

Center for Palestine Research & Studies (CPRS)

Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (30)

27-29 November 1997

Elections for a President and a Vice-President of the PA, the Peace Process, Corruption, and Political Affiliation

These are the results of opinion poll #30, conducted by the Center for Palestine Research & Studies, between 27-29 November 1997. The poll deals with Elections for a President and a Vice-President of the PA, the Peace Process, Corruption, and Political Affiliation. The total sample size of this poll is 1323 from Palestinians 18 years and older, of which 823 in the West Bank and 500 in the Gaza Strip. The margin of error is $\pm 3\%$, and the non-response rate is 3%.

1. Elections for a President and a Vice-President of the PA

- **For a President: Yasser Arafat 62%, Ahmad Yassin 3%, Haider Abdul Shafi 3%.**
- **For a Vice-President: Abu Mazen 5%, Sa'eb Erikat 5%, Ahmad Qourai' 4%, Haider Abdul Shafi 4%, Ahmad Yassin 3%, Farouq al-Qaddoumi 2%, Nabil Sha'ath 2%.**

The results of this poll indicate that if new elections for a president of the PA were held today, Yasser Arafat would win by a large margin receiving 62% of the votes of respondents. Ahmad Yassin and Haider Abdul Shafi received 3% each while 15 other Palestinian leaders received less than 1% each. The low level of support for Yassin is surprising in light of the fact that Hamas' popularity has risen in this poll to 12%. Even more surprising was the fact that more of Hamas supporters gave their votes to Arafat rather than Yassin (44% for Arafat vs. 11% for Yassin).

Furthermore, the results show that a major change has taken place regarding the popularity of both, Yassin and Abdul Shafi. In November 1994 (See CPRS Poll 13), Ahmad Yassin's popularity stood at 20% declining to 14% about a year later. During the same period, Abdul Shafi's popularity declined slightly from 9% to 8%. On the other hand, Arafat's popularity went up from 44% in November 1994 to 58% in October 1995. (see table below) It is important to note here that the format of the question was different in the first two polls from the current one. In the first two, respondents were asked to select a name from among a list containing the names of the three mentioned above in addition to George Habash. In the current poll respondents were asked to state their preference without such list. Based on previous cases, CPRS has found that such a change may have a direct impact on the results obtained.

	Yassir Arafat	Ahmad Yassin	Haidar Abdul Shafi
November 1994	44%	20%	9%
October 1995	58%	14%	8%
November 1997	62%	3%	3%

Regarding the vote for a vice-president, no Palestinian leader was able to gain more than 5% of the votes of the respondents. Abu Mazin and Saeb Erekat received 5% each; PLC Speaker Ahamd Qurai' and Haider Abdul Shafi received 4% each; Ahmad Yassin Received 3%; Farouq al-Qadoumi and Nabil Sha'ath received 2% each. Ten other Palestinian leaders received less than 2% each, and 49% (No Opinion).

These results indicate that there is no single prominent Palestinian leader who is seen by the man in the street as a "natural" vice-president. They also indicate that a major change has taken place with regard to the popularity of some known Palestinian leaders. A CPRS poll conducted in January 1995 found that Faisal al-Husaini and Farouq al-Qaddoumi had received the highest level of support with 16% going to the first and 12% to the second. Also in January 1995, Nabil Sha'ath received 13%, Hanan Ashrawi received 10%; and Abu Mazin received 7%; while 15% of the respondents selected other candidates and 29% refused to name a vice-president. It is important to indicate here too that the question format was different in the January 1995 poll from the current one. In the first one, respondents were asked to select a name from among a list containing the names of the three mentioned above in addition to George Habash, while in the current poll respondents were asked to state their preference without such a list.

2. The Peace Process

- **A majority of 68% supports the peace process; 28% oppose it.**
- **68% are optimistic about the Palestinian future, and 62% expect a Palestinian state in the coming years.**

The results indicate that a majority of 68% supports the peace process today, while 28% oppose it. A CPRS September 1997 poll found that 59% of respondents support the Oslo agreement while 34% oppose it. A CPRS June 1997 poll found that 68% support the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians.

Opposition to the peace process increases in Jerusalem (40%) compared to Jenin, Khan Younis and Rafah (16%, 20%, and 21% respectively); between men (35%) compared to women (21%); between the young (35% among those between 28-32 years of age) compared to the old (15% among those between 48-52 years of age); between refugees (31%) compared to non-refugees (26%); between the more educated (44% among BA degree holders) compared to the illiterates (12%); between students (39%) compared to housewives (17%); between high income people (42% among those whose monthly income exceeds \$1285) compared to low income people (24% among those whose monthly income is less than \$430). Support for the peace process also increases among supporters of Fateh (83%) compared to supporters of Hamas and the PFLP (54% and 38% respectively).

The poll found that 82% of respondents describe themselves as having been supportive of the peace process when it started, while 16% describe themselves as having been opposed to the process. The poll found that the current opposition to the peace process stems from disillusionment over the results of the process (40%). To a lesser degree it also stems from unacceptable Palestinian concessions (33%), or due to ideological and religious opposition to peace with Israel (20%).

The results also show that those opposed to the peace process lack an alternative option to it and that most of them prefer "waiting" (38%), while 27% prefer "armed struggle" and 16% prefer a resort to the "Intifada."

Despite the high level of support for the peace process, a large percentage of people (47%) describe their economic conditions as having become worse after the peace process, while only 14% say that they have become better off. These results indicate a slight improvement in the respondents' perception of their personal economic conditions compared to the situation prevailing in March 1995 when a CPRS poll indicated that 53% felt that they have become worse off while only 8% indicated that they have become better off.

Despite the deteriorating personal economic conditions of many of the respondents, the majority looks optimistically at the future and expects the emergence of a Palestinian State in the coming years. The poll results show that 68% of the respondents are optimistic about the Palestinian future while only 28% are pessimistic. Parallel to this, a majority of 62% expressed the expectation that a Palestinian State will be established in the coming years while 30% did not share such expectations. These results point to a positive change compared to how Palestinians felt in previous CPRS polls. Expectations regarding statehood stood at 50% in March 1997, 51% in September 1996, and 55% in February 1995. Arafat's recent talk about his intention to declare a Palestinian State in 1999 may have caused the rise in expectations. Levels of optimism stood at 64% in March 1997, 53% in September 1996, and 49% in September 1995. These results indicate that respondents' support for the peace process is correlated more with people's expectations regarding the future of their country more than with people's personal economic conditions.

The poll found that the **realistic** solution most acceptable to the Palestinians is the one based on the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza (41%), while the solution based on the establishment of a Palestinate in the whole of Palestine within its 1948 bouis acceptable to 28%, and the solution based on the establishment of a bi-national state in the Palestine of 1948 is acceptable to 18%.

The level of acceptance for a solution based on a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza is higher in the West Bank (44%) than in Gaza (35%); among residents of Bethlehem, Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm (56%, 53%, 51%, and 49% respectively) compared to residents of Ramallah, Khan Younis, and Gaza City (30%, 33%, and 34% respectively); among residents of villages and towns (43%) compared to residents of refugee camps (37%); among men (46%) compared to women (37%); among the old (49% among those between 48-52 years of age) compared to the young (35% among those between 18-22 years of age); among BA degree holders (48%) compared to the illiterates (35%); among employees, merchants, and workers (52%, 49%, and 49% respectively) compared to students (33%). The poll results also show that the level of acceptance of the solution based on a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza is the same for the supporters of Fateh and the PFLP (46% and 45% respectively) and surprisingly enough not far away from the level for Hamas supporters (36%).

3. Corruption

- **A majority of 63% believe corruption exists in PA institutions.**
- **48% believe corruption will increase or remain as it is in the future.**
- **61% believe that PA acts in accordance with Palestinian public interest.**

The poll found that a large percentage of 63% believe that corruption exists in PA institutions and that 48% believe that the corruption will increase or remain as it is in the future while 32% believe that it will decrease. A CPRS September 1997 poll found that 65% of respondents believed that corruption existed in PA institutions compared to 63% in June 1997, 57% in April 1997, and 49% in September 1996. The percentage of those who believe that corruption will increase or will stay as it is in the future was 47% in September 1997 and 57% in June 1997.

The percentage of those who believe in the existence of corruption in PA institutions is larger in the Gaza Strip (65%) than in the West Bank (61%); among residents of Ramallah and Jerusalem (67% each) compared to Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilia (49%, 53%, and 41% respectively); among residents of refugee camps (70%) compared to residents of villages and towns (60%); among men (72%) compared to women (53%); among the young (70% among those between 23-27 years of age) compared to the old (58% among those between 48-52 years of age); among BA degree holder (84%) compared to illiterates (41%); among specialists, merchants, employees, and students (91%, 83%, 81%, and 76% respectively) compared to housewives (49%); among high income people (81% among those with a monthly income of more than \$1285) compared to low income people (57% among those whose monthly income is less than \$430). The percentage of those who believe in the existence of corruption in PA institutions is also larger among supporters of the PFLP and Hamas (77% and 71% respectively) compared to Fateh supporters and the non-affiliated (58% each).

Despite the rise in the level of those who believe in the existence of corruption in PA institutions, a majority of 61% believe that the PA acts in accordance with the public interest of its citizens, while 29% believe that it does not. It is surprising to find that a majority of those supporting opposition factions believe, nonetheless that the PA acts in accordance with the public interest: 53% among Hamas supporters and 49% among PFLP supporters compared to 77% among supporters of Fateh and 49% among the non-affiliated.

4. Political Affiliation

- **Fatah receives 43%, Hamas 12%, and PFLP 4%.**

Fatah still enjoys the highest level of support in the Palestinian street (43%). The popularity of Fateh had declined in CPRS September 1997 poll to 37% compared to 41% in June 1997. Support for Hamas has increased from 9% in September 1997 to 12% in this poll. The percentage of the non-affiliated has decreased from 47% in the September poll to 37% in this one. The PFLP received the support of 4% while Islamic Jihad received 2%.

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	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %
Unemployment	27.0	23.0	34.0
1. In your opinion, does the Palestinian Authority act according to the public interest of its citizens?			
1) Yes	61.2	61.8	60.1
2) No	28.8	26.2	33.3
3) No Opinion	10.0	12.0	6.6
2. Do you think that there is corruption in PA institutions? (if yes, go to the next question)			
1) Yes	62.7	61.2	65.0
2) No	21.5	21.2	21.9
3) No Opinion/ Do not know	15.8	17.5	13.1
3. Will this corruption in PA institutions increase, decrease or remain as it is in the future?			
1) Increase	41.6	37.6	48.4
2) Remain as it is	6.7	5.0	9.5
3) Decrease	32.1	34.4	28.2
4) Do not know	19.6	23.0	13.9
4. When the peace process started, what was your attitude towards it?			
1) Supportive	81.8	79.9	85.1
2) Opposed	15.8	17.0	13.9
3) No opinion/Don't Know	2.4	3.1	1.0
5. What is your attitude toward it now?			
1) Supportive (go to Question 8)	68.3	67.0	70.5
2) Opposed	28.2	28.9	27.1

3) No opinion? Don't Know	3.5	4.1	2.4
	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %

6. What is the main reason for your opposition to the peace process?

1) Because you are against peace with Israel for religious reasons.	20.0	22.0	16.4
2) Because, despite the fact that you are for peace with Israel, you see too many unacceptable Palestinian concessions in the current peace process.	32.8	29.2	39.3
3) Because, despite the fact that you are for peace with Israel and do not see too many unacceptable concessions in the peace process, you are disappointed with the results of peace process.	40.0	41.6	37.9
4) Others	5.4	5.6	5.0
5) No Opinion/ Don't Know	1.5	1.6	1.4

7. Since you are opposed to the peace process, what is the alternative?

1) Intifada	15.5	14.5	17.3
2) Armed struggle	26.8	26.5	27.3
3) Waiting	37.6	39.4	34.5
4) Others	13.7	13.3	14.4
5) No Opinion	6.4	6.3	6.5

8. Do you expect the current peace process to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza strip in the coming years?

1) Yes	62.1	61.9	62.5
2) No	29.6	29.1	30.3
3) No Opinion/Don't Know)	0.6	0.8	7.2

9. After the peace process started and the self-rule agreement implemented, my economic and living conditions:

1) Became better	13.6	14.1	12.7
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2) Became worse	47.4	42.8	54.8
3) Remained the same	38.4	42.3	31.9
4) No Opinion/ Don't Know	0.6	0.8	0.6
	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %

10. Are you optimistic or pessimistic with regard to the overall future of the Palestinian people?

1) Optimistic	68.1	65.6	72.2
2) Pessimistic	28.1	30.6	23.9
3) No Opinion	3.8	3.8	3.9

11. The REALISTIC solution which I accept as an end to Palestinian - Israeli conflict must be based on the establishment of :

1) A Palestinian state within the 1967 boundaries.	40.9	44.4	35.3
2) A Palestinian State within the 1948 boundaries	28.3	25.2	33.5
3) A joint Palestinian - Israeli state within the 1948 boundaries	17.9	17.5	18.4
4) Others (Specify _____)	5.1	4.7	5.8
5) No Opinion/ Don't know	7.8	8.2	7.0

12. If separate elections for the president of the Palestinian Authority were held today, whom would you choose?

1) Arafat	62.2	58.4	68.5
2) Ahmad Yassin	2.6	3.3	1.4
3) Haidar Abdul Shafi	2.8	3.0	2.5
4) Others (Less than 1% each)	5.4	5.4	5.4
5) No one	6.3	8.2	3.3
6) No Opinion / Don't Know	20.7	21.7	19.0

13. If separate elections for a Vice President of the Palestinian Authority were held today, whom would you choose?

1) (Mahmoud Abbas) Abu Mazin	5.3	3.1	8.9
2) Saib Erikat	4.7	5.3	3.7
3) Ahmad Qurai' (Abu Al-Ala')	4.2	5.4	2.3
4) Haidar Abdul Shafi	3.5	2.8	4.7
5) Ahmad Yassin	2.9	3.9	1.2
6) Farouq Al-Qaddomi	2.0	2.4	1.4
7) Nabil Sha'ath	2.0	1.1	3.5
8) Others (less than 2% each)	15.7	15.6	12.9
8) No one	10.6	12.0	8.2
9) No Opinion /Don't Know	49.1	46.6	53.2

	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %
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14. Which of the following political trends do you support?

1) PPP	1.0	1.4	0.4
2) PFLP	4.1	2.6	6.4
3) Fateh	43.0	41.5	45.4
4) Hamas	11.9	12.2	11.2
5) DFLP	0.9	1.2	0.4
6) Islamic Jihad	2.1	2.0	2.4
7) Fida	0.3	0.5	0.0
8) Independent Islamists	2.7	3.1	2.0
9) Independent Nationalists	5.2	5.9	4.0
10) None of the above	25.9	25.9	25.9
11) Others	3.0	3.7	1.8