

# Center for Palestine Research & Studies (CPRS)

## Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (36)

8-10 October 1998

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### **The Peace Process, Violence against Israelis, Domestic Situation, Presidential Elections and Political Affiliation**

These are the results of opinion poll #36, conducted by the Center for Palestine Research & Studies, between 8-10 October 1998. The poll deals with the peace process, violence against Israelis, domestic situation, presidential elections and political affiliation. The total sample size of this poll is 1331 from Palestinians 18 years and older, of which 814 in the West Bank and 517 in the Gaza Strip. The margin of error is  $\pm 3\%$  and the non-response rate is 3%.

#### **1. Peace Process**

- **A majority of 51% supports armed attacks against Israelis and 44% oppose them**
- **A majority of 66% supports and 30% opposes the current peace process**
- **About two thirds believe that final status talks will not succeed**
- **49% believe that the peace process will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state**
- **45% support a unilateral establishment of a Palestinian state in May 1999 and 44% support waiting for a Palestinian-Israeli agreement first**

Despite the fact that the level of support for the peace process remained high in this poll (66%), an important increase in the level of support for armed attacks against Israelis has been registered. Support for violence increased from 44% in early August 1998 to 51% now. It is worth recalling that support for violence had dropped to 21% in early 1996 before rising gradually since to reach 50% in June 1998.

Also, despite the continued support for the peace process, a large majority of 61% does not believe that the two sides will be able to reach an agreement on final status issues. This result reflects an important negative change in public perception of the chances for the peace process compared to the situation eighteen months ago when only 52% expressed belief that the final status talks would fail.

Moreover, the percentage of those who believe that the peace process will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the coming years did not exceed 49%. Despite the fact that the result reflects a significant rise compared to the situation two months ago (37% in August), it is still much less than the 62% of November 1997.

If belief in the eventual emergence of a Palestinian state as a result of the peace process has increased compared to the situation two months ago, a significant drop has occurred in the level of support for a unilateral Palestinian declaration of statehood in May 1999. Last June,

support stood at 58%; today it stands at 45% with support for waiting until a Palestinian-Israeli agreement is reached on the issue increasing from 34% in June to 44% today. The reasons for the drop in the level of support for the unilateral action may be due to several factors. One might be the confusion created in the public mind as a result of Arafat's failure to make his intentions to declare the state in May 1999 known to the whole world at the UN. A second factor might be the increased Israeli threats of annexation and imposition of closure and other collective punishment measures. A third factor contributing to the reluctance of the Palestinian street to support the unilateral declaration could be the disappointment in the street from the new Palestinian government and the widespread feeling that it will not be able to meet the challenges of a possible Israeli response to such a move (see below).

It is worth mentioning that the poll shows important differences between the West Bank and Gaza regarding most of the issues of the peace process. Support for the process is higher in the Gaza Strip and more Gazans believe that the final status talks will succeed. Doubts about the eventual emergence of a Palestinian state as a result of the peace process are bigger in the West Bank and more West Bankers are likely to support violence against Israelis. In this regard, support for violence increases especially in Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah. It also increases in the refugee camps, among young people, those with BA degrees, single people, and supporters of opposition factions.

## **2. Domestic Situation**

- **66% believe that corruption exists in PA institutions and 64% believe that it will increase or remain the same in the future**
- **Corruption is seen especially in ministries by 79%, in security services by 70%, in the PLC by 46%, and in the office of the presidency by 34%**
- **Positive evaluation of Palestinian democracy does not exceed 27%, compared to 70% to Israeli democracy and 29% to Egypt and Jordan's.**
- **57% believe that people can not criticize the PA without fear**
- **Positive evaluation of the PLC stands at 39%, the Cabinet at 41%, the Judicial Authority at 45%, the security services at 51%, the Presidency at 55%, and the opposition at 33%**
- **Only a minority believes that the new Palestinian cabinet is capable of meeting the challenges of dealing with corruption, insuring respect for human rights, improving the economic situation, and confronting the Israeli response to a unilateral declaration of statehood in May 1999**

An increase has occurred in the percentage of those who believe that corruption exists in the institutions of the Palestinian Authority with 66% expressing this view now compared to 56% two months ago. The current level is similar to those obtained four months ago in June 1998. Another increase occurred in the percentage of those who believe that corruption will increase or remain the same in the future from 61% in August 1998 to 64% today.

Public perception of corruption increases in particular with regard to ministries (79%) and security services (70%), and decreases with regard to the PLC (46%) and the office of the Presidency (34%). These results are almost identical to those obtained two months ago.

The results indicate an important drop in the positive evaluation of Palestinian democracy from 33% two months ago to 27% in this poll. The perception of Palestinian democracy has worsened recently as the percentage of positive evaluation stood at 46% early this year and began to decrease gradually and without stop since then. Meanwhile, positive evaluation of Israeli democracy remained high at 70% and low for Egypt and Jordan at 29% each. The percentage of those who believe that people can not criticize the Palestinian Authority without fear remains the same at 57%.

An important drop has occurred in the positive evaluation of the performance of all Palestinian political institutions without any exceptions. The level for the PLC performance declined to the lowest level in two years at 39%, the cabinet at 41%, the judicial authority at 45%, security services at 51%, the Presidency at 55%, and the opposition at 33%.

Only a minority believes that the new Palestinian cabinet is capable of meeting the existing and approaching challenges. Forty percent expressed the belief that it would be able to deal with corruption; 39% said it would protect human rights; 35% said it would improve the economic situation; and only 32% expressed the belief that it would be able to meet the challenges posed by an Israeli response to the Palestinian declaration of statehood in May 1999. The belief in the ability of the new cabinet to deal with all these issues is stronger among women, the less educated, housewives, and supporters of Fateh.

Despite the widespread and unprecedented disappointment and disillusionment revealed in this poll, the level of optimism is still relatively and surprisingly high reaching 59% with pessimism reaching 38%. However, the level of optimism stood at 68% only one year ago.

### **3. Elections for the President and vice-President and Political Affiliation**

- **In a three-way race for the presidency: Yassir Arafat: 43%, Ahmad Yasin: 13%, and Haydar Abdul Shafi: 10%**
- **In a race between eight candidates for the vice-presidency: Haydar Abdul Shafi: 12%; Eriqat and Ashrawi: 9% each; Hussein, Abu Mazin and Abu al-Lutuf: 7% each; and Abu al-Ala': 6%**
- **In a three-way race for the vice-presidency between Abu Mazin, Abu al-Ala' and Abu al-Lutuf: 24% each**
- **In a two-way race for the vice-presidency: Abu Mazin receives 33% and Abu al-Ala 29%**
- **Fateh receives 38%, the Islamists 18%, the national opposition 5%, and the non-affiliated 38%**

In a direct question about voting for the office of the president in case of a three-way race between Yassir Arafat, Haydar Abdul Shafi, and Ahmad Yasin, Arafat received the largest percentage of votes with 43%. This reflects a drop of 5 percentage points in his popularity

compared to results of our August poll. This is the lowest level of support for Arafat in all CPRS surveys since 1994. Previously, the lowest level of support for him stood at 44% in November 1994. Ahmad Yasin came second with 13%. This is almost identical to what he received two months ago. Haydar Abdul Shafi received 12% with an increase of 3 percentage points from the level of support he received two months ago.

In the race for the vice presidency, respondents were given a list of eight names. Haydar Abdul Shafi came first with 12%, followed by Eriqat and Ashrawi with 9% each. Faisal Husseini, Abu Mazin, and Abu al-Lutuf came next with 7% each. Abu al-Ala' received 6% and Nabil Sha'ath 2%.

When respondents were asked to choose from among a list of three candidates only, Abu al-Lutuf, Abu Mazin, and Abu al-Ala' received 24% each. It is worth mentioning that this result reflects an increase in the level of support for Abu al-Lutuf from 19% two months ago, and a decrease in support for Abu Mazin from the 29% during the same period. When respondents were given a choice between two candidates only, support for Abu Mazin increased to 33% and for Abu al-Ala' to 29%.

Meanwhile, support for Fateh remained stable at 38% and for Hamas at 12%. Support for all Islamists reached 18% and for the national opposition factions 5%, while the percentage of the non-affiliated remains stable at 38%.

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8-10 October 1998

	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %
Unemployment	29%	18%	45%

### 1. Do you support or oppose the current peace process between Palestinians and Israelis

1) Support	65.6	61.9	71.1
2) Oppose	29.9	33.4	24.9
3) No Opinion	4.4	4.7	4.0

### 2. Regarding the permanent status negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides over Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and settlements, I believe

1) There is a possibility to reach a solution acceptable to the two parties.	30.5	25.5	37.7
2) There is no possibility to reach a solution acceptable to the two parties.	61.3	64.1	57.3
3) No Opinion	8.2	10.4	5.0

### 3. Are you optimistic or pessimistic with regard to the future of the Palestinian people?

1) Optimistic	59.1	55.5	64.3
2) Pessimistic	37.6	40.4	33.6
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	3.3	4.1	2.1

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

1) Yes	48.9	49.5	48.0
2) No	29.7	32.8	25.2
3) Not Sure	21.4	17.7	26.8

	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %
<b>5. According to Oslo Agreement, the transitional period will end on May 4, 1999. Some people see the necessity of transforming the PA into a Palestinian State at that date even if Israel objected. Others argue that the establishment of the State should wait until an agreement is reached with Israel. What do you think?</b>			
1) Support waiting till reaching an agreement with Israel.	43.6	42.8	44.8
2) Support establishing a Palestinian state right after the end of the transitional period even if there no agreements were reached with Israel at that time	44.7	43.1	47.1
3) Others (specify_____)	5.6	5.9	5.1
4) No Opinion /Don't know	6.1	8.1	3.0
	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %
<b>6. Do you think that there is corruption in PA institutions?</b>			
1) Yes	66.0	64.5	68.1
2) No	17.8	16.0	20.3
3) Not Sure	16.3	19.5	11.6
<b>7. Will this corruption in PA institutions increase, decrease or remain as it is in the future?</b>			
1) Increase	56.8	56.7	56.8
2) Remain as it is	7.3	6.0	9.2
3) Decrease	28.6	30.5	25.9
4) Don't Know/ No Opinion	7.4	6.8	8.1
<b>8. In your opinion, in which of the following PA institutions does corruption exist?</b>			
<b>8-1 Ministries and Governmental offices</b>			
1) Yes	78.8	77.5	80.5
2) No	9.0	9.3	8.7
3) No Opinion /Don't Know	12.2	13.2	10.8

**8-2 Security forces and Police**

1) Yes	69.7	69.1	70.5
2) No	17.5	18.0	16.9
3) No Opinion /Don't Know	12.8	12.8	12.7
	<b>Total %</b>	<b>West Bank %</b>	<b>Gaza Strip %</b>

**8-3 Presidency Office**

1) Yes	34.4	34.1	34.8
2) No	29.7	26.2	34.6
3) No Opinion /Don't Know	35.9	39.8	30.7

**8-4 PLC**

1) Yes	46.3	47.4	44.7
2) No	32.5	30.4	35.5
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	21.2	22.2	19.8

**9. If you want to evaluate the status of democracy and human rights under the Palestinian Authority, you would say it is:**

1) Very Good	5.1	4.5	6.1
2) Good	21.9	22.9	20.4
3) Fair	33.2	34.2	31.7
4) Bad	18.7	17.9	19.8
5) Very Bad	15.5	13.2	18.9
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	5.6	7.3	3.2

**10. And what about the status of democracy and human rights in other countries:****10-1 America**

1) Very Good	33.1	30.7	36.6
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2) Good	24.7	22.4	28.0
3) Fair	8.6	7.8	9.8
4) Bad	8.9	11.2	5.6
5) Very Bad	2.8	3.5	1.8
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	21.9	24.4	18.3

**10-2 Israel**

1) Very Good	40.1	34.7	47.9
2) Good	29.4	29.6	29.0
3) Fair	7.8	7.6	8.2
4) Bad	8.0	9.2	6.2
5) Very Bad	2.9	3.8	1.6
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	11.9	15.2	7.2

**Total %**

**West Bank %**

**Gaza Strip %**

**10-3 Jordan**

1) Very Good	8.0	6.6	10.0
2) Good	21.0	19.4	23.4
3) Fair	28.4	25.3	32.9
4) Bad	17.6	21.3	12.2
5) Very Bad	7.9	9.2	6.1
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	17.0	18.2	15.3

**10-4 Egypt**

1) Very Good	7.6	4.6	12.1
2) Good	21.2	18.6	25.0
3) Fair	21.9	16.4	29.9
4) Bad	17.6	19.6	14.6



5) Very Bad	7.7	7.0	8.7
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	24.0	33.8	9.9

**10-5 France**

1) Very Good	25.2	22.5	29.0
2) Good	24.6	20.9	30.0
3) Fair	5.8	5.3	6.5
4) Bad	2.4	2.0	3.0
5) Very Bad	0.8	0.9	0.6
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	41.3	48.4	31.0

**11. In your opinion, can people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip criticize the Palestinian Authority without fear?**

1) Yes	37.3	39.0	34.7
2) No	56.8	53.2	62.0
3) Do not know	5.9	7.7	3.2

**12. Generally, how do you evaluate the performance of :**

**12-1 the Palestinian Legislative Council?**

1) Very Good	8.5	10.4	5.9
2) Good	30.7	29.8	31.9
3) Fair	26.6	23.2	31.6
4) Bad	15.6	14.5	17.1
5) Very Bad	6.3	5.5	7.5
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	12.3	16.6	6.1

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>West Bank %</b>	<b>Gaza Strip %</b>
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**12-2 Palestinian Government (The Cabinet)**

1) Very Good	10.2	8.8	12.1
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2) Good	30.7	29.3	32.8
3) Fair	25.9	24.0	28.6
4) Bad	13.1	13.6	12.3
5) Very Bad	4.6	4.2	5.2
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	15.5	20.0	9.0

#### **12-3 Judicial Authority and Palestinian Courts**

1) Very Good	12.6	10.7	15.5
2) Good	32.2	31.2	33.8
3) Fair	17.2	14.7	20.8
4) Bad	14.8	14.4	15.3
5) Very Bad	5.4	5.0	6.0
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	17.8	24.1	8.6

#### **12-4 Police and Security forces**

1) Very Good	14.1	11.4	17.9
2) Good	36.6	35.4	38.3
3) Fair	22.2	21.2	23.7
4) Bad	14.5	16.3	12.0
5) Very Bad	3.7	3.9	3.5
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	8.9	11.9	4.6

#### **12-5 Institution of Presidency**

1) Very Good	17.9	13.7	24.0
2) Good	36.7	34.4	40.0
3) Fair	15.1	13.7	17.0
4) Bad	5.5	6.5	4.2

5) Very Bad	2.2	1.4	3.4
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	22.5	30.3	11.3

#### **12-6 Opposition groups and factions**

1) Very Good	8.5	7.4	10.0
2) Good	24.1	22.9	25.8
3) Fair	25.9	25.2	26.8
4) Bad	16.5	15.9	17.3
5) Very Bad	4.4	3.0	6.4
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	20.7	25.5	13.7

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>West Bank %</b>	<b>Gaza Strip %</b>
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#### **12-7 Your district representatives at the PLC**

1) Very Good	9.6	11.1	7.6
2) Good	30.6	29.4	32.3
3) Fair	19.6	18.1	21.8
4) Bad	16.2	16.6	15.6
5) Very Bad	7.4	5.5	10.0
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	16.6	19.3	12.7

### **13) Do you think that the newly established Palestinian cabinet is capable of facing the following challenges in this period?**

#### **13-1 Dealing with Corruption**

1) Yes	40.3	40.5	40.0
2) No	43.9	40.0	49.4
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	15.9	19.5	10.6

#### **13-2 Guaranteeing Human Rights**

1) Yes	38.8	39.1	38.2
2) No	47.3	42.4	54.3
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	13.9	18.4	7.4

**13-3 Improving the Economic Situation**

1) Yes	35.2	37.3	32.2
2) No	52.5	47.2	60.2
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	12.3	15.5	7.6

**13-4 Confronting Israeli reaction to State Declaration in May 1999**

1) Yes	31.8	34.0	28.8
2) No	51.9	47.2	58.8
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	16.2	18.8	12.5

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

1) Haydar Abdul Shafi	10.3	10.6	9.9
2) Yasser Arafat	42.5	36.4	51.3
3) Ahmad Yasin	12.7	12.7	12.6
4) No one	1.1	1.4	0.5
5) Others	19.1	21.9	15.1
6) I will not participate	13.0	15.5	9.4
7) No Opinion / Don't Know	1.3	1.5	1.1

**Total %                  West Bank %                  Gaza Strip %**

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

1) Ahmad Qurai' (Abu Al-Ala')	5.8	6.4	4.9
2) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazin)	7.3	5.2	10.4

3) Farouq Al-Qaddoumi	7.0	8.6	4.7
4) Nabil Sha'ath	2.2	0.8	4.3
5) Saib Erikat	9.3	10.1	8.2
6) Hanan Ashrawi	8.9	10.1	7.1
7) Faisal Husseini	7.2	6.5	8.2
8) Haydar Abdul Shafi	12.4	8.0	18.7
9) Others	0.9	1.3	0.2
10) No one	21.2	23.2	18.3
11) I will not participate	12.8	14.3	10.5
12) No opinion/Don't know	5.1	5.5	4.4

**16. If separate elections for a Vice President of the Palestinian Authority were held today, and only the followings were nominated, whom would you choose?**

1) Ahmad Qurai' (Abu Al-Ala')	24.2	25.5	22.7
2) (Mahmoud Abbas) Abu Mazin	23.5	19.7	28.1
3) Farouq Al-Qaddoumi	23.6	28.9	17.0
4) No one	25.3	21.4	30.1
5) No opinion/Don't know	3.5	4.5	2.1

**17. If separate elections for a Vice President of the Palestinian Authority were held today, and only the followings were nominated, whom would you choose?**

1) Ahmad Qurai' (Abu Al-Ala')	28.6	31.6	24.9
2) (Mahmoud Abbas) Abu Mazin	32.8	30.4	35.9
3) No one	35.1	33.6	37.0
4) No opinion/Don't know	3.4	4.4	2.2

**18. Concerning armed attacks against Israeli targets, I...**

1) Support	50.8	51.9	49.0
2) Oppose	43.5	41.2	46.7

3) No Opinion /Don't Know	5.8	6.8	4.3
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**19. Which of the following political parties do you support?**

1) PPP	1.7	2.3	0.7
2) PFLP	3.0	2.3	3.9
3) Fateh	37.9	35.9	40.8
4) Hamas	12.2	11.1	13.8
5) DFLP	0.5	0.6	0.5
6) Islamic Jihad	3.9	4.3	3.4
7) Fida	0.1	0.1	0.2
8) Independent Islamists	2.2	2.4	1.9
9) Independent Nationalists	4.4	5.3	3.1
10) None of the above	33.1	34.8	30.5
11) Others	0.9	0.8	1.2