

The **Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR)** is an independent nonprofit institution and think tank for policy analysis and academic research. PSR was founded with the goal of advancing scholarship and knowledge on immediate issues of concern to Palestinians in three areas: domestic politics and government, strategic analysis and foreign policy, and public opinion polls and survey research. The center engages in several activities. It conducts academic and policy analysis studies. It organizes socio-political surveys and public opinion polls on current Palestinian political and social attitudes. It sponsors study groups and task forces on issues of critical importance to the Palestinians. Finally, it organizes conferences, public lectures, and briefings on current public policy issues. PSR is dedicated to promoting objective and nonpartisan research and analysis and to encouraging a better understanding of the Palestinian domestic and international environment in an atmosphere of free debate and exchange of ideas.

This poll is part of PSR series of regular polls.

*This poll has been conducted in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Ramallah*



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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (56)**

**With only one third of Palestinians satisfied with the Gaza War accomplishments and only one third satisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government, half of Gazans say they are thinking about emigrating and the largest percentage believes that Israel came out a winner in the battle at FIFA. Nonetheless, Ismail Haniyeh would win the elections in Gaza Strip while Abbas would win in the West Bank.**

4-6 June 2015

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 4 and 6 June 2015. The period before the poll witnessed the failure of reconciliation government efforts to reunify the institutions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a debate among Palestinians over the decision to drop the demand for expelling Israel from FIFA, the formation of a right wing government in Israel under prime minister Netanyahu, the publication of the corruption court decision asserting as unconstitutional Abbas decision to lift the immunity of Mohammad Dahlan and the publication of news reports indicating that Hamas and Israel have indirectly been negotiating a long term ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. This press release covers attitudes regarding Palestinian elections, conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, reconciliation, the Gaza war, FIFA, and other internal and international issues. The total size of the sample is 1200 adults interviewed face to face in 120 randomly selected locations. The margin of error is 3%.

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### **Main Findings:**

Findings of the second quarter of 2015 indicate a high level of frustration among Gazans, with half of the respondents stating that they are considering emigration from the Gaza Strip. This is the highest percentage ever recorded in our polls. Findings also show an additional decline (particularly in the Gaza Strip) in satisfaction with the achievements of the latest Gaza war. Despite this, Ismail Haniyeh wins against Abbas in a presidential election in the Strip. In the West Bank Abbas and Fatah are more popular than Haniyeh and Hamas. It is worth mentioning that the public is divided equally on the significance of the

election victory of Hamas' student bloc at Birzeit University. Half of the respondents believes that the outcome of this election reflects the trend among the overall public while the other half believes that it reflects the trend among students only.

Given the internal dispute within Fatah regarding Mohammad Dahlan, our findings show that his popularity in the Gaza Strip is relatively high, coming in third place after Ismail Haniyeh and Marwan Barghouti in hypothetical elections in which Abbas does not participate. Dahlan's popularity in the West Bank however is much lower, almost non-existent. In this context, we found that Abbas' decision to lift Dahlan's immunity and bring him to trial for corruption finds significant support in the West Bank while opposition to the decision is widespread in the Gaza Strip.

Findings show that the public is unhappy with the outcome of the FIFA battle over Israel's membership. The largest percentage, around one third, believes that Israel came out a winner while a little over a fifth believes that the Palestinian side came out a winner in that battle.

### **(1) Palestinian Elections:**

- If new presidential elections are held today and only two candidates were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the former would win 47% (compared to 48% three months ago) and the latter 46% (compared to 47% three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 46% and Haniyeh 50%. In the West Bank, Abbas receives 47% and Haniyeh 44%.
- The level of satisfaction with the performance of Abbas rises to 44% (compared to 40% three months ago). Satisfaction with Abbas stood at 50% in June 2014 in the aftermath of the Shati reconciliation declaration but before the Gaza war.
- If presidential elections were between Marwan Barghouti and Haniyeh, the former would receive 58% and the latter would receive 36% of the participants' votes. Three months ago, Barghouti received 58% and Haniyeh 38%.
- If presidential elections were between three: Mahmud Abbas, Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Abbas would receive 25%, Barghouti 38%, and Haniyeh 34%.
- In an open question, 26% said they prefer to see Marwan Barghouti president after Abbas and 20% said they prefer to see Ismail Haniyeh, 4% said they prefer Dahlan, 3% said they prefer Rami al Hamdallah, another 3% selected Mustapha Barghouti, and 2% said they prefer Khalid Misha'al.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 72% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 35% say they would vote for Hamas and 39% say they would vote for Fatah, 11% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 16% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 32% and Fatah at 39%. In June 2014, just before the Gaza war, vote for Hamas stood at 32% and Fatah 40%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands in this poll at 39% (compared to 39% three months ago) and for Fatah at 44% (compared to 36% three months ago). In the West Bank vote for Hamas stands at 32% (compared to 27% three months ago) and Fatah at 36% (compared to 41% three months ago).
- A majority of 66% wants elections to take place within a few to six months from today, 10% want them to take place after a year or more, and 21% do not want elections.
- 47% believe that the outcome of the latest student elections at Birzeit University, in which Hamas' student bloc won, only reflects the trend among university students, while an identical percentage believes that it reflects a trend among the general public. In explaining the outcome of those elections at Birzeit University, 14% said Fatah's student bloc lost because Fatah, the movement, lacks credibility and is rife with corruption. 23% said the loss was due to internal disputes within Fatah's student body or due to its mismanagement of its internal affairs or due to its bad performance inside the university. 12% said it was due to rising Hamas popularity due to the war on Gaza or because the performance of Hamas' student body was satisfactory.

### **(2) Domestic conditions, salary payment crisis, and ISIS:**

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 14% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 30%.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 46%. In the West Bank perception of safety and security stands at 54%.
- Findings show that the percentage of Gazans who say they seek immigration to other countries stands at 50%; in the West Bank, the percentage stands at 25%.

- Al Jazeera viewership is the highest, standing at 23%; Al Arabiyya stands at 8%. Viewership of PA's Palestine TV stands at 20% and Hamas' al Aqsa TV at 12%. Maan-Mix viewership stands at 18%.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 79%.
- 23% say there is press freedom in the West Bank and 18% say the same about the status of the press in the Gaza Strip.
- 32% of the Palestinian public say people in the West Bank can criticize the PA in the West Bank without fear. 30% say people in the Gaza Strip can criticize the authorities in Gaza without fear.
- In light of the recent decision of the corruption court to reject the decision of PA president Abbas to lift the immunity of Mohammad Dahlan and to try him for corruption, 39% said they supported the court's decision and 46% said they support the decision of the president to lift the immunity. Support for the court's decision stands at 47% in the Gaza Strip compared to 36% in the West Bank. When asked about the corruption charges against Dahlan, 58% said they thought the charges were true and 19% said they were untrue. 23% said they do not know.
- An overwhelming majority of 84% believes that ISIS is a radical group that does not represent true Islam and 10% believe it does represent true Islam. 6% are not sure or do not know. In the Gaza Strip, 14% (compared to 8% in the West Bank) say ISIS represents true Islam.

### **(3) The reconciliation government and its role in Gaza:**

- Optimism about the success of reconciliation and the end of the split stands today at 38% and pessimism at 59%. Three months ago optimism stood at 42% and pessimism at 54%.
- A year after its establishment, satisfaction with the performance of the reconciliation government stands at 35%; dissatisfaction stands at 59%. Three months ago, satisfaction stood at 28%. It is worth mentioning that a year ago, right after its establishment, 61% had confidence in the reconciliation government.
- 47% (56% in the Gaza Strip) want to place the reconciliation government in charge of the Rafah crossing, but 36% (26% in the Gaza Strip) prefer to keep it under Hamas' control. The same applies to the crossings with Israel with 48% (56% in the Gaza Strip) wishing to place them under the control of the reconciliation government.
- 43% want the reconciliation government to be in charge of the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and 33% want it placed in the hands of Hamas.
- Satisfaction with the implementation of the reconciliation agreement stands at 31% and dissatisfaction at 65%.
- 52% believe that Hamas has established a shadow government in the Gaza Strip and 35% reject this claim. But the belief that Hamas was responsible for hindering the functioning of the reconciliation government does not exceed 24% while 32% believe that the PA and president Abbas were to blame for that and 13% blame the head of the reconciliation government. When asked who was responsible for the return of the ministers of the reconciliation government from the Gaza Strip without being able to assume their responsibilities over their ministries, 46% said it was the reconciliation government and the president and 35% said it was Hamas.
- 75% believe that the reconciliation government should be responsible for paying the salary of the Gazan civil public sector that used to work for the previous Hamas government. A similar percentage (72%) believes that the reconciliation government is also responsible for paying the salary of the Gaza police and security personnel who used to work for the previous Hamas government.
- 65% want the reconciliation government, not Hamas, to be in charge of the Gaza police force and security personnel who used to work for the previous Hamas government; 28% believe Hamas should be the one in charge.
- 76% support the unification of the police forces in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including those who used to work for the previous Hamas government, under the full command and control of the reconciliation government. But 20% prefer to maintain the current status quo in the Gaza Strip, i.e., continued Hamas control of the police in the Gaza Strip.
- 48% believe the PA has become a burden on the Palestinian people and only 46% believe it is an achievement. A year ago, right after the formation of the reconciliation government, 50% said the PA was an achievement and 45% said it was a burden.

### **(4) Gaza War:**

- 63% support indirect negotiations between Hamas and Israel to reach a long term hudna, or truce, in the Gaza Strip in return for lifting the siege and 32% oppose such negotiations.

- Belief that Hamas has won the Gaza War stands at 59%; 25% believe the two sides were losers. Among Gazans, only 47% say Hamas came out a winner. Nine months ago, 69% of all Palestinians said Hamas came out a winner.
- Percentage of satisfaction with war achievements compared to the human and material losses sustained by the Gaza Strip stands at 35% and dissatisfaction at 63%.
- Despite that, a majority of 63% supports the launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip at Israel if the siege and blockade are not ended.

#### **(5) Most vital Palestinian goals and the main problems confronting Palestinians today:**

- 45% 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, 30% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 14% believe that it should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society that applies all Islamic teachings, and 11% 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 the continuation of occupation and settlement activities in the eyes of 29% of the public; an identical percentage believe it is poverty and unemployment. 22% say it is the spread of corruption in some public institutions; and 15% believe it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings.

#### **(6) Other issues: FIFA, boycott, Israeli right wing government, and the nuclear agreement with Iran**

- **FIFA:** in the FIFA battle over Israeli membership in the international football federation, 33% believe that Israel came out as the winner and 22% believe the Palestinian side came out as the winner. 10% believe both sides were winners, 4% believe both sides were losers, 15% believe neither side won or lost, and 17% did not know or did not express an opinion.
- **Boycott of Israeli products:** 86% support the campaign to boycott Israel and impose sanctions on it and 88% say they have stopped buying Israeli products, such as those manufactured by Tnuva or Strauss, and 64% believe that the boycott of Israeli products will be effective in helping to end Israeli occupation.
- **Israeli right wing government:** in the wake of the formation of a new right wing government led by Prime Minister Netanyahu, 79% of the public feel pessimistic about the future of Palestinian-Israeli relations.
- **Nuclear agreement with Iran:** 36% of the public believe that the framework agreement on Iran's nuclear program, signed between the US and Iran, is a bad agreement for the Arabs and 25% believe it is a good agreement for the Arabs. 25% believe it is neither good nor bad. When asked if the agreement is good or bad for Israel, 50% said it was good and 24% said it was bad; 12% said it was neither good nor bad.