

The **Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR)** is an independent nonprofit institution and think tank of 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 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-Stiftung in Ramallah



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung

For further information,
please contact
Dr. Khalil Shikaki or Walid
Ladadweh
at the Palestinian Center for
Policy and Survey Research

Ramallah, Palestine
Telephone 02 296 4933
Fax 02 296 4934

e-mail: pcpsr@pcpsr.org
<http://www.pcpsr.org>

PRESS RELEASE

Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (60)

With half of the public thinking that the recent Palestinian little uprising, or *habba*, has come to an end and with support for stabbing attacks continuing to decline and Hamas' popularity slipping, half of the public supports the French Initiative but only a small percentage expects it to succeed

2-4 June 2016

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 2 and 4 June 2016. The period before the poll witnessed a significant decline in the number of incidents of confrontations and stabbings directed against Israelis. But a bombing attack on an Israeli bus took place in Jerusalem in mid-April. The period also witnessed meetings in Cairo between Hamas leaders and Egyptian officials and in Doha between Fatah and Hamas representatives. Data collection took place while the Paris Peace Conference was in session with the participation of representatives from more than 20 states. This press release addresses many of these issues and covers attitudes regarding Palestinian elections, conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, reconciliation, Palestinian-Israeli confrontations, the French Initiative, and other internal and international issues. Total size of the sample is 1270 adults interviewed face to face in 127 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is 3%.

For further details, contact PSR director, Dr. Khalil Shikaki, or Walid Ladadweh at tel. 02-296 4933 or email pcpsr@pcpsr.org.

Main Findings:

Results of the second quarter of 2016 point out to three main findings: (1) half of the public believes that the current Palestinian confrontations, or *al habba al sha'biyya*, has come to an end, support for stabbing attacks continues to decline, and the public continues to reduce its expectations from the current confrontations; (2) by contrast, half of the public expresses support for the French Initiative that aims at providing an international backing for a revival of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, but public expectations of success for the initiative are much smaller than the support; and, (3) there is a limited decline in support for Hamas and its presidential candidate, Ismail Haniyeh, despite continued demand for Abbas' resignation from two thirds of the public.

Findings show a continued and significant drop, particularly in the West Bank, in support for stabbing attacks. The highest percentage of support for such attacks was registered six months ago before it considerably declined three months ago. Furthermore, findings show a continued

decline in public expectations regarding a possible escalation of the current limited popular confrontations to an armed intifada; today, a quarter thinks such a development is likely. Similarly, findings show a decline, dropping from more than half to less than a third, in the percentage of those who think that if the current confrontations continue as they are now, they would contribute to achieving national rights in ways that negotiations could not. Decline, particularly in the West Bank, has also been found in the percentage of those who believe that if the current confrontations develop into an armed intifada, it would help Palestinians achieve national rights and in the percentage of those who support ending Palestinian implementation of PA obligations under the Oslo agreement. Nonetheless, a majority continues to believe that if the current confrontations develop into an armed intifada, it will help achieve national rights in ways that negotiations could not. Perhaps it is for this reason that a majority continues to support a return to an armed intifada. Indeed, more than two thirds supported the Jerusalem bus bombing attack which took place in mid-April and injured 20 Israelis.

If new presidential elections are held today in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Hamas' candidate Ismail Haniyeh would do better than Abbas but findings show that the gap between the two narrows from eleven to five percentage points. Marwan Barghouti remains the most popular Palestinian figure. If new parliamentary elections are held today, Fatah is likely to do a little better than Hamas. It seems that the declining Palestinian-Israeli confrontations and the focus on international diplomacy in recent weeks have influenced the domestic balance of power in a manner that favors Abbas while somewhat weakening Hamas. Moreover, it is possible that the optimism regarding improved relations between Egypt and Hamas, which might have improved Hamas standing in the past, has now somewhat faded as the Rafah border crossing has remained essentially closed during most of the last three months. Moreover, a majority is convinced that another Gaza war will erupt in the near future. On the other hand, Abbas, Fatah and the PA remain highly vulnerable as two thirds demand Abbas resignation, Fatah has not gained any additional support during the last three months, and a majority of Palestinians believes that the PA has become a burden on the Palestinian people.

(1) The French Initiative:

- We asked the public about its support for the French Initiative. The initiative we presented to respondents as one that "calls for the formation of an international support group for Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, the holding of an international peace conference that would seek a settlement based on the two-state solution and the Arab Peace Initiative in accordance with a specific time frame." 50% of the respondents supported and 41% opposed the initiative. Support reached 46% in the West Bank compared to 56% in the Gaza Strip.
- We also asked respondents to indicate their expectations regarding the success or failure of the French Initiative in assisting the goal of reaching Palestinian-Israeli peace. 29% expected success and 59% expected failure. Here too there was a significant difference between residents of the West Bank compared to residents of the Gaza Strip: 39% of Gazans, compared to only 22% of West Bankers, expected success.

(2) Palestinian-Israeli confrontations:

- The public is divided into two equal halves regarding the end of the current popular confrontation, or *al habba al sha'biyya*: 48% believe it has stopped and 48% believe it has not stopped. In the West Bank, 49% believe it has ended and 46% believe it has not.
- Support for use of knives in the current confrontations with Israel continues to decline in this poll, dropping from 58% three months ago to 51%. Support for knifing attacks in the Gaza Strip stands at 75% and in the West Bank at 36%. Three months ago, support among West Bankers for knifing attacks stood at 44% and among Gazans at 82%. Nonetheless, support for the Jerusalem bus bombing attack which took place in mid-April and cause more than 20 Israeli injuries stands at 65%; only 31% say they oppose this bombing attack.
- 25% believe that the current confrontations will develop into a new armed intifada, 17% believe they will develop into wide scale peaceful popular confrontations, and 13% believe they will develop in both directions. By contrast, 29% believe the confrontation will stay as they are now and 13% believe they will gradually dissipate. Three months ago, 29% said that the current confrontations will develop into an armed intifada.
- In the absence of peace negotiations, 54% support a return to an armed intifada; 75% support joining more international organizations; 56% support a popular non-violent resistance; 43% support the dissolution of the PA. Three months ago, 56% supported return to armed intifada. In the West Bank, current level of support for an armed intifada stands at 51% (compared to 52% three months ago).
- 58% of the public (68% in the Gaza Strip and 52% in the West Bank) believe that if the current confrontations develop into an armed intifada, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not. Three months ago, 65% (75% in the Gaza Strip and 59% in the West Bank) said that if the

current confrontations develop into an armed intifada, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not.

- 41% of the public (52% in the Gaza Strip and 35% in the West Bank) believe that if the current confrontations develop into wide scale peaceful popular confrontations, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not. Three months ago, 54% said that if the current confrontations develop into wide scale peaceful popular confrontations, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not.
- 32% of the public (41% in the Gaza Strip and 26% in the West Bank) believe that if the current confrontations stay as they are now, they would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not. Three months ago, 43% (54% in the Gaza Strip and 36% in the West Bank) said that if the current confrontations stay as they are now, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not.
- When comparing the level of support of various parties for the current confrontations, Hamas comes on top with 66% of the public believing that it supports them, followed by Fatah (49%). By contrast, only 26% say president Abbas supports the confrontations.

(3) The future of the Oslo agreement and the future of security coordination:

- 56% support and 36% oppose abandoning the Oslo agreement. Three months ago, 63% of the public supported the abandonment of the Oslo agreement and 30% opposed it. Support for the abandonment of the Oslo agreement stands at 57% in the West Bank and 55% in the Gaza Strip.
- But 67% of the public believe that despite his statement to the contrary, president Abbas is not serious about abandoning Palestinian Oslo obligations and only 27% think he is serious. Three months ago, 65% expressed the view that the president is not serious.
- Similarly, we asked the public about its assessment of the seriousness of the Palestinian leadership regarding its intention to suspend security coordination with Israel in light of the Israeli announcement that the IDF will not stop its incursions into Palestinian cities. More than two-thirds (68%) indicated that the PA leadership is not serious while only 27% indicated it believes the PA leadership is serious.
- We told the public that a Palestinian abandonment of the Oslo agreement might lead to one of two outcomes: the collapse of the Palestinian authority and the return of the Israeli “civil administration” or alternatively an Israeli suspension of its settlement activities and return to serious negotiations with the Palestinian side. We asked the public what it thought was the most likely outcome: 46% selected the collapse of the PA while 41% selected the Israeli suspension of its settlement activities.

(4) Palestinian Elections:

- 65% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 31% want him to remain in office. These results are almost identical to those obtained in our previous poll three months ago. Demand for Abbas’ resignation stands at 64% in the West Bank and 67% in the Gaza Strip.
- If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 30% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 22% prefer Ismail Haniyeh; Rami al Hamdallah receive 6%; Khalid Mishal, and Mustapha Barghouti and Mohammad Dahlan receive 5% each; and Saeb Erekat and Salam Fayyad receives 2% each.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 34% which is similar to the level of satisfaction we obtained three months ago. Level of satisfaction with Abbas are identical in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmoud Abbas, the former would receive 48% (compared to 52% three months ago) and the latter 43% (compared to 41% three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 41% of the vote (compared to 44% three months ago) and Haniyeh receive 49% (compared to 54% three months ago). In the West Bank Abbas receives 41% (compared to 41% three months ago) and Haniyeh 47% (compared to 50% three months ago).
- If presidential elections were between three: Mahmud Abbas, Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Abbas would receive 20%, Barghouti 40% and Haniyeh 35%.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 75% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 31% say they would vote for Hamas and 34% say they would vote for Fatah, 9% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 26% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 33% and Fatah at 34%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 33% (compared to 38% three months ago) and for Fatah at 35% (compared to 34% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 29% (compared to 29% three months ago) and Fatah at 34% (compared to 34% three months ago).

(5) Domestic Conditions:

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 12% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 25%.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 44%. In the West Bank perception of safety and security stands also at 44%. Three months ago, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stood at 47% and in the West Bank at 39%.
- Findings show that the percentage of Gazans who say they seek to immigrate to other countries stands at 45%; in the West Bank, the percentage stands at 22%. Three months ago 48% of Gazans and 21% of West Bankers said they seek to emigrate. The largest percentage (40%) of those who seek to emigrate indicates that the main motivation is search for jobs; 23% say difficult conditions imposed by Israeli occupation forces them to seek to emigrate; 12% say it is the lack of security and 9% say it is the lack of freedoms and democracy that push them out.
- In an open-ended question, we asked the public about its viewership habits in the last two months. Findings indicate that Al-Jazeera TV viewership is the highest, standing at 19%, followed by Hamas' al Aqsa Palestine TV at 18%, Palestine TV and Maan-Mix at 17% each, Palestine Today (Filasteen al Youm) at 7%, Al Arabiya at 6%, al Quds TV at 4%, and al Mayadeen at 2%.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 80%.
- 17% say there is press freedom in the West Bank and 16% say the same about the status of the press in the Gaza Strip.
- 31% of the Palestinian public say people in the West Bank can criticize the PA authority in the West Bank without fear.
- A majority of 52% view the Palestinian Authority as a burden on the Palestinians while only 41% view it as an asset.
- An overwhelming majority of 76% indicates that it does not agree with the decision apparently taken by the PA president to withhold financial support from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine; only 16% agree with that decision.

(6) Reconciliation and the reconciliation government, and the possibility of another Gaza war:

- Optimism about the success of reconciliation and the end of the split stands today at 36% and pessimism at 60%. Three months ago optimism stood at 38% and pessimism at 59%.
- 28% say they are satisfied and 63% say they are dissatisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government. In the Gaza Strip, dissatisfaction stands at 66% and in the West Bank at 62%.
- Belief that Hamas was responsible for hindering the functioning of the reconciliation government does not exceed 19% (11% in the West Bank and 32% in the Gaza Strip) while 35% believe that the PA and president Abbas were to blame for that and 15% blame the prime minister of the reconciliation government.
- 71% believe that the reconciliation government should be responsible for paying the salaries of the Gazan civil public sector that used to work for the previous Hamas government. A similar percentage (69%) believes that the reconciliation government is also responsible for paying the salaries of the Gaza police and security personnel who used to work for the previous Hamas government.
- In return, 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; only 26% believe Hamas should be the one in charge. Similarly, 75% 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 21% prefer to maintain the current status quo in the Gaza Strip, i.e., continued Hamas control of the police in the Gaza Strip.
- We asked the public if it believes that there might be a real chance to open the Rafah Crossing on a normal regular schedule now after the meetings in Cairo between Hamas and the Egyptian officials and in light of the Doha meetings between Fatah and Hamas officials. 55% said there is a chance for that and 39% said there was no real chance for that.
- In light of recent talk about a possible Gaza war, we asked the public about its expectations: 55% said the prospects for such war in the near future are high or very high and 40% said the prospects are low or very low. A majority of 57% of Gazans believe the prospects for war are high or very high.

(7) The Arab World, war in Syria, ISIS, and US elections:

- 78% say the Arab World is too preoccupied with its own concerns, internal conflicts, and the conflict with Iran and that Palestine is no longer the Arab's principal or primary issue or cause. Only 20% think Palestine remains the Arab's principle cause.
- 59% believe that there is an Arab Sunni alliance with Israel against Iran despite the continued Israeli occupation of Arab land while 30% believe that the Arabs would not ally themselves with Israel until it ends its occupation and allows the creation of a Palestinian state.
- In light of the escalating conflict in Syria and the emergence of three main parties to the conflict, we asked the public for its view on the party it views as the more preferable or the one it views as the least harmful. The largest percentage (40%) chose the Free Syrian army, 18% chose Bashar Asad and his army, and 5% chose the extreme religious opposition, such as ISIS. 23% said they do not like any of the three parties.
- An overwhelming majority of 88% believes that ISIS is a radical group that does not represent true Islam and 8% believe it does represent true Islam. 4% are not sure or do not know. In the Gaza Strip, 16% (compared to 3% in the West Bank) say ISIS represents true Islam.
- 79% support and 18% oppose the war waged by Arab and Western countries against ISIS.
- We asked the public about the US elections and which presidential candidate, Hilary Clinton or Donald Trump, it viewed best for the Palestinians. A large majority (70%) said there is no difference between the two candidates, while 12% said Clinton is better and 7% said Trump is better.

(8) 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, 32% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 13% believe that it should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings, and 10% 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 poverty and unemployment in the eyes of 38% of the public; 31% say it is the continuation of occupation and settlement activities; 17% say it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings; and; 10% believe it is the spread of corruption in public institutions.