

PRESS RELEASE

JOINT PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION POLL

- **Stable majorities of the Israeli and Palestinians publics support the Quartet's roadmap.**
- **Abu Mazin's nomination as Prime Minister increases optimism about return to negotiations.**

The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in Ramallah and the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, have conducted a joint survey of Palestinian and Israeli public opinion.

This joint poll is the fifth in an ongoing research project into the opinions of the two publics. The first poll was conducted in July 2000 at the wake of the Camp David summit. The current poll was designed to examine attitudes toward the appointment of Abu Mazin as a prime minister, issues of political reform, the war in Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and reconciliation.

The poll was planned and supervised by Dr. Yaacov Shamir, professor of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University and Dr. Khalil Shikaki, professor of Political Science and director of PSR. The two surveys included both identical questions as well as specific questions for each public. A representative sample of 1315 Palestinians in 120 locations in the West Bank Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem was interviewed face-to-face with a sampling error of 3%. The interviews were conducted between April 3- 7. The Israeli data are based on telephone interviews with two representative samples of 502 Israeli Jews and 501 Israeli Arabs. The Israeli sample was properly weighted according to the proportion of the respective sectors to produce the overall Israeli estimates (sampling error of 3.9%). The interviews were conducted in Hebrew, Arabic and Russian between April 3 – 11.

The following summary highlights the findings of the joint poll. For further details on the Palestinian survey, contact Dr. Khalil Shikaki at Tel 02-2964933 or email kshikaki@pcpsr.org. On the Israeli survey, contact Dr. Yaacov Shamir at Tel. 03-6419429 or email jshamir@mscc.huji.ac.il.

Summary of Results

1) The Peace Process:

- Palestinian and Israeli attitudes toward the Quartet's roadmap remain highly stable since last November and seem not to have been affected by the war in Iraq. 55% of the Palestinians and 61% of the Israelis support it. 39% percent of the Palestinians and 35% of the Israelis oppose it. Last November, 54% of the Palestinians and 59% of the Israelis supported and 42% and 38% respectively opposed it.
- A majority of 71% of the Palestinians (compared to 76% last November) supports a mutual cessation of violence while 27% (compared to 22% last November) oppose it. Under conditions of mutual ceasefire, 50% of the Palestinians would support taking measures against those who would continue to carry out attacks against Israeli civilians, while 45% would oppose doing so. Last November, support for such measures stood at 56% and opposition at 40%. Still, three quarters acknowledge that failure to take such measures would impede the revival of the peace process. On the other hand, 79% express concern that taking such measures may lead to civil war.
- In the absence of a mutual cessation of violence, a majority of 57% (compared to 53% last November) continues to support armed attacks against Israeli civilians inside Israel and 40% oppose it. Support for attacks on soldiers and settlers remains very high (over 90%) as in the previous poll. As in November, two thirds continue to believe that armed confrontations have so far helped achieve Palestinian rights in ways that negotiations could not. Among Israelis, only 23% believe that the Intifada has so far achieved Palestinian national and political goals.
- Palestinians are divided over whether the US and other members of the Quartet would put heavy pressure on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to accept the roadmap with 45% believing that they would and 46% that they would not. Israelis however are much more certain that such pressure is soon to come. 85% of the Israeli public believe so. A clear majority of 79% of the Palestinians and 60% of the Israelis would oppose such American and international pressure if it was put on the Palestinian Authority or on Israel respectively. However 36% of the Israelis but only 17% of the Palestinians would support it. Interestingly enough 38% of the Palestinians would support the deployment of international forces in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in order to force the Palestinians and the Israelis to accept and implement the roadmap. An additional 9% would support such deployment only if

the forces were European. Forty-eight percent would oppose any deployment of international forces, and less than one percent would support the deployment if the forces were made up of Americans only. Israelis are less supportive of the deployment of international forces in general but more favorable to American forces. 24% of the Israelis support the deployment of international forces, and additional 13% support it if these are American forces. Only 3% support it if the forces were to be European. 58% oppose the idea altogether.

- A majority of 65% of the Palestinians (compared to 73% last November) and 77% of the Israelis (75% last November) supports reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis after a peace agreement is reached and a Palestinian state is established and recognized by the state of Israel.

2) Abu Mazin Appointment as Prime Minister

- A majority of Palestinians (64%) supports the creation of the position of a prime minister while 28% oppose that step. But support for Abu Mazin as a prime minister is slightly less, at 61%, and opposition slightly higher, at 32%.
- A majority of 70% of the Palestinians and 67% of the Israelis believes that a government headed by Abu Mazin would be able to renew negotiations with Israel. However, only 39% of the Palestinians believe that it would be able to control the security situation and enforce a ceasefire on all Palestinian factions and 53% believe that it would not. Similarly only 36% of the Israelis believe that Abu Mazin would be able to calm down the Intifada and reduce the violence, and 56% don't believe in that. It is worth noting that while the appointment of Abu Mazin has not changed Palestinian expectations regarding the prospect for joint cessation of violence and return to negotiations (standing at 18%, compared to 16% last November), a shift did occur in the expectations regarding the prospect for a continued armed confrontations and no return to negotiations. In this poll, only 27% of Palestinians (compared to 42% last November) believe that armed confrontations would not stop and the two sides would not return to negotiations. As to political reforms, only 43% of the Palestinians and 32% of the Israelis believe that Abu Mazin would be able to carry out political reform in the Palestinian authority. Moreover, Israelis seem to remain skeptical about the chances of a democratic regime to be established in the Palestinian authority or in a future Palestinian state. Only 9% percent of the Israeli public give it high or very high chances.

- Palestinians are divided in two halves over the issue of whether Abu Mazin will be able to form a government that could win the confidence of the Palestinians, with 43% believing he would and 43% believing he would not. It is worth remembering that only 40% were willing in November 2002 to give confidence to Arafat's current government.
- Palestinians are also divided over the issue of whether the appointment of Abu Mazin represents erosion in the authority and status of Yasir Arafat with 50% agreeing with that and 43% disagreeing. Israelis are even more skeptical than that. Only, 38% of the Israeli public see the nomination of Abu Mazin's as signifying an erosion in Arafat's political status.
- While a Palestinian majority of 86% supports internal and external calls for wide and fundamental political reforms, only 44% support (and 50% oppose) the call for changing the Palestinian political system so that power would reside in the hands of the prime minister while the position of the president would become ceremonial. Support for this change in the political system stood at 47% last November and opposition at 49%.

3) War in Iraq

- Almost all Palestinians oppose the war on Iraq; with 58% of them believing that the primary motive of the US is to seize Iraqi oil, 32% believing the motive to be to help Israel, and only 2% believing it to be to disarm Iraq from weapons of mass destruction. The great majority of the Israeli public on the other hand, supports the war (76%), and 50% believe that the primary reason for the war was to disarm Iraq from weapons of mass destruction; 30% believe that the primary motive was to seize Iraqi oil and only 5% believe that it had anything to do with Israel. 60% of the Israelis also believe that France and Germany objected to the war primarily in order to protect their economic interests in Iraq and the Arab world.
- While 78% of the Palestinian respondents believe that the war in Iraq would strengthen Palestinian desire to carry out attacks on Israelis and 61% believe that it would take Israelis and Palestinians further away from the peace process, only 46% believe (and 44% do not believe) that Israel would be able to exploit the opportunity to carry out a mass expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

- Most Palestinians (61%) believe that Iraq of Saddam Hussein would win the war in Iraq while only 12% believe that the winner will be the US and its allies. Eighteen percent see all sides as losers. Among Israelis only 3% believed that Iraq of Saddam Hussein would win the war.

4) Domestic Israeli Issues

- The Israeli survey also examined the Israeli public's assessments of the current economic crisis. Fifty one percent of the Israelis believe that the crisis stems mainly from the Intifada and the cessation of foreign investments. Additional 29% put the blame on mismanagement of the economy by the current and previous government. Only 8% blame welfare payments which don't encourage people to go out to work. As to the conditions needed to put the economy back on track, 49% believe that it is impossible to solve the crisis without the opening of a political process with the Palestinians and 47% believe it is possible..
- Israelis were asked as to their preferences on government spending in several areas. 93% of the public support more spending for creating jobs, 81% support more spending for healthcare, 75% support more spending for education and only 47% support more spending for national security. On the other hand, 70% prefer to reduce spending of settlements, and 66% would like to see less spending for religious establishments and seminaries.

5) Domestic Palestinian Issues

- Arafat's popularity, at 35%, remains unchanged since last November. Marwan Barghouti is the second most popular Palestinian leader with 20% support. Despite his appointment as a prime minister, Abu Mazin's popularity remains unchanged at 3%.
- Fateh, at 26%, is still the most popular faction followed by Hamas at 17%. Fateh's support stood at 27% last November. Total support for Islamists (including Hamas, Islamic Jihad and independent Islamists) stands at 29% compared to 25% last November. The combined strength of all Palestinian opposition factions, Islamist and nationalist, stands at 32% while 41% remain undecided.
- A majority of 81% believes that there is corruption in the Palestinian Authority and only 30% among those believe that corruption will decline in the future. Last November, 84% believed corruption existed in the PA.

- Palestinians are divided over the performance of the finance minister, Salam Fayyad, with 35% satisfied, 36% unsatisfied, and 29% unsure.
- Fourteen percent, compared to 20% last November, say that conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip lead them to seek permanent emigration.

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