

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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### Press Release

#### Public Opinion Poll No (73)

**While a majority is dissatisfied with the behavior of the PA and Palestinian factions in response to the Israeli demolition of homes in Wadi al Hommos, a greater majority believes that Abbas' response, to stop implementation of agreements with Israel, is merely a media stunt and will not be implemented; and while support for two-state solution declines, support for armed attacks rises and an overwhelming majority rejects the US "deal of the century" and believes it will not end the occupation. In domestic matters, an overwhelming majority views "honor killing" as a heinous crime, a majority has no trust in the Palestinian judiciary, and more than 60% demand the resignation of president Abbas**

11-14 September 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 11-14 September 2019. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including a presidential termination of the work of the Supreme Judicial Council and the formation of a transitional one, a presidential statement requiring former ministers, who illegally received salary increases, to return these funds, and a widespread internal debate over "honor killing" in the context of the death of a woman from Bethlehem in suspicious circumstances. In relations with Israel, five main developments occurred during this period: an Israeli demolition of a large built up area in Wadi Hommos which is located in an area under PA zoning control, responding to this incident, Abbas announced his intention to suspend the implementation of agreements with Israel, an explosive device was detonated in an area near the settlement of Dolev, west of Ramallah, killing an Israeli woman, Israeli prime minister Netanyahu announced his intentions to annex the Jordan Valley if he wins the Israeli elections scheduled for 17 September 2019, and finally, Israel transferred to the PA about two billion Shekels from the Palestinian custom revenues which the PA had previously announced it will not accept if it was not transferred in full. On Palestinian-American relations, US ambassador David Friedman stated that the US peace plan does not call for the creation of a Palestinian state but that it allows for Palestinian autonomy. 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 peace process. Total size of the sample is 1200 adults interviewed face to face in 120 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is +/-3%.

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## **Main Findings:**

Findings of the third quarter of 2019 show an overwhelming majority, reaching about three quarters, dissatisfied with the performance of the PA and the political factions in their response to the Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes in Wadi al Hommos, near Jerusalem. The majority views the response of president Abbas to the demolition—by declaring that the PA is stopping its implementation of the agreements with Israel— as inappropriate. Indeed, an overwhelming majority, exceeding three quarters of the public, believes that Abbas’ decision is merely a media stunt aiming at absorbing public anger with the PA leadership over its failure to prevent Israel from carrying out that demolition. Furthermore, public anger with the PA is probably driven by the belief of more than 80% that the Palestinian leadership will not implement the decision to stop implementing the agreements with Israel.

In domestic matters, findings show that the overwhelming majority of the public views “honor killing” of women as a heinous crime that must be punished severely. Only 10% think that this type of crimes is understandable and punishment should thereby be reduced. By contrast, findings show that almost half of the public, much more in the Gaza Strip, believes human beings can be possessed by Jinn or demons while a slightly smaller percentage believes this to be a superstition.

Findings also show that Shtayyeh’s government has failed so far in winning the trust of the public. Indeed, public trust in the ability of the government to perform better than the previous government has declined compared to the findings three months ago. Similarly, the public is dissatisfied with the performance of the judiciary, particularly the courts, with about two-thirds believing that its functioning is marred by corruption, lack of independence, or that it rules not according to the law but in accordance with whims and personal interests. But the public is evenly divided in its satisfaction with the decisions made by Abbas regarding the judiciary. Moreover, the largest percentage believes that the Transitional Judicial Council will not succeed in the next year or two in reforming the judiciary. Furthermore, trust in the presidency is also low as more than 60% demand the resignation of president Abbas; slightly more than a third wants him to stay in office. If Abbas runs in a presidential election against Ismail Haniyyeh, the votes would be very close.

In foreign affairs, findings show that the largest percentage of the Palestinians, particularly in the West Bank, does not view Iran as a friend or an ally of the Palestinians. Yet, a majority, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, believes that if war breaks out between Iran and Israel, the former would be able to defeat the latter, as Iran is believed to have a stronger military force.

In light of prime minister Netanyahu’s statement announcing his intentions to annex the Jordan Valley, findings show a significant increase in the percentage of those who believe that the two-state solution is no longer feasible or practical. As in the past, feasibility is linked to support for the two-state solution. Findings show a significant decline in support for that solution accompanied by an increased support for armed attacks against Israelis. Moreover, public perception of the Trump peace plan continues to worsen, compared to attitudes two years ago, with two-thirds of the public demanding the Palestinian leadership to reject the plan out of hand even before reading the plan’s content, because it must be bad. More than 80% reject the idea presented by the US ambassador to Israel offering self-rule, rather than sovereign and independent statehood, to the Palestinians. More than 70% oppose resumption of the dialogue with the Trump Administration.

### **(1) Home demolition in Wadi al Hommos and Abbas’ response by suspending implementation of agreements with Israel:**

- An overwhelming majority of 74% thinks that the PA and the political factions have not done all they could to prevent the Israeli demolition of buildings and homes in Wadi al Hommos near Jerusalem and 19% think they have done their best.
- Two thirds of the public (66%) believe that it was the duty of the PA and its security services and the police to protect the homes in Wadi al Hommos by serving as a buffer between the buildings and the Israeli bulldozers.
- 61% say that Abbas’ decision to suspend implementation of agreements with Israel was not the most appropriate response to the demolition of homes in Wadi al Hommos while 32% think it was the appropriate response.

- A large majority of 71% thinks that by suspending agreements with Israel, Abbas does not mean dissolving the PA and 18% think he does mean that.
- Similarly, a majority of 67% thinks that by suspending agreements with Israel, Abbas does not mean ending security coordination with Israel and 24% think he does mean that.
- A large majority of 69% thinks that by suspending agreements with Israel, Abbas does not mean ending civil coordination with Israel and 19% think he does mean that.
- A large majority of 69% thinks that by suspending agreements with Israel, Abbas does not mean annulling the PLO recognition of Israel and 20% think he does mean that.
- A large majority of 76% thinks that by suspending agreements with Israel, Abbas does not mean ending negotiations with Israel and returning to armed struggle and 15% think he does mean that.
- A large majority of 65% thinks that by suspending agreements with Israel, Abbas does not mean returning to Israel those VIP cards issued to senior PA officials and 22% think he does mean that.
- We asked the public if it thinks the PA is serious about implementing Abbas' decision to suspend implementation of agreements with Israel. An overwhelming majority of 78% says the PA will not do that and only 16% say it will.
- Similarly, we asked the public about Abbas' motivation behind making the decision to suspend implementation of agreements with Israel. A similar overwhelming majority (76%) indicates that the president's decision is a media stunt or ploy and it will not be implemented while only 16% say the decision is serious and will be implemented.

**(2) “Honor killing,” Jinn possession, economic conditions, the performance of the Shtayyeh government, and others:**

- An overwhelming majority of 81% (90% in the West Bank and 66% in the Gaza Strip) say that “honor killing” is an dreadful crime that should be punished severely while 7% say that it is a normal crime that should be punished like any other crime. Only 10% (5% in the West Bank and 19% in the Gaza Strip) say that it is an understandable act that should be punished lightly.
- The public is divided on the issue of humans being possessed by Jinn or demons: 48% (37% in the West Bank and 67% in the Gaza Strip) say they believe it is real while 44% (56% in the West Bank and 24% in the Gaza Strip) believe it is superstition.
- 59% of the public say that their income has declined during the past six months due to the inability of the PA to pay the salary of the public sector in full; 35% say their income did not change and 4% say it has increased.
- A majority of 54% supports and 37% oppose the PA decision to refuse to accept a partial transfer of custom revenues. However, 43% say that they are worried that this decision could lead to the collapse of the PA while 50% indicate that it could not. Three months ago, 62% said they supported the PA decision to refuse to accept a partial transfer of custom revenues and 52% said they were worried that this decision could lead to PA collapse.
- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 8% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 22%.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 63% and in the West Bank at 52%. Three months ago, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stood at 67% and in the West Bank at 59%.
- 31% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage rises in the Gaza Strip to 41% and declines in the West Bank to 24%.

- Only 36% of the West Bankers say that people can criticize the authority in their area without fear and 59% say that they cannot. Three months ago, 57% of West Bankers said they could not criticize the PA in the West Bank without fear. In the Gaza Strip, 43% say that people in the Gaza Strip can criticize Hamas authority without fear and 53% say they cannot.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 80% while perception of corruption in the institutions controlled by Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands at 65%. When asked about Abbas decision mandating that ministers of the previous government return illegal pay raise they received, 80% said this measure was not sufficient.
- The public is divided over its assessment of the PA: 49% view it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 46% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people.
- With more than five months passing since the formation of the Shtayyeh government, findings indicate that a majority, or a plurality, of the public views its performance as similar to that of the previous government in matters of security (44%), the economy (37%), the reunification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (50%), the preparation to hold general elections (49%), and the protection of liberties and human rights (47%). But a percentage ranging between 50% and 32% indicates that it believes the performance to be worse than that of the previous government while a percentage ranging between 16% and 8% indicates that the performance of the Shtayyeh government is better than that of the previous government. These findings indicate a drop in public's positive evaluation of the of the Shtayyeh government compared to our findings three months ago.
- Responding to a question about expectations regarding the ability of the Shtayyeh government to make progress in reconciliation and reunification, 61% expects failure; only 27% expects success.
- In a similar question about the ability of the new government to organize legislative or legislative and presidential elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a majority of 58% expects failure and 30% expects success.
- In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 60% expects failure and 28% expects success.
- 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 19%, followed by Al Aqsa TV and Maan TV (13% each), Palestine TV (12%), Palestine Today TV (11%), al Al Arabiya (5%), and al Mayadeen (4%).

### **3) Public evaluation of the judiciary and views on the president's decisions regarding the judiciary:**

- A majority of 60% (65% in the West Bank and 52% in the Gaza Strip) believes that it will not receive a fair trial if it finds itself in a Palestinian court while 32% (26% in the West Bank and 41% in the Gaza Strip) believe that will receive a fair trial.
- A majority of 63% (72% in the West Bank and 48% in the Gaza Strip) thinks that the Palestinian judiciary is marred by corruption, lacks independence, or rules according to whims and interests; 29% disagree and believe that it is has integrity, independence, or rules according to the law.
- The public makes a similar assessment of Palestinian layers: 66% (74% in the West Bank and 53% in the Gaza Strip) think lawyers' work is marred by corruption and incompetence and that lawyers are untruthful with clients; 25% think lawyers' work has integrity, competent, and lawyers are truthful with the clients.
- The public is divided in its view of Abbas' decision to lower the retirement age for judges, to dismiss the Supreme Judicial Council, and to appoint a Transition Supreme Judicial Council: 42% are in favor, 42% are not in favor, and 16% are uncertain.

- 49% believe that the Transitional Judicial Council will not succeed in the next year or two in reforming the judiciary while 36% believe it will succeed.
- A plurality of 47% does not agree and 39% agree, with the view that the judicial matters are not part of jurisdiction of the PA president or that his decisions regarding the judiciary constitute an interference in the affairs of the judiciary.
- The public is divided on the view that Abbas' decision regarding the judiciary was necessary in light of the fact that it has failed to reform itself: 43% agree and an identical percentage disagree with this statement.

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

- Only 38% of the public expect elections, parliamentary or parliamentary and presidential, to take place in the Palestinian territories in the near future; 49% believe no elections will take place.
- An overwhelming majority (72%) wants elections to be for both, a parliament and a president, while only 12% want parliamentary elections only. 12% do not want any elections.
- If elections were held for a parliament and a president, 69% want Hamas to participate and to allow them in the Gaza Strip while 21% say they do not want Hamas to participate or allow elections in the Gaza Strip.
- 61% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 35% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 57% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 55% in the West Bank and 73% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, demand for Abbas resignation stood at 49% in the West Bank and 71% in the Gaza Strip.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 37% and dissatisfaction at 60%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 43% in the West Bank and 29% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, satisfaction with Abbas stood at 38% (42% in the West Bank and 27% 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 48% and the latter 46% of the vote (compared to 48% for Abbas and 42% for Haniyeh three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 39% of the vote (compared to 43% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives 57% (compared to 52% three months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 56% (compared to 52% three months ago) and Haniyeh 36% (compared to 36% three months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti receives 62% and Haniyeh 34%.
- We asked about potential Abbas successors: If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 36% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 19% prefer Ismail Haniyeh. Mohammad Dahlan is preferred by 8% (2% in the West Bank and 19% in the Gaza Strip), Mustafa Barghouti by 4%, and Khalid Mishal and Salam Fayyad by 3% each.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 66% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 29% say they would vote for Hamas and 38% say they would vote for Fatah, 11% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 23% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 30% and Fatah at 39%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 39% (compared to 38% three months ago) and for Fatah at 31% (compared to 33% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 20% (compared to 25% three months ago) and Fatah at 43% (compared to 43% three months ago).

##### **(5) Reconciliation, Hamas and Iran:**

- 30% are optimistic and 67% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 33%.
- Moreover, the overwhelming majority (72%) 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 23% say that such measures should be removed only after Hamas fully hands over control over the Strip to the PA government.
- A majority of 52% (down to 37% in the Gaza Strip) believes that the chances for a Hamas-Israel agreement on a long term hudna or cessation of violence are slim while 36% believe the chances are medium and only 9% believe the chances are high.
- In the context of the visit of a senior Hamas delegation to Iran, we asked the public to tell us how it views Iran: a plurality of 48% says Iran is not a friend or ally to the Palestinians and 40% (36% in the West Bank and 48% in the Gaza Strip) say it is a friend and ally.
- In the context of statements by Iran and its allies indicating that the Islamic republic has a military capacity to defeat Israel in war, we asked the public if it believes this to be true: 55% say they believe this to be true and 32% believe it to be untrue.

##### **(6) The Trump peace plan:**

- We asked the public if Palestinian acceptance of the Trump peace plan would lead to the end of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank: 83% say no; only 9% say yes it would.
- When asked if the Trump peace plan permits Israel to annex a large part of the West Bank, a large majority of 65% of the public says it does and only 27% say it does not.
- Two thirds (67%) believe that in response to a Palestinian rejection of the Trump peace plan, the US will impose further sanctions on the Palestinians; 23% say it will amend its plan in case of Palestinian rejection.
- A large majority of 69% believes that the Palestinian leadership should reject the US plan; 19% say it should accept it with reservations; and 5% believe it should accept it without reservation. Three months ago, 75% said the PA leadership should reject the plan.
- We asked this same question with a slightly different options: 64% indicate that the Palestinian leadership should reject out of hand the US "deal of the century" if the US presents its plan because it must be bad for the Palestinians; 21% want the PA to examine the substance of the plan before accepting or rejecting it; and 9% believe the leadership should accept the plan out of hand because it will certainly be better than the status quo. A year ago, only 50% said the PA should reject the plan out of hand.
- An overwhelming majority of 81% reject the proposed self-rule idea that deny Palestinian statehood that was proposed by US ambassador to Israel David Friedman while 9% say they accept it and 10% are uncertain.
- Similarly, 72% say that they are against, and 22% for, American ideas proposed to solve the refugee problem in which Palestinian refugees are offered full citizenship and rights in the host countries and in which the host countries receive billions of US dollars in assistance and investments.
- A majority of 68% is opposed and 20% 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, in December 2017, recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

##### **7) The peace process:**

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 42% and opposition at 56%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 47%. 37% of the public believe that a majority of the Palestinians supports this solution and 56% believe that the majority opposes it.

- A majority of 63% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 34% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 78% 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 32% of the public while 37% prefer waging “an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.” Only 10% prefer “waging a non-violent resistance” and 17% prefer to keep the status quo. Three months ago, 36% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel and 34% said they prefer waging an armed struggle.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation, the largest group (44%) chose armed struggle, 24% negotiations, and 22% popular resistance. Three months ago, 38% chose armed struggle and 31% chose negotiations.
- In light of the suspension of peace negotiations, Palestinians support various alternative directions: 62% support popular non-violent resistance; 50% support a return to an armed intifada; 40% 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, 47% said they prefer a return to armed intifada and 38% said they prefer to dissolve the PA.
- We asked about the armed attack that took place few weeks ago in an area west of Ramallah, near the settlement of Dolve, in which one Israeli woman was killed: 61% (49% in the West Bank and 80% in the Gaza Strip) supported it and 33% opposed it. A majority of 54% views the attack as a one-time, lone wolf, event while 39% think it is the beginning of the return to armed struggle.
- An overwhelming majority of 83% supports the local and international boycott movement against Israel while 15% are opposed to it. A majority of 52% say that they are currently boycotting non-essential Israeli products and those that have non-Israeli substitutes while 33% say they are not. 57% say the boycott of non-essential Israeli products and those that have non-Israeli substitutes will be effective in contributing to the end of occupation and 42% say it will not.
- About two-thirds of the public believe that the European countries will not boycott Israel or impose sanctions on it while 26% believe they will.
- An overwhelming majority of 74% says that Palestinians should condemn visits of Arab journalists to Israel while 7% say the visits should be encouraged.
- A majority of 52% expects the Israeli right wing led by Netanyahu to win the upcoming Israeli elections and 19% expect the center-left led by Gantz to win the elections; 29% do not know who is likely to win.
- About half of the public (48%) does not encourage the participation of the Joint Arab List in an Israeli government coalition led by the center and the left while 37% encourage such participation and 15% have no opinion.
- The public is divided in its position regarding the participation of the Palestinian citizens of Israel in the Knesset elections: 46% support and 42% oppose such participation.

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

- 44% 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, 33% 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 9% 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 28% of the public is poverty and unemployment while 25% say it is the continuation of occupation and settlement activities; another 25% say it is the spread of corruption in public institutions; and 15% say it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings.