

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*



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### Public Opinion Poll No (70)

**A large majority rejects the Social Security Law, two-thirds are dissatisfied with the reconciliation government, and almost two-thirds demand the resignation of president Abbas. In the meanwhile, three quarters of the Palestinians welcome the role played by Qatar in the Gaza Strip and the last Palestinian-Israeli armed confrontations in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank significantly increase the popularity of Hamas and the support for an armed intifada and decrease the support for diplomacy and negotiations. Indeed, three quarters demand Palestinian rejection of the Trump peace plan viewing it as failing to meet any of the basic needs of the Palestinians**

12-16 December 2018

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 12-16 December 2018. The period before the conduct of the fieldwork of the poll witnessed several developments including the intensification of popular opposition to the Social Security Law, the failure of reconciliation efforts, the release of a report indicating that President Abbas intends to dissolve the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the transfer of the Qatari funds to Israel to cover the cost of fuel for the Gaza power station, and the direct Qatari payment to Gazan employees of the former Hamas government. Also, it was revealed during this period that some Palestinians have sold property to Israeli Jews in East Jerusalem and other places in the West Bank. Despite the efforts to calm conditions in the Gaza Strip, this period witnessed a serious escalation in violence between Hamas and Israel. The US Administration announced its intention to make public its own plan for Palestinian-Israeli peace. The Israeli prime minister visited Oman and Israeli ministers visited the United Arab Emirates. Finally, a major violent escalation took place in the West Bank during the period of the fieldwork for this poll. This press release addresses all these issues and covers other matters such as parliamentary and presidential elections, general conditions in the Palestinian territories, the peace process and the future possible directions for Palestinians in the absence of a viable process. Total size of the sample is 1270 adults interviewed face to face in 127 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is +/-3%.

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### Main Findings:

Findings of the last quarter of 2018 indicate a significant increase in Hamas' popularity in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The violent confrontations in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were probably responsible for this change. Moreover, Hamas' success in insuring Gazan access to fuel and money to pay the salaries of its former government employees probably contributed to this outcome. Support for Fatah remains relatively unchanged. Moreover, support for Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh rises in the Gaza Strip while support for President Mahmoud

Abbas declines in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. If new presidential elections are held today, findings show that Haniyeh would most likely be the winner. If parliamentary elections are held today, Fatah and Hamas are likely to receive the same levels of support.

Findings also show that the public has lost hope for a successful reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and that a large majority is dissatisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government. They also show that the public is highly opposed to the policies of president Abbas toward the Gaza Strip including his demand for the full transfer of control over the Strip by Hamas to the reconciliation government and his demand for one gun. Indeed, the public supports the continued presence of armed battalions of the various factions alongside the official PA security services in the Gaza Strip. An overwhelming majority demands the ending of sanctions imposed by President Abbas on the Gaza Strip such as the decrease in salaries and in the amount of electricity provided to Gazans. But it is worth noting that a large percentage supports the dissolution of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) despite the fact that more than one third believes that such a step is harmful to the reconciliation efforts.

Findings also show a widespread opposition to the Social Security Law reaching almost a consensus among West Bankers who believe that the law applies to them or will have an impact on them or their families. It is evident that the distrust in the government and the belief that the law is unjust are the most important drivers of the opposition to the law.

The majority views the results of the last confrontation between Hamas and Israel in the Gaza Strip as a victory for Hamas. Indeed, an even larger majority than before continues to support Hamas-Israel indirect negotiations for a long term *tahdia* or truce. The majority also supports the current agreement between Hamas and Israel that allows Qatari-funded Israeli fuel as well as Qatar money to reach the Gaza Strip despite opposition by the PA to this Qatari role. In fact, findings show that three quarters of the Palestinians welcome the Qatari role in the Gaza Strip, both in terms of paying for the fuel needed for the generation of electricity and for the payment of the salaries of the employees of the former Hamas government. Despite all of this, the public tends to believe that the current ceasefire in the Gaza Strip will collapse shortly and that such a collapse will lead to a widescale war against the Gaza Strip.

Findings regarding the peace process indicate a significant decline in support for the two-state solution and a considerable rise in support for an armed intifada. They also show a significant rise in the perception that the two-state solution is no longer feasible due to settlement expansion in the West Bank. Moreover, an overwhelming majority believes that the Trump Administration is not serious about promoting peace between Palestinians and Israelis. Palestinians believe that the Trump peace plan, when and if one is ever presented, will *not* call for any of the following: the establishment of a Palestinian state, East Jerusalem as a capital of the state of Palestine, the June 1967 lines as a basis for setting borders of Palestine, a just solution to the refugee problem, or ending the Israeli occupation and the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. For this reason, three quarters of the Palestinians demand a rejection of the Trump plan. But findings also indicate that a large minority believes that the US mediation is indispensable for any peace negotiations with Israel. Moreover, the public is split in its attitude toward the Trump plan if it does indeed contain all these vital elements that the public currently thinks will be absent.

### **(1) Presidential and parliamentary elections:**

- 64% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 32% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 62% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 55% in the West Bank and 77% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, demand for Abbas resignation stood at 52% in the West Bank and 78% in the Gaza Strip.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 32% and dissatisfaction at 65%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 38% in the West Bank and 23% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, satisfaction with Abbas stood at 35% (42% in the West Bank and 23% in the Gaza Strip).
- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the former would receive 42% and the latter 49% of the vote (compared to 47% for Abbas and 45% for Haniyeh three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 36% of the vote (compared to 41% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives

62% (compared to 56% three months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 46% (compared to 51% three months ago) and Haniyeh 41% (compared to 41% three months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti receives 55% and Haniyeh 40%.

- If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 29% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 24% prefer Ismail Haniyeh. Mohammad Dahlan is preferred by 6% (1% in the West Bank and 16% in the Gaza Strip). Rami al Hamdallah is selected by 5%; Khalid Mishal by 4%; Mustafa Barghouti and Saeb Erikat by 2%; and Salam Fayyad by 1% each.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 69% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 34% say they would vote for Hamas and 35% say they would vote for Fatah, 10% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 21% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 27% and Fatah at 36%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 39% (compared to 34% three months ago) and for Fatah at 31% (compared to 32% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 29% (compared to 21% three months ago) and Fatah at 39% (compared to 38% three months ago).

## **(2) Domestic conditions:**

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 4% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 14%.
- In a close-ended question, we asked respondents to identify the party or side responsible for the worsening conditions in the Gaza Strip: Hamas, the PA and Abbas, Egypt, or others. The largest percentage (43%) blames the PA, president Abbas, and the reconciliation government; 21% blame Hamas, 9% blame Egypt, and 20% blame others. Responses of West Bankers differ from those of Gazans: 58% of Gazans, compared to 34% of West Bankers, blame the PA, Abbas and the reconciliation government; and 28% of Gazans, compared to 17% of West Bankers, blame Hamas.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 55%. In the West Bank perception of safety and security stands at 47%. Three months ago, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stood at 45% and in the West Bank at 48%.
- One third (32%) of the public says it wants to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage rises in the Gaza Strip to 48% and declines in the West Bank to 22%.
- Only 35% of the West Bankers say that people can criticize the authority in their area without fear and 61% say that they cannot. In the Gaza Strip, 48% say that people can criticize the authority in their area without fear and 50% believe that they cannot.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 80%.
- A majority of the public (53%) views the PA as a burden on the Palestinian people while 42% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people.
- We asked the public about its viewership habits in the last two months. Findings indicate that Al Jazeera TV viewership remains the highest, standing at 20%, followed by Al Aqsa TV (14%), Maan TV, Palestine TV, and Palestine Today (at 12% each), al Mayadeen and al Quds TV (5% each), and Al Arabiya (at 4%).

## **(3) Reconciliation and the reconciliation government:**

- 23% are satisfied and 66% are dissatisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government. Three months ago, satisfaction stood at 22%.

- 29% are optimistic and 66% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 30%.
- The public is opposed to Abbas' position that Hamas must fully hand over control over the Gaza Strip to the reconciliation government, including the ministries, the security sector, and the "arms:" only 34% agrees with Abbas' demand but a majority of 61% disagrees. Three months ago, 31% said they agreed with Abbas.
- When the question of "arms" was further clarified by asking the public if it supports or opposes the continued existence of armed factional battalions in the Gaza Strip alongside the official PA security sector forces, more than two-thirds (68%) said that they prefer to keep the armed battalions in place and only 25% said that they oppose the continued existence of the armed battalions in the Gaza Strip. It is worth noting that on this matter, there are no differences between the attitudes of the West Bankers and Gazans.
- Moreover, an overwhelming majority (77%) demands that the PA immediately lift all the measures taken against the Gaza Strip, such as public sector's salary deductions and the reduction in access to electricity; only 18% say that such measures should be removed only after Hamas fully hands over control over the Strip to the reconciliation government. It is worth mentioning that the demand for the immediate lifting of PA measures stands at 80% in the West Bank and 73% in the Gaza Strip.
- The largest percentage (47%) supports the dissolution of the Palestinian Legislative Council and 43% are opposed to that. Nonetheless, 37% believe that such a dissolution will harm the prospects of reconciliation while 21% believe it will improve the chances for reconciliation, and 34% believe it will have no impact on the reconciliation.

#### 4) Israel-Hamas confrontations in the Gaza Strip and the long-term *tahdia*, or truce:

- A majority of 61% (compared to 55% three months ago) supports and 33% oppose a Hamas-Israel long-term *tahdia*, or cessation of violence, even in the absence of reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. The agreement would entail the opening of the border crossing with Egypt and access to a seaport and an airport in a neighboring area in return for a Hamas enforcement of a long-term ceasefire as well as ending the Return Marches and the incendiary kites. Support for this long-term cessation of violence is higher in the Gaza Strip (64%) than in the West Bank (59%).
- Two-thirds (67%) support a limited *tahdia* (quiet) that would allow the entry into the Gaza Strip of Qatari fuel and money in return for stopping the confrontations along the Gaza-Israel border area including the incendiary balloons. Opposition to this *tahdia* stands at 28%. Support for this *tahdia* stands at 72% in the Gaza Strip and 64% in the West Bank.
- But a majority of 62% believes the current ceasefire between Hamas and Israel will not last for long and that it will collapse soon while 32% believe it will last for a long or a medium period.
- If the current ceasefire collapses, a majority of 62% believes it will lead to a widescale war between Hamas and Israel while 31% believe that a collapse of the ceasefire will not lead to a widescale war.
- But the public is split over the chances for reaching a long term *Tahdia* that would ease the siege and stop the confrontation: 50% believe the chances are high or medium and 48% think the chances are non-existent.
- 62% think that Hamas has come out victorious from the most recent confrontation with Israel while 31% think it has not come out victorious. By contrast, about two-thirds (66%) are dissatisfied and 25% are satisfied with the position taken by the PA and the PA leadership during the most recent confrontation in the Gaza Strip.

## **5) Social Security Law**

- 44% of the public believe that the Social Security Law applies to them or that they will be impacted by its implementation while 46% believe it does not apply to them or will not affect them.
- In its position toward the Social Security Law, the public is divided into three groups: (1) the largest one (51%) is opposed to the implementation of the law now or in the future; (2) only 13% support the implementation of the law now; and (3) 9% support the implementation of the law but only after it is revised. It is noticeable that opposition to the law in the West Bank is higher than it is in the Gaza Strip (65% and 28% respectively). Moreover, Opposition to the implementation of the law now or in the future is higher among those who say that the law applies to them or will affect them, reaching two-thirds (67%); and this is particularly true among West Bankers as opposition to the law stands among them at 84%.
- In an open question, addressed to those who said that they oppose the implementation of the law, we asked about the reasons for the opposition. Three answers were provided: 49% said the law is unjust, 32% said they do not trust the government and fear its corruption, and 14% said that their salaries are already too small and they cannot afford further cuts.
- Even if the law was revised as some demand, only 31% believe that the Social Security Fund or the government will actually make the payment to the retirees; a majority of 56% believes that the Fund and the government will not honor their commitment to pay the retirement wages.

## **6) Sale of Palestinian property to Israeli Jews**

- An overwhelming majority of the public (88%) designate other Palestinians who sell property to Israeli Jews in East Jerusalem and other occupied territories as traitors while 9% call them corrupt and unpatriotic.
- Three quarters believe that the current penalties for sale of property to Israeli Jews in East Jerusalem and other places do not provide a deterrence against such sales while 14% believe the current penalties provide a sufficient deterrent. When, in an open question, we asked the public to identify a deterrent punishment, about two-thirds (64%) said it is the death penalty while 22% said imprisonment.
- Findings show that more than three quarters (78%) are dissatisfied and 17% are satisfied with the measures taken by the PA to deter sale of properties by Palestinians to Israeli Jews.

## **7) Role of Qatar in the Gaza Strip**

- More than three quarters (78%) support the Qatari efforts to support the electricity sector in the Gaza Strip despite the fact that the PA is opposed to this Qatari effort; opposition to Qatari efforts does not exceed 19%.
- More significantly, an overwhelming majority of 79% supports the Qatari payment of salaries to the employees of the former Hamas government in the Gaza Strip despite the fact that the PA is opposed to this payment; opposition to the payment does not exceed 19%.
- Generally speaking, a large majority of 73% looks positively, and only 25% looks negatively, at the role played by Qatar on the Palestinian issue, particularly in the Gaza Strip. It is noticeable that there are no differences between the views of Gazans and West Bankers regarding the Qatari role.

## **8) Decisions of the Palestinian Central Council of the PLO**

- Two thirds (67%) support and 29% oppose the Central Council’s decision to suspend Palestinian recognition of the state of Israel until Israel recognizes the state of Palestine.
- Similarly, 72% support and 23% oppose the Central Council’s decision to stop security coordination with Israel; but more than two-thirds (70%) believe that the Palestinian leadership will not implement that decision and only 23% believe it will.

## 9) The peace process

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 43% and opposition at 55%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 47%. But support for the two-state solution rises to 52% when the borders of the Palestinian state are described as those of the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1967.
- Yet, when we asked the public to choose between the two-state solution, the one-state solution, or any other third solution, 45% said they prefer the two-state solution, 22% said they prefer the one-state solution, and 23% preferred some other solution. It should be noted however that in this question we have defined the two-state solution to mean “a Palestinian state alongside Israel based on the 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital.” The one-state solution was defined as “a state that includes Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in which Palestinians and Israeli Jews enjoy equal rights in all matters.” Three months ago, support for the two-state solution stood at 53%, for the one state solution at 24%, and 14% preferred a third undefined alternative.
- A majority of 63% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 35% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 73% believe that the chances for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel in the next five years are slim or nonexistence while 26% believe the chances to be medium or high.
- The most preferred way out of the current status quo is “reaching a peace agreement with Israel;” according to 34% of the public while an identical percentage prefers waging “an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.” Only 11% prefer “waging a non-violent resistance” and a minority of 16% prefers to keep the status quo. Three months ago, 40% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel.
- But a large minority of 44% thinks that armed struggle is the most effective means of establishing a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel while 28% believe that negotiation is the most effective means and 23% think non-violent resistance is the most effective. Three months ago, 39% said negotiation is the most effective means and 33% said armed struggle is the most effective means.
- An overwhelming majority of 77% say they are worried that in their daily life they would be hurt by Israelis or that their land would be confiscated or homes demolished; 23% say they are worried.
- 59% believe that Israel’s long-term aspiration is to expand the state of Israel to stretch from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea and to expel the Palestinian population, and 23% think that Israel aims at annexing the occupied territories and deny the Palestinian citizens their rights. By contrast, only 18% think that Israel’s long-term aspiration is to insure its security and then withdraw from all or parts of the occupied territories.
- In light of the suspension of peace negotiations, Palestinians support various alternative directions: 71% support joining more international organizations; 61% support popular non-violence resistance; 54% support a return to an armed intifada; 47% support dissolving the PA; and 32% support abandoning the two-state solution and demanding the establishment of one state for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, only 46% said they prefer a return to armed intifada and 42% said they prefer to dissolve the PA.

- Half of the public (50%) opposes and 47% support in principle the holding of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations in order to resolve the conflict.
- If a Palestinian state is established, about two-thirds (68%) want it to be armed with heavy weapons, such as tanks and air force, while 27% want it to have a strong security force but without heavy arms.
- After the establishment of a Palestinian state, a majority of 54% is opposed to the idea of a confederation between that state and Jordan while 40% support the idea.

#### **10) Trump's Peace Plan:**

- An overwhelming majority (80%) believes that the Trump Administration is not serious about launching a new peace plan and 16% believe it is serious.
- If the Trump Administration does nonetheless offer such a peace plan, 73% believe the chances for its success are slim or non-existent and 24% believe the chances are high or medium.
- A large majority of 72% believes that if the US does indeed offer a peace plan, it will not call for the establishment of a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel; 22% believe it will.
- A similar percentage (75%) believes that the plan will not call for a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem; 21% believe it will.
- 67% believe the Trump plan will not call for the borders of the Palestinian state to be based on the lines of June 1967 with minor mutual land swaps; 26% believe it will.
- An overwhelming majority of 80% believes the plan will not call for a just solution to the refugee problem; 16% believe it will.
- Similarly, 77% believe the plan will not call for the ending of the Israeli occupation and the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the areas occupied in 1967; 19% believe it will.
- 74% believe that the Palestinian leadership should reject the US plan, if offered, and 21% believe it should accept it.
- But if the Trump plan does indeed include all such items, such as a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, with borders based on the 1967 lines, a just solution to the refugees' problem, and an Israeli army withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, the largest percentage (49%) calls for rejecting it and 44% call for accepting it.
- A majority of 59% is opposed and 28% is not opposed to a resumption of dialogue between the Palestinian leadership and the Trump Administration. Official contacts between the PA and the US government were suspended by the PA after the US recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
- We asked the public if Palestinian-Israeli negotiations can be sustained without the US role as a mediator: A majority of 52% believes that it can while 43% view the US role as indispensable.

#### **11) Israeli relations with Arab countries:**

- 78% believe that the Arab World is preoccupied with its problems and internal conflicts and that Palestine is not its primary cause; 21% believe that Palestine remains the primary cause of the Arab World. Moreover, 72% believe that an alliance already exists between Sunni Arabs and Israel against Iran despite the continued Israeli occupation; 21% disagrees with this assessment.
- A majority of 60% believes that the visits by Israeli leaders to Arab countries are harming the prospects for peace while 10% believe they contribute to peace making; 27% believe they neither help nor hinder peace making.

- We asked the public to speculate about the motivation of some of the Arab countries in allowing such Israeli visits to their capitals. A majority of 60% said that they want to win the support of the Trump Administration, 17% said they are seeking to fight Iran, and 12% said they are interested in promoting Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

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

- 46% 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, one 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 in the eyes of 29% of the public is the continuation of occupation and settlement activities while 26% say it is poverty and unemployment; 25% say it is the spread of corruption in public institutions; 15% say it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings; and 3% say it is the absence of national unity.

**(13) The murder of Jamal Khashoggi:**

- A majority of 51% believes that Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman is the person responsible for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, while 26% put the blame for the murder on King Salman, and 9% put it on those employees reporting to the two leaders.