

Poll: Israelis feel country's image is 'poor'

Jan. 6, 2010

Haviv Rettig Gur , THE JERUSALEM POST

A survey conducted at the behest of the Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs discovered that a large majority of Israelis would like to assist in improving their country's image in the world.

The survey, which sampled 495 adult Israeli Jews, was conducted in early December by the Kelim Shluvim Research Institute.

Fully 91 percent of respondents said they believed that Israel has an "acute" or "very acute" image problem in the world, with 51% saying "very acute." Eighty percent concurred that Israel is depicted worldwide as an "aggressive state."

The survey also asked Israelis if they would personally like to take part in Israel's public diplomacy efforts, and 85% said they would, suggesting that the desire to improve Israel's image abroad crossed political and social boundaries.

"These findings are not surprising," Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Minister Yuli Edelstein said of the survey, adding that "since its inception" Israel has had "very serious difficulties" in explaining its perspective to the world.

In the wake of the survey, the ministry plans to create a Web site that will offer assistance to anyone wishing to help explain Israel's position overseas.

On Wednesday, the ministry will present its 2010 working plan to the Knesset. According to a ministry spokesman, some 4.2 million outgoing plane tickets are sold in Israel each year, so an important plank of Israel's hasbara should be to empower these travelling Israelis to respond to anti-Israel accusations they encounter overseas.