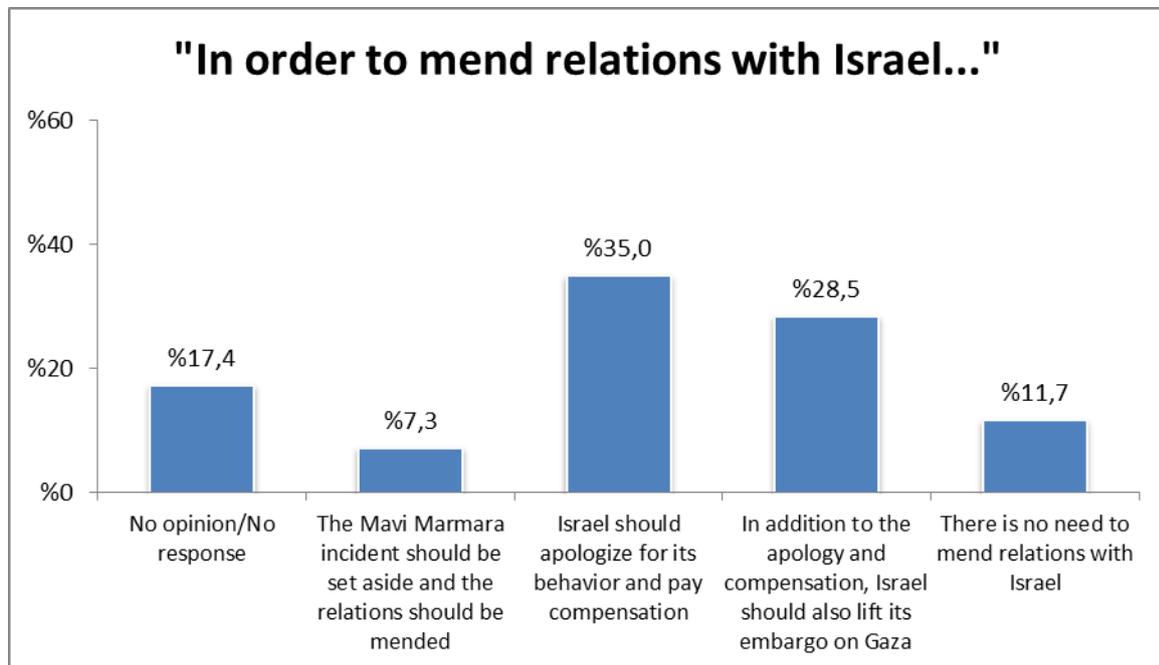


IS TURKEY'S PRECONDITION OF THE REMOVAL OF THE EMBARGO ON GAZA IMPORTANT FOR MENDING THE TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS?

The public opinion survey conducted by the Centre for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) through TNS, clarified the expectations of the Turkish public from Israel three years after the Mavi Marmara incident. According to the results of the survey, while 35 percent of the public thinks that Israel should apologize and pay compensation, 29 percent believe that in addition to the apology and reparations, Israel should lift its embargo on Gaza.

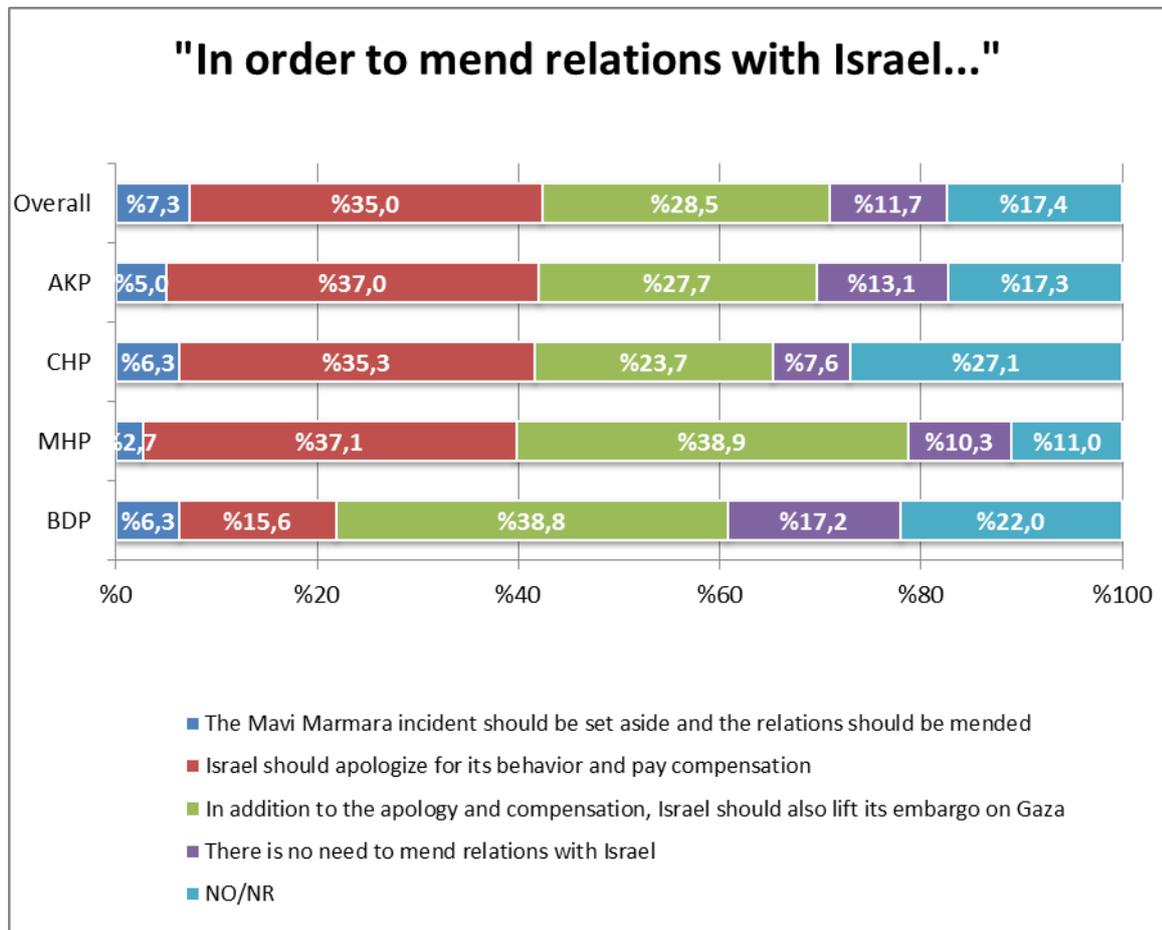


The poll which was conducted between March 1st and April 9th 2013 and used a sample of 1504 people, asked the following question: "3 years ago Turkish-Israeli relations plunged into a crisis due to the killing of 9 Turkish passengers aboard the Mavi Marmara ship. In order to mend the relations, which one of the following statements that will be read is the most appropriate one?"¹

Around 35 percent of the survey participants think that the payment of compensation and an apology would suffice, while around 30 percent believe that in addition to the apology and reparations, Israel should lift its embargo on Gaza.

¹ In this survey that was conducted between 1 March and 9 April 2013, was based on the answers of 1504 people that represent the ages of 18 and up and that live in urban and rural areas. The cities included in the survey are: Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Manisa, Erzurum, Gaziantep, İstanbul, İzmir, Kayseri, Kırklareli, Konya, İçel, Samsun, Zonguldak, Denizli, Malatya. The survey was conducted by TNS Turkey.

Apart from the 65 percent that believe that relations would recover if Israel takes these steps; two points deserve attention. 12 percent of the participants believe that Turkey's relations with Israel do not need to recuperate. On the other end, 7 percent argue that the Mavi Marmara incident should be set aside, in other words there should be no-precondition for the improvement in the relationship. 17 percent declared that they have no opinion on the issue.



There are major gaps among voter bases of different parties with regards to expectations from Israel after the Mavi Marmara incident. While 37 percent of AKP voters think that an apology and the payment of compensations would suffice; 28 percent hold the opinion that in addition to the apology and reparations, the embargo on Gaza should be lifted. These ratios are 35 percent and 24 percent respectively for CHP voters. The share of CHP voters who think that the lifting of the Gaza embargo is a pre-condition is lower than the ruling AKP.

An area where MHP voters have diverged from others is their approach to the lifting of the Gaza embargo. The ratio of those who think that in addition to the apology and compensations, the lifting of the Gaza embargo should be a pre-condition for the improvement of ties is close to 40 percent and this is respectively 1,5 and 1,64 times the AKP and CHP voters that hold this opinion. In this regard, we can argue that MHP voters attribute more importance to the Gaza issue compared to the voters of other parties. In a similar

fashion to MHP voters, BDP voters view the lifting of the Gaza embargo highly and their ratio is close to 40 percent.

Those who believe that relations with Israel should not be mended are also distributed differently among the voter base. While the percentages of the participants that hold this view are 17 percent for BDP and 13 percent for AKP; this ratio goes down to the level of 10 percent among MHP and 6 percent among CHP voters.

On the other hand, participants who argue that the Mavi Marmara incident should be set aside and relations should be improved with no pre-conditions are clustered around the 5-6 percent range for AKP, CHP and BDP voters; this population falls as low as 2 percent among MHP voters.



The same question was directed to a panel of 101 foreign policy experts by EDAM². The experts poll showed that their demands from Israel for the normalization of relations were less hawkish compared to the general public. More than a third of experts agree that the Mavi Marmara incident should be set aside and the relations should be mended. It should be reminded that this figure was 7 percent among the general public.

While those who choose the "Israel should apologize for its behavior and pay compensation" option is at 35 percent among the general public; this option was favored by 57 percent of the foreign policy panel. Only 6 percent of the foreign policy panel argued that in addition to the apology and compensation, Israel should also lift its embargo on Gaza. This is almost one fifth of the rate of the general public which was polled at 29 percent. In this regard, we can say that experts are more reconciliatory than the general public with regards to improving relations with Israel. Only 1 percent of the experts hold the view that relations with Israel do not need to be mended.

² 101 experts participated in the expert study and the survey was conducted by Infakto RW