

22 December 2009

PRESS RELEASE

Joint Israeli Palestinian Poll, December 2009

In Israel: A slim majority (52%) believes Israel should pay almost any price to return prisoners of war.

In the PA: If released from jail, Marwan Barghouti would beat Ismail Haniyeh for Presidency by a large margin.

These are the results of the most recent poll conducted jointly by the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah, between December 9-15, 2009. This joint survey was conducted with the support of the Ford Foundation Cairo office and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Ramallah and Jerusalem.

Following important domestic developments in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, our poll focused on these developments:

- **In the PA President Abbas announced his decision not to run in the next presidential elections; 57% of the Palestinians support and 36% oppose this decision. Nevertheless, 58% believe Abbas will withdraw his decision and will eventually run in the next elections. If presidential elections were between Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, Abbas receives 54% and Haniyeh 38%; and if they were between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti would receive 67% and Haniyeh would receive 28%.**
- **In Israel, 52% think that Israel should pay almost any price to return prisoners of war home since this is the moral obligation of the state which sent them to war. 35% however think that Israel should not free “terrorists” who killed Israelis in “terrorist” acts inside Israel since this will encourage further abductions and acts of “terror.” 58% of the Israelis support and 36% oppose the release of Israeli Arabs who carried out violent attacks within Israel in return for the release of Gilad Shalit.**

- **49% of Israelis support and 42% oppose Netanyahu's decision to enforce a 10 month freeze on construction in the West Bank settlements, excluding East Jerusalem.**
- **Following these developments, 44% of the Israelis and 38% of the Palestinians think that armed confrontations will not stop and the two sides will not return to negotiations. 8% of the Israelis and 19% of the Palestinians think that negotiations will resume soon enough and armed confrontations will stop. 38% of the Israelis and 37% of the Palestinians expect that negotiations will resume but some armed attacks will continue.**
- **Given the continued American involvement in an attempt to resolve the conflict, 69% among Palestinians but only 13% of the Israelis see Obama's policy as supportive of Israel; 37% of Israelis and 3% of Palestinians see his policy as supportive of the Palestinians; and 36% of Israelis and 22% of Palestinians see this policy as supportive of both sides equally.**

The Palestinian sample size was 1200 adults interviewed face-to-face in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip in 120 randomly selected locations between December 10 and 12, 2009. The margin of error is 3%. The Israeli sample includes 604 adult Israelis interviewed by phone in Hebrew, Arabic or Russian between December 9 and 15, 2009. The margin of error is 4.5%. The poll was planned and supervised by Prof. Yaacov Shamir, the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University, and Prof. Khalil Shikaki, Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR).

For further details on the Palestinian survey contact PSR director, Prof. Khalil Shikaki or Walid Ladadweh, at tel. 02-2964933 or email pcpsr@pcpsr.org. On the Israeli survey, contact Prof Yaacov Shamir at tel. 03-6419429 or email jshamir@mssc.huji.ac.il.

MAIN FINDINGS

(A) US policy toward the conflict

- Since the election of President Obama and following the intensified involvement of the US in the region we have been tracking in our poll Israelis and Palestinians' attitudes toward the US policy in the region. Our previous polls revealed an increased apprehension of Israelis with regard to a more intensive American involvement to resolve the conflict while Palestinians were somewhat more favorable to it.

- Our current poll indicates that 13% of Israelis and 69% of the Palestinians think that Obama's policy is more supportive of Israel, 37% and 3% respectively think it is more supportive of the Palestinians, and 36% and 22% respectively think it is supportive of both sides equally. In August, 12% of Israelis and 64% of Palestinians believed that Obama's policy is more supportive of Israel; 40% and 7% respectively thought it is more supportive of the Palestinians, and 38% and 23% respectively thought it is supportive of both sides equally.
- 55% of the Palestinians believe and 39% do not believe that the US has now abandoned its demand from Israel to implement a comprehensive freeze on settlement construction. 68% of the Palestinians oppose and 30% support unconditional return to negotiations, as requested by the US, before Israel implements a comprehensive freeze on settlement construction that would include East Jerusalem.

(B) Israeli and Palestinian Domestic Developments

- Netanyahu's decision to put a freeze on construction in the West Bank settlements caused a significant political roar mainly from settlers and right wing parties. Our poll however indicates that 42% among Israelis oppose such a freeze, whereas 49% support it.
- Moreover, 58% among Israelis support the removal of illegal settlement posts in the West Bank, while 32% oppose.
- 49% of the Israelis also support and 43% oppose the dismantling of most of the settlements in the West Bank as part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians. However support for this step has been decreasing consistently since the disengagement from Gaza in August 2005.
- Another related development which intensified following Netanyahu's freeze decision is protest and refusal to evict settlers from illegal posts within the Israeli military. Our poll examined Israelis attitudes on this issue: 34% of Israelis support and 57% oppose the refusal of soldiers to evict settlers in the West Bank
- Only 27% support and 66% oppose to the refusal of soldiers to serve in the West Bank.
- 43% of the Israelis think that soldiers who refuse to serve in the territories and those who refuse to remove settlements should be equally punished. 19% believe that those who refuse to serve in the territories should be punished but not those who refuse to remove settlements, while 6% think that those who refuse to remove settlements should be punished but not those who refuse to serve in the territories. 22% think that both kinds of refusals should not be punished.
- In the Palestinian Authority, President Abbas announced his decision not to run in the next presidential elections, 57% of the Palestinians support this decision, while 36% oppose it. Nevertheless, 58% believe Abbas will withdraw his decision and will eventually run in the next elections. If presidential elections were between Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the former receives 54% and the latter 38% and if they were between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti would receive 67% (compared to 62% last August) and Haniyeh would receive 28% (31% in August).

(C) Negotiation Tracks on the Agenda

The Israeli-Palestinian Track

- Now, more than 40 years after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 66% of the Israelis and 68% of the Palestinians believe that the chances for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state next to the state of Israel in the next five years are non-existent or low. 30% of the Israelis and 31% of the Palestinians believe they are medium or high. These figures are very similar to those we obtained in August.
- Similarly, 65% of the Israelis and 67% among Palestinians think that it is impossible to reach these days a final status settlement with the Palestinians; 32% in both publics believe it is possible.
- 64% of Palestinians and 73% of Israelis believe that the best solution to the conflict is the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, known as the two-state solution. 20% of the Palestinians and 9% of the Israelis think that the best solution is to establish one state shared by Palestinians and Israelis in all the area west to the Jordan River
- 57% of the Israelis support and 35% oppose the proposal that after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the settlement of all issues in dispute, including the refugees and Jerusalem issues, there will be a mutual recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people and Palestine as the state of the Palestinian people. Among Palestinians, 53% support and 46% oppose this step. In August, 64% of the Israelis supported this proposal, while 31% opposed it. Among Palestinians, 49% supported the proposal in August and 49% opposed it.

The Saudi Plan

- 57% of the Israelis oppose and 36% support the Saudi initiative which calls for Arab recognition of and normalization of relations with Israel after it ends its occupation of Arab territories occupied in 1967 and after the establishment of a Palestinian state. The plan calls for Israeli retreat from all territories occupied in 1967 including Gaza the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and the establishment of a Palestinian state. The refugees' problem will be resolved through negotiation in a just and agreed upon manner and in accordance with UN resolution 194. In return, all Arab states will recognize Israel and its right to secure borders, will sign peace treaties with her and establish normal diplomatic relation. In August, 54% of the Israelis opposed the plan while 40% supported it. Among Palestinians, 68% support the plan, and 30% oppose it; 64% supported it in August and 34% opposed it.

(D) Conflict management and threat perceptions

- 53% of the Israelis support and 42% oppose talks with Hamas if needed to reach a compromise agreement with the Palestinians. In August, 52% supported and 44% opposed such talks.
- A sizeable Israeli majority (66%) support and only 27% oppose talks with a national unity government composed jointly of Hamas and Fatah if such a government is reestablished. In August, these figures were 66% and 30% respectively.
- 17% of the Palestinians and 32% of the Israelis believe that Israel will agree in the future to a complete freeze on settlement construction, including in East Jerusalem. 81% and 59% respectively don't believe this will happen.

- 58% of the Israelis support and 36% oppose the release of Israeli Arabs who carried out violent attacks within Israel in return for the release of Gilad Shalit. In August, 63% of the Israelis supported and 27% opposed this act.
- Some 52% of Israelis think that Israel should pay almost any price to return prisoners of war home since this is the moral obligation of the state which sent them to war. 35% however think that Israel should not free “terrorists” who killed Israelis in “terrorist” acts inside Israel since this will encourage further abductions and acts of “terror.” This reflects the general parameters of public debate in Israel regarding the negotiations with Hamas over Gilad Shalit, but we deliberately avoided mentioning his name in this question in order not to bias our respondents.
- Among Israelis, 57% are worried that they or their family may be harmed by Arabs in their daily life, compared to 50% in August. Among Palestinians 77% are worried or very worried that they or members of their family could be hurt by Israel in their daily life or that their land would be confiscated or home demolished and 23% are not worried. But we also found that 36% of the Palestinians fear that their security and safety and that of their family are not assured, compared to 40% in August, indicating further increased public perception of safety and security among Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- 14% of the Israelis believe that Palestinian aspirations in the long run are to return **some** of the territories occupied in 1967. 26% think that they aspire to return **all** the territories occupied. 14% think that they want to conquer the State of Israel, and 40% fear that they plan to conquer the state of Israel and destroy its Jewish population. Palestinians similarly don’t trust Israelis long run aspirations. Only 12% of the Palestinians believe that Israel wants to guarantee its security and withdraw from **all** the territories occupied in 1967. 11% of the Palestinians believe that Israel wants to Guarantee its security and withdraw from **part** of the occupied territories. 23% believe that Israel plans the annexation of the West Bank while denying political rights of Palestinians, and 53% fear that Israel aspires the realization of Greater Israel borders and transfer of the Palestinians. With regard to their own long term aspirations, about half of the Palestinians (49%) believe they aspire to reach a peace agreement with Israel that would establish a state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital;, 10% believe the aspiration is to force Israel to end its occupation and withdraw to the 1967 lines without a peace agreement, 16% believe the goal is to return all Palestine from the river to the sea to Arab sovereignty by force, and 23% believe the goal is to conquer the state of Israel and destroy its Jewish population. As to Israelis, a majority of them (54%) think that the aspirations of Israel for the long run are to guarantee its security and withdraw from part of the territories occupied in 1967; 10% think that the aspirations are to guarantee security and withdraw from all the territories; 8% believe Israel’s aspirations for the long run are to annex the West Bank while denying political rights of Palestinians, and 15% think it is the realization of Greater Israel borders and transfer of the Palestinians. These results emphasize the mirror image perceptions and misperceptions of the two sides which remain severe obstacles in the peace process.