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More than 1/3 of Americans Expect Peace and Security in America to Worsen, According to Inaugural Global Peace Perceptions Poll

*- 37% feel they are less able to influence political decisions compared to five years ago
- 'Cyber-attacks' and 'interference by a foreign country' were among America's lowest security concerns*

New York, 19 September 2018 – Over a third of Americans are pessimistic about prospects for peace and security in their country, according to a global survey commissioned by International Alert and the British Council.

The Peace Perceptions Poll 2018, conducted in 15 countries in partnership with global polling agency RIWI, found that:

- The United States was more negative about future peace and security than those living in conflict areas such as Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). 36% of respondents said the level of peace and security in the US would worsen over the next five years. Women felt more uncertain than men and were more likely to think peace and security would get worse in the US over the next 5 years.
- 26% of US respondents did not think that their country is a peaceful and secure place to live in.
- US respondents perceived one of the lowest levels of political influence, with 37% saying they are less able to influence the political decisions that affect them compared to five years ago.
- Despite public debate around Russian interference, 'cyber-attacks' and 'interference by a foreign country' were among America's lowest security concerns.
- 15% of respondents ranked 'violence or harassment by state authorities' as their top concern, placing the US among top five countries with highest concerns about state violence.
- Respondents perceived some of the highest levels of economic exclusion, with 33% saying they are 'not at all' or 'not really' able to improve their economic situation.
- When asked what their government could spend on to promote peace internationally, 29% of respondents said it should prioritize dealing with reasons why people fight, while 22% said it should focus on 'teaching peace, tolerance and conflict resolution in schools'. Military interventions were the least popular option here, with only 10% selecting it.
- A third of Americans said 'dealing with reasons why people fight in the first place' was the most effective way of creating long-term peace. A quarter believed this was best done through 'supporting societies and communities to resolve conflict peacefully'.

The online poll asked more than 110,000 people about their perceptions of peace and conflict. It included Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Hungary, India, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Retired US Ambassador Carey Cavanaugh, now Chair of the Board of Trustees of International Alert, said: "If we hope to effectively address violence around the world, we must have a better understanding about how people experience and respond to conflict and what they believe could best be done to reduce it.

“This inaugural effort does exactly that. It starts the long process of asking questions that need to be asked and assembling the data that can bring these grassroots perspectives to the attention of politicians and policy-makers, thereby increasing their ability to craft strategies that may truly increase prospects for peace,” he added.

Harriet Lamb, CEO of International Alert, said: “At a time when conflict is on the rise, the poll shows strong popular support for peacebuilding approaches, which focus on dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place.

“The public clearly understand what is needed to build peace. People have crisis fatigue – they want long-term solutions. Politicians should focus on how to break the cycle of violence by investing more in peacebuilding.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

- “Peace Perceptions Poll 2018” will be launched in London on 19 September 2018 and in New York on 21 September 2018, to mark the International Day of Peace.
- Press pack, containing infographics and visuals, available here: <https://bit.ly/2CVkHKn>
- More information available on the poll’s website: <https://www.international-alert.org/peacepoll/>
- Interviewees available
- For media inquiries, to arrange interviews, to attend the launch events, to get infographics, or an embargoed copy of the report, contact: Taraneh Dadar (TDadar@international-alert.org/M: +44(0)7775 756288/T: +44(0)207 627 6880) or Nicola Norton (Nicola.norton@britishcouncil.org /M: +44 (0)7471 142 442).

About International Alert:

International Alert is a leading peacebuilding organisation that works with people directly affected by conflict to build lasting peace. Founded in 1986, International Alert works in over 25 countries and territories. international-alert.org

About British Council:

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. britishcouncil.org

About RIWI:

RIWI is a global survey technology, global messaging, and global predictive analytics firm. RIWI partners with those who need adaptive insights and large sets of privacy-compliant opinion data, behavioural data, and population trends data. RIWI offers predictive and applied analytics, message testing, and risk monitoring anywhere around the world. riwi.com