UK most pessimistic about prospects for peace in global poll

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UK most pessimistic about prospects for peace in global poll

London, 19 September 2018 – The UK has emerged as the most pessimistic country regarding its future peace prospects in a survey of 15 countries commissioned by the British Council and International Alert.

The Peace Perceptions Poll 2018, conducted in partnership with global polling agency RIWI, found that people in the UK seem more negative about their country's future peace and security than those living in conflict zones, including Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The poll asked more than 110,000 people about their perceptions of peace and conflict. The online survey 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, with targeted polling additionally undertaken in Northern Ireland.

The UK was the most worried about terrorism of all the countries surveyed. More than a quarter of Britons do not feel that the UK is a 'peaceful and secure place to live in'. 40% of UK respondents felt prospects for peace and security will get worse in the next five years.

The report found people in the UK:

- are most concerned about terrorism and criminal violence.
- had some of the highest levels of perceptions of political exclusion: 41% of respondents felt less able to influence the political decisions affecting them, compared to five years ago. They blamed this on a lack of trustworthy information and corruption in politics.
- perceived some of the lowest levels of access to economic opportunities, with 40% saying they felt unable to improve their or their family's economic situation.

Harriet Lamb, CEO of International Alert said: "The poll's findings point to the uncertainties facing the British public. The UK has to ensure that people have more equal access to economic opportunities and feel able to engage politically."

Professor Jo Beall, Director Education and Society, British Council said: "This poll seeks to understand people's experience of conflict, and their aspirations for peace – whether in the UK or elsewhere in the world. We believe these findings will be useful for leaders and policy-makers facing up to the challenges of peacebuilding, wherever they are in the world."

When asked about the most effective ways to build long-term peace internationally, a third of British respondents prioritised 'dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place', followed by a fifth who emphasised 'supporting societies and communities to resolve conflict peacefully'.

When asked how the UK government should promote peace: 32% said it should 'deal with the reasons why people fight in the first place', followed by 25% who said it should 'teach peace, tolerance and conflict resolution in schools'. They chose these over military interventions, which was amongst the least selected options.

Harriet Lamb, CEO of International Alert added: "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."

Key Global Findings:

- Those living in more peaceful countries tended to be more pessimistic about future prospects for peace. The UK, Brazil, the US and Hungary had the largest numbers thinking peace and security would get worse over the next five years.
- 'Lack of jobs and ability to provide for one's family' was widely seen as the top reason that would drive people to violent action. This was followed by a 'sense of injustice' and a need to 'improve one's social status'.
- Globally, terrorism and criminal violence were people's top security concerns.
- 83% of global respondents said having political influence was fundamental for peace and security, with 90% saying the same about access to economic opportunities.
- Globally, people said the two most important means of achieving long-term peace were establishing why conflicts start and supporting societies to deal with conflict peacefully.
- When asked where governments should spend more to promote peace, 'dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place' ranked first in 10 of the 15 countries, followed by 'teaching peace, tolerance and conflict resolution in schools'.
- The DRC and South Africa perceived the highest levels of political exclusion, with 50% and 44% of the population respectively saying they are less able to influence the political decisions that affect them, compared to 5 years ago. This was followed by the UK (41%), Hungary (40%) and the US (37%).
- Across the majority of countries polled, corruption in politics was cited as the number one reason why people felt they had less political influence. This was most strongly felt in South Africa, Ukraine and Nigeria.
- Those who thought they had more political influence attributed it extensively to social media and technology, which ranked top with 28% choosing it.
- Those who felt most economically excluded generally lived in middle- to high-income countries, including Hungary, Ukraine, the UK, Lebanon, the US and South Africa. This shows that the perception of economic exclusion is as important as the reality.

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 on the poll 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

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