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PRESS RELEASE

Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No. 22

A SIGNIFICANT DECREASE IN PUBLIC SATISFACTION WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PRESIDENT AND HAMAS GOVERNMENT LEADS THE MAJORITY TO SUPPORT THE HOLDING OF EARLY PRESEDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND INCREASES THE GAP BETWEEN THE POPULARITY OF FATAH AND HAMAS IN FAVOR OF THE FORMER

14-16 December 2006

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 December 14-16, 2006. Total size of the sample is 1270 adults interviewed face to face in 127 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is 3%. This press release highlights the main findings regarding domestic issues. PSR will soon release findings related to the peace process and the ceasefire.

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As he was leaving the Rafah Crossing, fire was opened on the car carrying Prime Minister Ismael Haniya, which took place in the evening of the first day of data collection. During the final hours of data collection, President Mahmud Abbas made a speech in which he declared his intentions to call for the holding of early presidential and parliamentary elections. We believe that these two events had little or no impact on data collection or poll findings.

Summary:

Findings show significant increase in the level of dissatisfaction with the performance of the Hamas government and the president. The poll also shows great concern about internal security and a negative evaluation of the role played by the "Executive Force." These developments have affected public attitude with a majority supporting the holding of early presidential and parliamentary elections. They have also led to a limited decrease in the popularity of Hamas.

Main Findings:

- 48% agree that the government should resign but a similar percentage (47%) disagrees with that. But a majority of 61% supports the holding of early presidential and parliamentary elections and 37% oppose that. A majority of 56% agrees with Abbas and Fatah that the PA president has the right to call for early presidential and parliamentary elections and 38% agree with Hams that the PA president does not have the right to do so.

- If early parliamentary elections are held today, Hamas would receive 36% of the vote and Fatah would receive 42%. 12% would go to other lists and 10% remain undecided. The gap between Fatah and Hamas has therefore widened from 3 percentage points three months ago to 6 percentage points in this poll.
- If early presidential elections are held today and only two, Mahmud Abbas for Fatah and Ismail Haniya for Hamas, were to compete, Abbas would receive 46% of the vote and Haniya would receive 45%. 9% remain undecided.
- But if the presidential race was between Marwan Barghouti, representing Fatah, and Khaled Meshaal, representing Hamas, Marwan Barghouti would receive 57% of the vote and Khaled Meshaal would receive 36%. 7% remain undecided.
- The decrease in Hamas' popularity is associated with a decrease in public satisfaction with its performance from 42% three months ago to 33% in this poll. Moreover, only 30% of the respondents evaluate the performance of the "Executive Force," commanded by the interior minister, as positive and contributing to the enforcement of law and order while 51% evaluate its performance as negative and contributing to lawlessness and anarchy.
- Similarly, findings show a significant decrease in the level of public satisfaction with the performance of president Mahmud Abbas from 55% three months ago to 40% in this poll.
- More than 90% of the public describe current Palestinian conditions as bad or very bad and only 2% describe it as good. Moreover, 87% say they and their families lack safety and security and 87% believe corruption exists in the PA and more significantly 69% say corruption will increase or remain the same in the future.
- Given the electoral experience of January 2006, a majority of the Palestinian public is still in favor of democracy: 53% say it is appropriate for the Palestinians and 43% say it is inappropriate.

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