



المركز الفلسطيني للبحوث السياسية والمسحية

Palestinian Center for POLICY and SURVEY RESEARCH

Poll

Survey Research Unit

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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*



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](mailto:pcpsr@pcpsr.org)  
<http://www.pcpsr.org>

Press Release

Public Opinion Poll No (71)

**As about 80% reject the Trump peace plan expecting it to deny the Palestinians their most vital needs, the popularity of Fatah and Abbas rises as a result of the recent PA confrontation with Israel and the popularity of Hamas and Haniyyeh drops as a result of the forceful suppression of recent popular protests in the Gaza Strip, and as less than 30% of West Bankers indicate willingness to participate in the vote if restricted to parliamentary elections in the West Bank, three quarters demand the simultaneous holding of presidential and parliamentary elections in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip**

13-16 March 2019

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 13-16 March 2019. The period before the conduct of the fieldwork of the poll witnessed several developments including the dissolution of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) by the PA president, the announcement that a new PLC, but not presidential, elections will take place in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip within six months, the selection of Mohammad Shtayyeh to be the next prime minister following the resignation of the Hamdallah government, and the eruption of demonstrations in the Gaza Strip against high cost of living conditions and their violent suppression by Hamas' police and armed wing. The period also witnessed the implementation of Israel's decision to deduct a small amount of the Palestinian custom revenues it transfers every month to the PA and the PA response refusing to accept any of these funds, a Palestinian-Israeli escalation in al-Aqsa Mosque in the aftermath of a Waqf decision to re-open Bab al Rahma (Gate of Mercy) area for Muslim prayer and an Israeli ban on prayer in that area, and the formation of a new Israeli electoral list representing the center in preparation for Israeli parliamentary elections which are scheduled to take place next month. Finally, the US Administration announced during this period its intentions to release its peace plan, known as the "Deal of the Century," after the holding of the Israeli elections. This press release addresses many of these issues and covers other matters such as Palestinian 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%.

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

#### Main Findings:

Findings of the first quarter of 2019 indicate a rise in support for the two-state solution, but the largest percentage remains opposed to this solution. Support for negotiations, as the most effective means of establishing a

Palestinian state rises while the belief that armed struggle is the most effective means drops. But distrust in the seriousness of the Trump Administration increases. Similarly, findings show a significant rise in the belief that the Trump plan will not include a Palestinian state, nor will it include a reference to East Jerusalem as a capital for the state, or an emphasis on the 1967 borders, or a call to a just solution to the refugee problem, or a call to end the Israeli occupation and the withdrawal of the Israeli army. Given all these doubts about the plan, about 80% demand that the PA leadership reject the American plan when made public.

Findings also show that about three quarters of the public demand the simultaneous holding of presidential and parliamentary elections in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A similar percentage indicates its rejection of holding parliamentary elections if no presidential elections were held at the same time and if restricted to the West Bank. 60% would oppose elections, even if held in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, if restricted to a parliamentary vote. If the PA manages to hold parliamentary elections only and only in the West Bank, less than 30% of West Bankers say they will participate in that vote.

Findings also show that if presidential elections are held today, Abbas would win against Hamas' Haniyyeh. Three months ago, Haniyyeh was able to win against Abbas. Abbas' recent confrontation with the Israeli government over payment to the families of prisoners and martyrs and the deduction from the Palestinian custom revenues might have contributed to the rise in his popularity. By contrast, Hamas' violent suppression of the recent popular demonstrations in the Gaza Strip might have contributed to the decline in support for Haniyyeh. If parliamentary elections are held today, Fatah would win the largest share of the vote indicating a significant rise in its popularity compared to our findings three months ago. Support for Hamas on the other hand drops slightly compared to our findings three months ago. Vote for the two factions has probably been affected by the same factors that affected support for Abbas and Haniyyeh.

Findings indicate that the public is evenly divided over the selection of Shtayyeh as the next prime minister, one satisfied and the other dissatisfied with the selection. But the largest percentage believe a government led by Shtayyeh will not succeed in unifying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, or in organizing elections, or in improving Palestinian economic conditions. Given the Israeli decision to deduct part of the custom revenues Israel transfers to the PA on monthly basis and the PA response by refusing to accept any of those funds, a large majority expresses pessimism about the ability of the PA to pay salaries to its public sector and a majority says that this development could lead to PA collapse.

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

- Only 43% of the public expect elections, parliamentary or parliamentary and presidential, to take place in the Palestinian territories in the near future; 46% believe no elections will take place.
- An overwhelming majority (72%) wants elections to be for both, a parliament and a president, while only 10% want parliamentary elections only. 13% do not want any elections.
- An overwhelming majority (72%) expects Israel to refuse to allow election to take place in East Jerusalem and 15% expect Israel to allow it. Similarly, 53% believe that Hamas will not allow election to take place in the Gaza Strip if such vote was restricted to parliamentary elections and 33% believe it will allow such election.
- If elections were for a parliament and a president, 66% want Hamas to participate and to allow them in the Gaza Strip while 26% say they do not want Hamas to participate or allow elections in the Gaza Strip. But if elections were for a parliament only, 59% say they want Hamas to participate and to allow them in the Gaza Strip while 32% would oppose that.
- About three quarters (74%) oppose and 19% support the holding of parliamentary elections only and only in the West Bank. Similarly, 62% oppose and 31% support the holding of parliamentary elections only even if they are to take place in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- 54% say they will not participate in West Bank-Gaza Strip elections if they were restricted to a parliamentary vote and 41% say they will participate in such elections. Similarly, 61%

say they will not participate in elections if they were parliamentary only and if they were to take place in the West Bank only; 29% say they will participate in such elections.

- If elections were parliamentary only and took place only in the West Bank but some of the members of the new parliament were from the Gaza Strip, only 50% say such a parliament would represent both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip while 34% say it would represent the West Bank only. In the Gaza Strip, the largest percentage (48%) say such a parliament would represent the West Bank only and 45% say it would represent both areas.
- 54% are dissatisfied with the dissolution of the PLC while 37% say they are satisfied. It is worth noting that three months ago, before the actual dissolution of the PLC, 47% said they would support its dissolution and 43% said they would oppose such a step. Today, 53% view the dissolution of the PLC as illegal and unconstitutional while 33% view it as legal and constitutional.
- 64% are worried and 34% are not worried that domestic conditions would deteriorate in case the position of the president become vacant. But 47% believe that when the position of the president is vacant, Palestinian factions will be able to reach an agreement on conducting presidential elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in order to elect a successor; 45% believe that the factions will not reach such an agreement
- 60% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 35% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 64% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 55% in the West Bank and 68% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, demand for Abbas resignation stood at 55% in the West Bank and 77% in the Gaza Strip.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 34% and dissatisfaction at 62%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 40% in the West Bank and 24% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, satisfaction with Abbas stood at 32% (38% 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 51% and the latter 41% of the vote (compared to 42% for Abbas and 49% for Haniyeh three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 47% of the vote (compared to 36% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives 51% (compared to 62% three months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 55% (compared to 46% three months ago) and Haniyeh 33% (compared to 41% three months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti receives 64% and Haniyeh 33%.
- If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 35% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 19% prefer Ismail Haniyeh. Mohammad Dahlan is preferred by 7% (2% in the West Bank and 16% in the Gaza Strip). Rami al Hamdallah is selected by 4%; Khalid Mishal, Saeb Erikat, and Mustafa Barghouti by 3% each, and Salam Fayyad by 2%.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 70% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 32% say they would vote for Hamas and 39% say they would vote for Fatah, 8% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 18% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 34% and Fatah at 35%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 39% (compared to 39% three months ago) and for Fatah at 32% (compared to 31% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 26% (compared to 29% three months ago) and Fatah at 45% (compared to 39% three months ago).
- A majority of 54% view and 42% do not view the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It is worth noting that the belief that the PLO is the sole

legitimate representative of the Palestinian people stood at 58% nine months ago and at 69% thirteen years ago.

**(2) Mohammad Shtayyeh, a new prime minister:**

- 38% are satisfied and 40% are dissatisfied with the selection of Mohammad Shtayyeh as the next prime minister. In the Gaza Strip, dissatisfaction reaches 52%.
- The largest percentage (48%) believes that a government led by Shtayyeh will not succeed in achieving reconciliation and unifying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip while 35% believe it will succeed.
- Similarly, the largest percentage (44%) believes that a government led by Shtayyeh will not be able to organize legislative and presidential elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip while 40% think it will succeed.
- Half of the public believes that a Shtayyeh government will not be able to improve economic conditions in the PA while 36% believe it will be able to do that.

**(3) Domestic conditions:**

- Now after Israel deducted part of the custom revenues it transfers to the PA and after the PA has refused to accept the incomplete transfer, an overwhelming majority (69%) is worried and 25% are not worried that the PA will not be able to pay salaries to its public sector. Moreover 54% are worried and 40% are not worried that the PA's inability to pay salaries to its public sector will lead to PA collapse
- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 4% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 20%.
- In a close-ended question, we asked respondents to identify the party or side responsible for the worsening conditions in the Gaza Strip: Israel, Hamas, the PA and Abbas, Egypt, or others. The largest percentage (37%) blames Israel while 25% blame Abbas and the PA, 21% blame Hamas, 4% blame Egypt, and 9% blame others. Responses of West Bankers differ from those of Gazans: 41% of Gazans, compared to 16% of West Bankers, blame Abbas and the PA and 27% of Gazans, compared to 17% of West Bankers, blame Hamas.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 64%. In the West Bank perception of safety and security stands at 57%. Three months ago, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stood at 55% and in the West Bank at 47%.
- 29% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage rises in the Gaza Strip to 43% and declines in the West Bank to 20%.
- Only 32% of the West Bankers say that people can criticize the authority in their area without fear and 65% say that they cannot. In the Gaza Strip, 41% say that people can criticize the authority in their area without fear and 53% believe that they cannot.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 82%.
- The public is divided over the assessment of the PA: 47% view it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 47% 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 18%, followed by Palestine and Al Aqsa TV (14% each), Maan TV and Palestine Today (at 12% each), Al Arabiya (at 6%) and al Mayadeen (at 5%).

**(4) Reconciliation and the reconciliation government:**

- 30% are optimistic and 67% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 29%.

- 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 38% agrees with Abbas' demand but a majority of 58% disagrees. Three months ago, 34% 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, 71% said that they prefer to keep the armed battalions in place and only 24% 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 major differences between the attitudes of the West Bankers and Gazans.
- Moreover, an overwhelming majority (82%) 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 14% say that such measures should be removed only after Hamas fully hands over control over the Strip to the reconciliation government.

### 5) The peace process

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 48% and opposition at 50%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 43%.
- Yet, when we asked the public to choose between the two-state solution, the one-state solution, or any other third solution, 49% said they prefer the two-state solution, 17% 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 45%, for the one state solution at 22%, and 23% preferred a third undefined alternative.
- A majority of 58% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 37% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 77% 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 21% 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 39% of the public while 30% prefer waging "an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation." Only 11% prefer "waging a non-violent resistance" and a minority of 17% prefers to keep the status quo. Three months ago, 34% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel and 34% said they prefer waging an armed struggle.
- The public is divided over the role of negotiations and armed struggle in the establishment of a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel: 37% think that negotiation is the most effective means while 36% think armed struggle is the most effective means, while 22% believe that non-violent resistance is the most effective. Three months ago, 28% said negotiation is the most effective means and 44% said armed struggle is the most effective means.
- In light of the suspension of peace negotiations, Palestinians support various alternative directions: 55% support popular non-violent resistance; 47% support a return to an armed intifada; 41% support dissolving the PA; and 31% support abandoning the two-state solution and demanding the establishment of one state for Palestinians and Israelis. Three

months ago, 54% said they prefer a return to armed intifada and 47% said they prefer to dissolve the PA.

- 65% support and 31% oppose the PLO Central Council's decision to stop security coordination with Israel. But 78% believe that the PA leadership and security services will not stop security coordination with Israel
- More than three quarters (76%) believe that if Israel ban Muslim prayer at al Rahma Gate (Gate of Mercy) area, Palestinian protests will succeed, as the case was with the metal detector gates, in forcing Israel to allow such prayer; 21% believe Palestinian protests will not succeed this time.
- A majority 64% believe that visits of Israeli officials to Arab countries damage the chances for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; 8% believe the visits help to promote peace and 26% believe they neither help nor hurt conflict resolution.
- A slim majority of 51% expect the Israeli right wing led by Netanyahu to win the upcoming Israeli elections and 22% expect the center-left led by Gantz to win the elections. But three quarters believe that even if the center-left win the elections, conditions will stay as they are today or become worse; only 10% expect Palestinian-Israeli conditions to improve in that case.

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

- An overwhelming majority (83%) believes that the Trump Administration is not serious about launching a new peace plan and 12% believe it is serious.
- A large majority of 79% 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; 15% believe it will.
- A similar percentage (81%) believes that the plan will not call for a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem; 14% believe it will.
- 78% 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; 17% believe it will.
- An overwhelming majority of 84% believes the plan will not call for a just solution to the refugee problem; 10% believe it will.
- Similarly, 84% 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; 11% believe it will.
- 79% believe that the Palestinian leadership should reject the US plan, if offered, and 14% 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, a majority of 52% calls for rejecting it and 43% call for accepting it. Call for accepting the plan is higher in the Gaza Strip, standing at 55% while the call for rejecting it is higher in the West Bank, standing at 59%.
- A majority of 64% is opposed and 23% 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.