

PRESS RELEASE

Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No. 25

While Three Quarters of the Palestinians Reject Hamas's Military Action in the Gaza Strip and While Fateh and President Mahmud Abbas Gain Popular Support as a Result of Hamas's Step, and While a Majority Supports the Presidential Decree Regarding Election Law and Supports Early Elections, 40% Want the Government of Ismail Haniyeh to Stay in Power and Half of Gazans Feel They and Their Families are Secure and Safe in Their Homes

6-8 September 2007

These are the results of the latest poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during September 6-8, 2007. Total size of the sample is 1270 adults interviewed face to face in 127 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is 3%. This poll release covers three issues: Hamas's military action in the Gaza Strip, elections and balance of power, and the peace process. 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 show that only one fifth of the Palestinians supports Hamas's military takeover of the Gaza Strip and that Fateh and PA President Mahmud Abbas have benefited from Hamas's step as their popularity has increased significantly. Moreover, a majority supports the recently released presidential decree regarding election law and supports holding early elections. Findings show that a larger percentage of the public blames Hamas rather than Fateh for the problems confronting the Gaza Strip such as the closure of the Rafah Crossing and the electricity cutoff. A large percentage accepts the position of the PA president regarding resumption of dialogue with Hamas while a much smaller percentage supports the position of Hamas regarding dialogue. Nonetheless, the drop in Hamas's popularity is not big; indeed, 40% of the public wants the government of Ismail Haniyeh to stay in office and half of the Gazans say their security and personal safety and that of their families are now assured.

Hamas's Military Takeover of the Gaza Strip

- 22% support and 73% oppose Hamas's military takeover of the Gaza Strip. Support for Hamas's military action reaches 31% in the Gaza Strip compared to 17% in the West Bank.
- 40% agree and 52% disagree that Haniyeh's government should stay in office despite dismissal by the president. 32% evaluate the performance of the Haniyeh government as good or very good and 43% think it is bad or very bad.
- By contrast, 49% agree and 44% disagree that the government of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad should stay in office. Positive evaluation of the Fayyad government reaches 44% and negative evaluation 28%.
- 30% view the Haniyeh government as the legitimate PA government while 38% view the Fayyad government as the legitimate one and 22% believe both governments are illegitimate. Belief in the legitimacy of Haniyeh's government increases in the Gaza Strip (35%) compared to the West Bank (27%) and belief in the legitimacy of the Fayyad government is equal in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- In the battle over hearts and minds in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the largest percentage (45%) does not trust the media of Hamas/Haniyeh or Fateh/Fayyad and only 19% trust the media of Hamas/Haniyeh while 27% trust the media of Fateh/Fayyad. Trust in Hamas/Haniyeh's media increases in the Gaza Strip (27%) compared to the West Bank (15%). Similarly, trust in Fateh/Fayyad media increases in the Gaza Strip (30%) compared to the West Bank (25%). In the West Bank, 50% say they do not trust either media.

- The party most responsible for the closure of the Rafah Crossing is Israel in the eyes of 41% of the Palestinians, Hamas in the eyes of 26%, Fateh in the eyes of 15%, and Egypt in the eyes of 2%. Blaming Hamas for the closure of the Rafah Crossing increases in the Gaza Strip (33%) compared to the West Bank (22%). Similarly, blaming Fateh increases in the Gaza Strip (19%) compared to the West Bank (12%).
- The largest percentage (43%) blames Israel for the recent electricity cutoff in the Gaza Strip while 23% blame Hamas, 18% blame Abbas/Salam Fayyad, and 10% blame the European Union. Blaming Hamas and Fateh increases in the Gaza Strip (29% and 22% respectively) while blaming Israel increases in the West Bank (49%) compared to the Gaza Strip (32%).
- The largest percentage (33%) believes that the top priority for the Fayyad government should be the enforcement of law and order and ending lawlessness followed by conducting political reforms and fighting corruption (22%), and ending international sanctions and return to the peace process (18% each).
- The largest percentage (29%) expects the unification of the two authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip within months and 19% expect it within a year or two. On the other hand, 20% believe unification will not take place in the next two years and 22% believe that the separation will become permanent. In other words, 48% expect unification within the next two years and 42% do not expect unification in the future or near future. Optimism about unification within the next two years increases in the Gaza Strip (59%) compared to the West Bank (42%).
- To end the current crisis between Fateh and Hamas, 27% accept Hamas's view which calls for unconditional dialogue with President Abbas based on the existing status quo today and 46% accept Abbas's and Fateh's view which calls for a dialogue but only after Hamas transfers control over the security headquarters to its rightful owners and return to the status quo ante. Support for Hamas's position increases in the Gaza Strip (33%) compared to the West Bank (24%) and support for Abbas/Fateh's position increases also in the Gaza Strip (50%) compared to the West Bank (44%). About one quarter (24%) opposes both views.
- Among all respondents in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, only 8% evaluate the situation in the Gaza Strip as good or very good while 27% describe conditions in the West Bank as good or very good.
- West Bank-Gaza Strip public expectations regarding future conditions in the Gaza Strip tend to be pessimistic while expectations regarding future conditions in the West Bank tend to show some optimism. For example, while only 21% expect economic conditions to improve in the Gaza Strip, 56% expect these conditions to improve in the West Bank. Moreover, while only 28% expect conditions of democracy, freedom of speech and press will improve in the Gaza Strip, 47% expect these conditions to improve in the West Bank. In general, residents of the Gaza Strip tend to show more optimism regarding conditions in their area as well as in the West Bank while residents of the West Bank tend to show less optimism regarding conditions in both areas.
- 41% say they feel their security and personal safety and those of their family are assured today and 59% say they are not assured. Feelings of security and safety increases in the Gaza Strip (49%) compared to the West Bank (35%). The results regarding security and safety reflect significant increase compared to the situation in mid June when it reached 41% in the Gaza Strip and 18% in the West Bank.
- Percentage of those wishing to immigrate to other countries continues to increase from 28% last June to 32% in this poll. The percentage is higher in the Gaza Strip (37%) compared to West Bank (29%).

Presidential Decree on Elections, Early Elections, and Balance of Power:

- 58% support and 34% oppose the most recent presidential decree regarding the amendment to the electoral system basing it on proportional representation with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip becoming one electoral district and with the distribution of seats reflecting the percentage of popular vote received in the whole country.
- Moreover, 62% support and 32% oppose eligibility conditions imposed by the decree on candidate lists wishing to participate in elections including their commitments to the PLO, the Declaration of

Independence, and the Basic Law. A similar percentage (61%) accepts and 32% oppose the application of this eligibility condition on candidates for the presidential elections.

- Less than two years after the last legislative elections, 32% say that the lists and candidates they voted for in the last elections no longer represent them and 63% say they still represent them.
- Support for early elections reaches 62% and opposition 33%. Support increases in the Gaza Strip (65%) compared to the West Bank (60%).
- Popularity of Hamas drops to 31% losing two percentage points compared to its popularity in mid June and six percentage points compared to mid March. The popularity of Fateh increases from 43% three months ago to 48% in this poll. It is noticeable that this is the first time since the January 2006 elections, when it won 42% of the vote, that Fateh's popularity has significantly increased. The popularity of all the third parties combined reaches 11%, and 10% remain undecided. Hamas's and Fateh's popularity increases in the Gaza Strip (36% and 51% respectively) and decreases in the West Bank (28% and 47% respectively).
- If new presidential elections took place today and the only two candidates were Mahmud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the percentage of non participation would reach 38%. From among those willing to participate, 59% say they will vote for Abbas, 36% say they will vote for Haniyeh, and 5% remain undecided. If the competition is between Marwan Barghouti and Haniyeh, nonparticipation would drop to 29% and from among those willing to participate, 63% say they will vote for Barghouti, 32% say they will vote for Haniyeh, and 5% remain undecided. These results indicate a significant increase in the percentage of those voting for Abbas compared to the situation in mid June when it reached 49% compared to 42% for Haniyeh. Moreover, vote for Barghouti increases in this poll compared to where it was last June when it stood at 59% compared to 35% for Haniyeh.
- Satisfaction with the performance of Mahmud Abbas increases from 36% last June to 45% in this poll.

Peace Process

- Only one quarter (26%) of the public expects the November peace conference called for by the US to succeed and 67% expect it to fail in making progress in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.
- 57% agree and 41% disagree with the proposed two-state solution whereby Palestinians recognize Israel as the state for the Jewish people and Israelis recognize Palestine as the state for the Palestinian people after the establishment of a Palestinian state and the solution of all the issues of the conflict.
- Similarly, 58% support and 37% oppose conducting negotiations with the aim of establishing a Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and 80% to 90% of the West Bank to be followed by negotiations between the state of Palestine and the state of Israel on the permanent issues such as the permanent borders, holy places and refugees.
- But only 46% would support and 48% would oppose a permanent settlement of the borders of the Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with the exception of settlements in about 5% of the West Bank where a swap would take place with Palestinians receiving an equal amount of territories from Israel proper. Support for this settlement increases in the Gaza Strip (54%) compared to the West Bank (42%).

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