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This poll is part of PSR series of regular polls.

This poll has been conducted in cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Ramallah



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung

For further information,
please contact
Dr. Khalil Shikaki or Walid
Ladadweh
at the Palestinian Center for
Policy and Survey Research

Ramallah, Palestine
Telephone 02 296 4933
Fax 02 296 4934

e-mail: pcpsr@pcpsr.org
<http://www.pcpsr.org>

PRESS RELEASE

Public Opinion Poll No (65)

An overwhelming majority of Palestinians is worried about the future of liberties in Palestine, two-thirds demand the resignation of President Abbas, and half of the public views the Palestinian Authority as a burden on the Palestinian people; but the confrontations at the gates of al Haram al Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) increase confidence in popular non-violent resistance at a time when about three quarters believe that the Trump Administration is not serious about Palestinian-Israeli peace

14-16 September 2017

These are the results of the latest poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between 14-16 September 2017. The popular confrontations with the Israeli police in Jerusalem in protest over the installment of metal detectors at the entrance to al Haram al Sharif gates were the most important event during the period in question. During the confrontations, President Abbas announced the suspension of contacts with the Israeli side, including security coordination. Internally, the split and disunity characterized the Palestinian political scene, except during the last two days of data collection when delegates from Hamas and Fatah were called to Cairo for Egyptian sponsored talks. During this period, President Abbas issued a decree in the form of a Cybercrime Law that was severely criticized by human rights organizations, media outlets, and other civil society organizations. Several journalists were arrested in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. *It should be pointed out that data collection was completed just one day before Hamas announced the dissolution of its "Administrative Committee" that has served until then as the de facto government in the Gaza Strip.* This press release addresses these issues and covers other matters such as Palestinian elections, general conditions in the Palestinian territories, and the peace process. Total size of the sample is 1270 adults interviewed face to face in 127 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is 3%.

For further details, contact PSR director, Dr. Khalil Shikaki, or Walid Ladadweh at tel. 02-296 4933 or email pcpsr@pcpsr.org.

Main Findings:

Findings of the third quarter of 2017 show that an overwhelming majority of the Palestinian public is worried about the future of liberties in Palestine. This prevailing perception seems to be driven by the recent increase in the incidents in which journalists and activists have been arrested, by the recently announced presidential decree enacting a cybercrime law, and by the government proposed amendments to the Law of the Judiciary. A large majority believes that Palestinians cannot criticize the PA without fear. In fact, half of the public believes that the PA has now become a burden on the Palestinian people.

This worry about the future of liberties, along with the concerns about the steps taken by the PA against the Gaza Strip, might be responsible for the increase in the demand for the resignation of President Abbas and the decline in his popularity compared to that of Hamas' presidential candidate, Ismael Haniyeh. Indeed, if presidential elections are held today, Haniyeh would win against Abbas. Findings also indicate a decline in support for Fatah, particularly in the Gaza Strip where Hamas is more popular. In the West Bank however, Fatah remains more popular than Hamas.

Perhaps the most alarming result of this poll is the fundamental shift in the attitudes of Gazans. This shift was first noticed early this year but accelerated during the past nine months. It is probable that the change came as a response to the punitive steps taken by President Abbas against the Gaza Strip. The split that rested essentially on the power struggle between two large political parties in the entire Palestinian territories is in the process of transformation to one between West Bankers and Gazans, a split that did not exist during the first nine years of Hamas' violent takeover of the Gaza Strip. Gazans are moving away from Fatah and the Palestinian leadership in an unprecedented way and without a parallel or similar process among West Bankers. President Abbas might have hoped that the sanctions he imposed on the Gaza Strip would force Gazans to reject Hamas and its policies forcing Hamas to dismantle its "Administrative Committee" that has served as a *de facto* government for the Gaza Strip. Despite the limited decline in Hamas' popularity in this poll, it is plainly clear that Gazans are directing their greatest anger at Abbas and Fatah, rather than Hamas. Today, 80% of Gazans want Abbas' resignation, satisfaction with the performance of the president is about 20%, and it is certain that he would lose any presidential elections in the Gaza Strip to Hamas' Ismael Haniyeh. Moreover, Fatah is fast losing its popularity in the Gaza Strip, standing at 28% today compared to 40% only nine months ago. Those who still support Fatah in the Gaza Strip are shifting loyalty to Mohammad Dahlan whose popularity among Gazans has more than doubled during the past nine months, from 9% to 23% today, while his popularity among West Bankers did not change, remaining hardly at 1%.

Despite the fact that positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip remains very low, the poll found some positive indicators: the desire to migrate has declined somewhat and the perception of personal and family safety and security has increased. It is also interesting to note the large increase in support for the Hamas-Dahlan deal and the optimism of the majority of Gazans who believe that the deal will be successfully implemented.

It is also worth noting the increase in public confidence in popular non-violent resistance in the aftermath of the success in removing the metal detectors installed by the Israeli police in front of the gates of al Haram al Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary). Support for this model of resistance now reaches two thirds. It should be noted however that the findings also show a rise in support for violence despite the fact that a majority remains opposed to it. One reason for the rise in support for violent and non-violent resistance might be the lack of trust in diplomacy. Findings show that about three quarters believe that the Trump Administration is not serious about Palestinian-Israeli peace making and an even higher percentage believes that the Administration is not an honest broker and that it is biased in favor of Israel.

(1) Presidential and parliamentary elections:

- 67% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 27% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 62% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 60% in the West Bank and 80% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago demand for Abbas resignation stood at 55% in the West Bank and 75% in the Gaza Strip.
- If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 35% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 21% prefer Ismail Haniyeh; Mohammad Dahlan 9% (1% in the West Bank and 23% in the Gaza Strip); Mustapha Barghouti (5%); and Khalid Mishal and Rami al Hamdallah (4% each).
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 31% and dissatisfaction at 65%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 38% in the West Bank and 21% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, satisfaction with Abbas stood at 34% (39% in the West Bank and 24% in the Gaza Strip).
- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmoud Abbas, the former would receive 50% and the latter 42% of the vote (compared to 45% each three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 36% of the vote (compared to 39% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives 62% (compared to 55% three months ago). In the West Bank Abbas receives 45% (compared to 50% three months ago) and Haniyeh 42% (compared to 40% three months ago).
- If presidential elections were between three: Mahmud Abbas, Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Abbas would receive 20%, Barghouti 43% and Haniyeh 33%. If presidential elections were between two: Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti receives 59% and Haniyeh 36%.

- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 63% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 29% say they would vote for Hamas and 36% say they would vote for Fatah, 10% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 25% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 29% and Fatah at 39%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 31% (compared to 35% three months ago) and for Fatah at 28% (compared to 36% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 28% (compared to 24% three months ago) and Fatah at 42% (compared to 40% three months ago).

(2) Domestic conditions:

- Half of the public is not aware of the debate among the Palestinians surrounding the cybercrime law. Among those who are aware of the debate, 58% express the view that the law imposes restrictions on liberties and 39% believe it does not.
- Similarly, 60% are not aware of the debate surrounding the proposed amendments to the Law of the Judiciary. Among those who are aware of the debate, 55% express the view that the proposed amendments pose a threat to the independence of the judiciary and 38% think the amendments will improve the performance of the judiciary.
- In light of the increase in the incidents of the detention of journalist and activists in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 80% are worried about the future of liberties in Palestine. The level of worry is higher in the West Bank, standing at 85%, than in the Gaza Strip, standing at 71%; 17% are not worried.
- 81% believe that the PA does not have the right to arrest activists, such as Issa Amro from Hebron, just because they criticize the behavior of the PA; 14% believe the PA has the right to arrest its critics.
- Only 38% of the Palestinian public say people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear; 59% of the public say that people cannot criticize the PA without fear.
- Half of the public (50%) view the Palestinian Authority as a burden on the Palestinians while 44% view it as an asset.
- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 6% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 21%.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 49%. In the West Bank perception of safety and security stands at 50%. Three months ago, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stood at 43% and in the West Bank at 53%.
- Findings show that the percentage of Gazans who say they seek to immigrate to other countries stands at 43%; in the West Bank, the percentage stands at 22%. Three months ago, 47% of Gazans and 23% of West Bankers indicated that they seek to immigrate.
- In light of the recent incident in which an armed man, who was attempting to cross the Rafah border with Egypt, exploded a bomb that killed him and a Hamas policeman, 73% indicate that they are worried about the spread of Daesh (ISIS) among the youth in the Gaza Strip and 24% are not worried. Worry is higher in the Gaza Strip (78%) than in the West Bank (70%).
- We asked the public about its viewership habits in the last two months. Findings indicate that Al Jazeera TV viewership remains the highest, standing at 20%, followed by Maan TV (14%), al Aqsa TV (13%), Palestine TV (12%), Filasteen al Youm/Palestine Today (11%), Al Arabiya (6%) al Quds TV (4%), and al Mayadeen (3%).
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 77%.
- 73% support and 23% oppose Abbas' decision to suspend contacts and security coordination with Israel but two thirds (66%) believe that the PA and its security services did not implement that decision.

(3) Reconciliation, the reconciliation government, and the Hamas-Dahlan agreement:

- Optimism about the success of reconciliation and the end of the split stands today at 31% and pessimism at 61%. Three months ago optimism stood at 27% and pessimism at 64%.
- 23% say they are satisfied and 64% say they are dissatisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government. In the Gaza Strip, dissatisfaction stands at 77% and in the West Bank at 56%.

- Belief that Hamas was responsible for hindering the functioning of the reconciliation government does not exceed 15% (9% in the West Bank and 23% in the Gaza Strip) while 33% believe that the PA and president Abbas were to blame for that and 15% blame the prime minister of the reconciliation government.
- 47% believe that the Hamas-Dahlan agreement will fail and 43% think it will succeed. In the Gaza Strip, 57% think it will succeed and 39% think it will fail.
- 56% support the Hamas-Dahlan agreement and 35% oppose it. In the Gaza Strip, support for the agreement stands at 73% and opposition at 25%. Three months ago, only 40% supported the agreement and 48% opposed it and support for it in the Gaza Strip stood at 61%.

(4) Confrontations at the gates of al Haram al Sharif

- An overwhelming majority of 73% believe that the Jerusalem residents who took part in the confrontations that made it possible to force Israel to uninstall the metal detectors played the greatest role in the success of the confrontations. Only 10% attribute the success to the Waqf men; 7% to King Abdullah; 6% to president Abbas, and 1% to King Salman of Saudi Arabia.
- 63% believe that the approach adopted in the confrontations at the gates of al Haram al Sharif provide a successful model to emulate in confrontations with the Israeli occupation; 34% think the model is not effective.

(5) Convening the Palestinian National Council

- 60% condition the convening of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) to the prior election of its members while 25% want to convene the meeting with the current membership.
- Furthermore, 61% condition the convening of the PNC to the participation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad while 28% think it can be convened without them.
- 50% support holding the meeting of the PNC in Ramallah while 35% support holding it in Cairo or Amman.

(6) The peace process:

- 74% believe the US Administration under Donald Trump is not serious in its efforts to reach a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement; 22% think it is serious.
- 55% believe that if the Trump Administration invited the Palestinian leadership to return to negotiations with Israel, it should not accept the invitation; 41% think it should accept it.
- If negotiations are resumed under US sponsorship, the Trump Administration will be biased in favor of Israel according to 83% of the public; 10% think it will be an honest broker and 2% think it will be biased in favor of the Palestinian side.
- 52% support and 47% oppose the two-state solution, the state of Palestine next to the state of Israel. Support in the Gaza Strip stands at 56% and in the West Bank at 49%.
- But 57% think the two-state solution is no longer viable or practical due to settlement expansion while 40% think it remains feasible.
- Similarly, 70% think the chances for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel in the next five years are slim to non-existent and 28% think the chances are medium or high.
- 35% think that the most effective means of creating a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel is armed action, 33% think negotiation is the most effective, and 26% think popular non-violent resistance is the most effective.
- In the absence of peace negotiations, 71% support joining more international organizations, 67% support non-violent popular resistance, 45% support a return to an armed intifada, and 47% support the dissolution of the Palestinian Authority. Three months ago, support for a return to an armed intifada stood at 39% and 54% supported popular non-violent resistance.
- Support for the one-state solution stands at 31% while 67% are opposed to this solution.
- Furthermore, a majority of 58% believes that Israel's long term aspiration is to annex the lands occupied in 1967 and expel their population and 25% believe that Israel wants to annex the West Bank while denying the Palestinians their rights. 16% believe that Israel's long term aspiration is to insure its security and withdraw from all or most of the territories occupied in 1967.

- The percentage of those who are worried that they would be hurt by Israel or that their land would be confiscated or homes demolished stands at 78%.
- 77% say the Arab World is too preoccupied with its own concerns, internal conflicts, and the conflict with Iran and that Palestine is no longer the Arab's principal or primary issue or cause. Only 22% think Palestine remains the Arab's principle cause.
- 64% believe that there is an Arab Sunni alliance with Israel against Iran despite the continued Israeli occupation of Arab land while 25% believe that the Arabs would not ally themselves with Israel until it ends its occupation and allows the creation of a Palestinian state.

(7) Most vital Palestinian goals and the main problems confronting Palestinians today:

- 40% believe that the *first* most vital Palestinian goal should be to end Israeli occupation in the areas occupied in 1967 and build a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital. By contrast, 33% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 15% believe that it should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings, and 12% believe that the first and most vital goal should be to establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians.
- The most serious problem confronting Palestinian society today is poverty and unemployment in the eyes of 26% of the public while 25% believe it is the spread of corruption in public institutions; 23% say it is the continuation of occupation and settlement activities; 20% say it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings; and 3% say it is the absence of national unity.