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Widespread Middle East Fears that Syrian Violence Will Spread

No Love for Assad, Yet No Support for Arming the Rebels

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As concern mounts about the Syrian government’s possible use of chemical weapons against its own people, publics in the Middle East – especially the Lebanese – are extremely worried about violence spreading to neighboring countries. Nonetheless, a new survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted before news emerged of alleged use of chemical agents by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, found little regional support for Western or Arab countries sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria. And there is even greater opposition among American and European publics to such indirect Syrian involvement by their governments. A more recent Pew Research nationwide U.S. [poll](#) finds that hard evidence that Damascus has engaged in chemical warfare would only lead to a modest increase in American public support for an allied military effort in Syria.

Meanwhile, Assad is very unpopular throughout the region, except among Shia Muslims in Lebanon. In turn, Lebanese Muslims are divided over aid to the rebels. Most Sunnis back such assistance, while Shia overwhelmingly oppose it.

These are the key findings from a new survey by the Pew Research Center of 11,771 people in 12 countries from March 3 to April 7, 2013. Surveyed countries include Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian territories and Tunisia in the Middle East; Germany, France and Britain in Europe; and the United States and Russia.

Fear of Spreading Violence

Publics in the region are deeply concerned that the fighting in Syria could one day spread to neighboring nations. This worry is particularly prevalent in predominantly Muslim countries that share a border with Syria, notably Lebanon and Jordan.

Fears of Spreading Violence at Home

How concerned are you that violence in Syria will spread to your own country?

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	<i>Total concerned</i>	Not concerned	DK
	%	%	%	%	%
Lebanon	68	27	95	5	0
<i>Christian</i>	75	24	99	1	0
<i>Shia</i>	60	35	95	5	0
<i>Sunni</i>	65	26	91	9	0
Jordan	46	34	80	17	2
Turkey	25	37	62	29	8

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q141.

With clashes escalating along the Syrian-Lebanese frontier, more than nine-in-ten Lebanese (95%) worry that Syria's violence may spill over into their nation, including 68% who are *very* concerned. Such fears are shared by all the principal religious groups in Lebanon: the Christians (99%), Shia (95%) and Sunni (91%). With roughly 400,000 Syrian refugees already seeking shelter in Jordan, 80% of Jordanians express concern about the Syrian fighting spreading into Jordan. In Turkey, which already harbors nearly 300,000 Syrians who have fled the civil war, 62% say they are apprehensive that the violence could infect their society.

Middle Eastern nations slightly further afield are only marginally less concerned. In Tunisia, 89% worry that the turmoil in Syria could lead to new unrest in other countries. In Egypt, 77% of those surveyed express anxiety that the violence might trigger conflicts elsewhere; as do 74% in the Palestinian territories. Meanwhile, the Israelis, who have fought four major wars with the Syrians, look on with unease. Nearly eight-in-ten (78%) Israelis are concerned that the fighting north of the Golan Heights could eventually lead to instability in other parts of the region.

Few Favor Arming Rebels

Despite such concerns, publics in the region are generally opposed to both Western and Arab governments sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria.

Populations in five of the six countries in the region that were surveyed oppose Americans or Europeans supplying the Syrian rebels with weapons. This opposition is particularly strong in Lebanon where 80% of the total public and 98% of Shia Lebanese do not want the West to

Even Egyptians, Tunisians Worry

Are you concerned that violence in Syria will spread to neighboring countries?

	Concerned	Not concerned	DK
	%	%	%
Lebanon	90	11	0
<i>Christian</i>	95	5	0
<i>Shia</i>	81	19	0
<i>Sunni</i>	86	14	0
Tunisia	89	9	2
Jordan	79	21	1
Israel	78	22	1
Egypt	77	22	2
Palest. ter.	74	23	2
Turkey	55	37	9

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q140.

U.S., Europe Keep Out

Do you support or oppose Western countries sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria?

	Support	Oppose	DK
	%	%	%
Jordan	53	44	3
Egypt	33	59	7
Tunisia	32	60	9
Palest. ter.	31	63	6
Turkey	22	68	10
Lebanon	18	80	2
<i>Christian</i>	21	78	1
<i>Shia</i>	1	98	1
<i>Sunni</i>	32	66	2

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q138.

get involved. In Jordan (53%) about half the population supports American or European military assistance for the Syrian opposition.

Similarly, only the Jordanians (65%) and Lebanese Sunnis (63%) back Arabs arming the rebels. Nearly all the Shia (97%) surveyed in Lebanon are opposed to such outside intervention.

At the same time, there is no public support in the United States, Western Europe or in Turkey for sending arms and military supplies to the anti-government groups in Syria. Eight-in-ten (82%) Germans oppose such assistance, as do more than two-thirds of the French (69%) and the Turks (65%) and a majority of the British (57%). Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Americans were also against arming the rebels when the survey was taken in the first two weeks of March. Since then evidence has emerged that the Assad government may have used chemical weapons in its fight against opposition forces. In a subsequent Pew Research Center [poll](#) taken April 25-28, Americans, by a 45% to 31% margin, favor rather than oppose the U.S. and its allies taking military action against Syria, if it is confirmed that Syria used chemical weapons against anti-government groups.

Region Says No Arab Aid to Rebels

Do you support or oppose Arab countries sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria?

	Support	Oppose	DK
	%	%	%
Jordan	65	30	5
Palest. ter.	42	53	6
Egypt	38	57	5
Tunisia	37	55	9
Lebanon	37	60	4
<i>Christian</i>	39	56	5
<i>Shia</i>	1	97	2
<i>Sunni</i>	63	35	2
Turkey	24	66	10

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q139.

Americans, Europeans Want No Part of Syrian Conflict

Do you support or oppose your country sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria?

	Support	Oppose	DK
	%	%	%
France	31	69	1
Britain	30	57	14
U.S.	25	64	11
Turkey	25	65	9
Germany	16	82	3

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q137.

Meanwhile, the Russian government, long an ally of the Assad regime and a vocal opponent of outside intervention in the Syrian civil war, can claim little backing for its policy from its own people. Just 27% of Russians approve of Moscow's support of the Syrian government. Most Russians (52%) have no opinion on the issue.

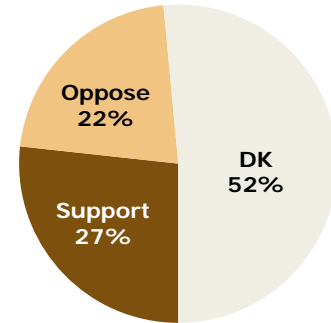
Assad Highly Unpopular

There is little public backing for Syrian president Bashar al-Assad from the mostly Sunni Arab publics in the Middle East. Only the Shia in Lebanon (91%) have a favorable view of him. (Assad comes from a family of Alawites, a branch of Shia Islam.)

Roughly nine-in-ten Lebanese Sunnis (92%), Israelis (91%) and Jordanians (90%) have a negative view of the Syrian leader, as do eight-in-ten Egyptians (81%) and Tunisians (81%) and seven-in-ten Turks (72%). Even the Christians in Lebanon (63%) oppose Assad, despite the relative protection the Assad family has given the Christian community in Syria over the years.

The intensification of the conflict in Syria in the last year has not altered regional views of Assad. He was not liked in 2012 and he is not liked today.

Russian Support of Assad Regime



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q137b.

Syria's Assad Widely Unpopular

	Favorable	Unfavorable	DK
	%	%	%
Israel	7	91	2
Jordan	8	90	2
Palest. ter.	8	87	4
Tunisia	9	81	10
Egypt	11	81	8
Turkey	8	72	20
Lebanon	40	59	1
<i>Christian</i>	36	63	1
<i>Shia</i>	91	8	1
<i>Sunni</i>	7	92	1

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q40d.

Survey Methods

About the 2013 Spring Pew Global Attitudes Survey

Results for the survey are based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see below.

The descriptions 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:	Britain
Sample design:	Random Digit Dial (RDD) probability sample of landline and cell phone households
Mode:	Telephone adults 18 plus
Languages:	English
Fieldwork dates:	March 4 – March 27, 2013
Sample size:	1,012
Margin of Error:	±3.3 percentage points
Representative:	Telephone households (roughly 98% of all British households)

Country:	Egypt
Sample design:	Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by governorates and urbanity
Mode:	Face-to-face adults 18 plus
Languages:	Arabic
Fieldwork dates:	March 3 – March 23, 2013
Sample size:	1,000
Margin of Error:	±4.3 percentage points
Representative:	Adult population (excluding Frontier governorates, or about 2% of the population)

Country: **France**
Sample design: Random Digit Dial (RDD) sample of landline and cell phone-only households with quotas for gender, age and occupation and stratified by region and urbanity
Mode: Telephone adults 18 plus
Languages: French
Fieldwork dates: March 4 – March 16, 2013
Sample size: 1,004
Margin of Error: ±3.6 percentage points
Representative: Telephone households (roughly 99% of all French households)

Country: **Germany**
Sample design: Random Digit Dial (RL(2)D) probability sample of landline and cell phone households
Mode: Telephone adults 18 plus
Languages: German
Fieldwork dates: March 4 – March 18, 2013
Sample size: 1,025
Margin of Error: ±4.1 percentage points
Representative: Telephone households (roughly 99% of all German households)

Country: **Israel**
Sample design: Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by Israel's six districts, urbanity, and socioeconomic status, with an oversample of Arabs
Mode: Face-to-face adults 18 plus
Languages: Hebrew, Arabic
Fieldwork dates: March 29 – April 4, 2013
Sample size: 922 (504 Jews, 406 Arabs, 12 others)
Margin of Error: ±4.6 percentage points
Representative: Adult population

Country: **Jordan**
Sample design: Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by Jordan's 12 governorates and urbanity
Mode: Face-to-face adults 18 plus
Languages: Arabic
Fieldwork dates: March 4 – March 23, 2013
Sample size: 1,000
Margin of Error: ±4.5 percentage points
Representative: Adult population

Country: **Lebanon**
Sample design: Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by Lebanon's seven regions and urbanity
Mode: Face-to-face adults 18 plus
Languages: Arabic
Fieldwork dates: March 4 – March 22, 2013
Sample size: 1,000
Margin of Error: ±4.0 percentage points
Representative: Adult population (excluding a small area in Beirut controlled by a militia group and a few villages in the south of Lebanon, which border Israel and are inaccessible to outsiders)

Country: **Palestinian territories**
Sample design: Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by region and urban/rural/refugee camp population
Mode: Face-to-face adults 18 plus
Languages: Arabic
Fieldwork dates: March 29 – April 7, 2013
Sample size: 810
Margin of Error: ±4.4 percentage points
Representative: Adult population (excluding Bedouins who regularly change residence and some communities near Israeli settlements where military restrictions make access difficult, or roughly 5% of the population)

Country: **Russia**
Sample design: Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by Russia's eight regions plus Moscow and St. Petersburg and urbanity
Mode: Face-to-face adults 18 plus
Languages: Russian
Fieldwork dates: March 5 – March 21, 2013
Sample size: 996
Margin of Error: ±3.6 percentage points
Representative: Adult population (excluding High North regions, the Chechen Republic, and the Ingush Republic, or about 3% of the population)

Country: **Tunisia**
Sample design: Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by governorate and urbanity
Mode: Face-to-face adults 18 plus
Languages: Tunisian Arabic
Fieldwork dates: March 4 – March 19, 2013
Sample size: 1,000
Margin of Error: ±4.0 percentage points
Representative: Adult population

Country: **Turkey**
Sample design: Multi-stage cluster sample stratified by the 26 regions (based on geographical location and level of development (NUTS 2)) and urbanity
Mode: Face-to-face adults 18 plus
Languages: Turkish
Fieldwork dates: March 5 – March 24, 2013
Sample size: 1,000
Margin of Error: ±7.7 percentage points
Representative: Adult population

Country:	United States
Sample design:	Random Digit Dial (RDD) probability sample of landline and cell phone households stratified by county
Mode:	Telephone adults 18 plus
Languages:	English, Spanish
Fieldwork dates:	March 4 – March 18, 2013
Sample size:	1,002
Margin of Error:	±3.5 percentage points
Representative:	Telephone households with English or Spanish speakers (about 97% of U.S. households)

**Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project
2013 Spring Survey Topline Results
May 1, 2013 Release**

Methodological notes:

- Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see Survey Methods section.
- Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. The topline “total” columns show 100%, because they are based on unrounded numbers.
- Not all questions included in the Spring 2013 survey are presented in this topline. Omitted questions have either been previously released or will be released in future reports.

		Q40d Now I'd like to ask your views about some additional political leaders. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of: d. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad					
		Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	DK/Refused	Total
Turkey	Spring, 2013	3	5	24	48	20	100
	Spring, 2012	2	8	19	54	16	100
Egypt	Spring, 2013	3	8	20	61	8	100
	Spring, 2012	5	6	36	48	5	100
Jordan	Spring, 2013	3	5	22	68	2	100
	Spring, 2012	2	6	23	67	2	100
Lebanon	Spring, 2013	29	11	9	50	1	100
	Spring, 2012	28	14	13	46	0	100
Palest. ter.	Spring, 2013	1	7	21	66	4	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2013	4	5	6	75	10	100
	Spring, 2012	3	5	8	76	9	100
Israel	Spring, 2013	1	6	27	64	2	100

		Q137 Do you support or oppose (survey country) sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria?			
		Support	Oppose	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2013	25	64	11	100
Britain	Spring, 2013	30	57	14	100
France	Spring, 2013	31	69	1	100
Germany	Spring, 2013	16	82	3	100
Turkey	Spring, 2013	25	65	9	100

		Q137b Do you support or oppose Russia's support of the Syrian government?			
		Support	Oppose	DK/Refused	Total
Russia	Spring, 2013	27	22	52	100

		Q138 Do you support or oppose Western countries sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria?			
		Support	Oppose	DK/Refused	Total
Turkey	Spring, 2013	22	68	10	100
Egypt	Spring, 2013	33	59	7	100
Jordan	Spring, 2013	53	44	3	100
Lebanon	Spring, 2013	18	80	2	100
Palest. ter.	Spring, 2013	31	63	6	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2013	32	60	9	100

		Q139 Do you support or oppose Arab countries sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria?			
		Support	Oppose	DK/Refused	Total
Turkey	Spring, 2013	24	66	10	100
Egypt	Spring, 2013	38	57	5	100
Jordan	Spring, 2013	65	30	5	100
Lebanon	Spring, 2013	37	60	4	100
Palest. ter.	Spring, 2013	42	53	6	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2013	37	55	9	100

		Q140 To what extent are you concerned that the violence in Syria will spread to neighboring countries – very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?					
		Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned	DK/Refused	Total
Turkey	Spring, 2013	20	35	27	10	9	100
Egypt	Spring, 2013	37	40	17	5	2	100
Jordan	Spring, 2013	36	43	16	5	1	100
Lebanon	Spring, 2013	60	30	10	1	0	100
Palest. ter.	Spring, 2013	38	36	16	7	2	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2013	83	6	4	5	2	100
Israel	Spring, 2013	35	43	14	8	1	100

		Q141 And thinking specifically about our country, to what extent are you concerned that the violence in Syria will spread to (survey country) – very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?					
		Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned	DK/Refused	Total
Turkey	Spring, 2013	25	37	19	10	8	100
Jordan	Spring, 2013	46	34	8	9	2	100
Lebanon	Spring, 2013	68	27	5	0	0	100