

Center for Palestine Research & Studies (CPRS)

Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (45)

2-4 December 1999

The Peace Process, Israeli Debate about Refugees, Safe Passage, Events in Nazareth, Refugees in Lebanon, Hamas and Jordan, Corruption and Democracy, Elections for the President and Vice-president, and Political Affiliation

These are the results of opinion poll # 45, conducted by the Center for Palestine Research & Studies, between 2-4 December 1999. The poll deals with the Peace Process, Israeli debate about refugees, safe passage, events in Nazareth, refugees in Lebanon, Hamas and Jordan, corruption and democracy, elections for the President and Vice-president, and political affiliation. The total sample size of this poll is 1299 from Palestinians 18 years and older, of which 807 in the West Bank and 492 in the Gaza Strip. The margin of error is $\pm 3\%$ and the non-response rate is 3%.

Main Results

1. The Peace Process

- **75% support the current peace process and 21% oppose it**
- **36% support armed attacks against Israeli targets and 55% oppose it**
- **18% have Trust in Barak's government**
- **14% expect a framework agreement on final status issues to be completed by February 2000**
- **30% believe it is possible to reach a mutually acceptable solution to final status issues**
- **50% expect the current peace process to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the near future**
- **46% have confidence that the Palestinian leadership will remain committed to Palestinian basic rights in the final status negotiations and 28% do not have such confidence**
- **51% describe their economic conditions today as being worse than they were when the peace process started and 13% describe them as being better than they were then**
- **65% remain optimistic despite all**

The results show a continued high level of support for the peace process, with 75% supporting it, as the case has been during the past several months. Support for armed attacks against Israeli targets decreased slightly from 39% two months ago to 36% in this poll. This result is the same as the one obtained last September. Trust in Barak's government reached 18% compared to 29% last July, 21% last September, and 19% last October. The level of no confidence in the intentions of Barak's government toward the peace process reached 71% in this survey.

The lack of confidence in Barak is reflected in the very low level of expectation from the peace process with only 14% expecting the two sides to conclude a framework agreement for the permanent settlement by February 2000 as stipulated by the Sharm al Sheikh agreement. A majority of 56% expected failure in meeting the deadline.

Moreover, the percentage of those who expect the two sides to reach a mutually acceptable solution to final status issues of refugees, Jerusalem, borders, and settlements, did not exceed 30%, while 58% believed that it will not be possible. The percentage of those who believed in the possibility of finding such a solution stood at 35% last September, while the highest level of expectation stood at 44% in June 1996. It is interesting to note that the percentage of those who believe that the current peace process will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the near future is higher than the percentage of those who believe that the two sides will find a solution to the final status issues mentioned above. Half of the Palestinians today expects the peace process to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. In June 1999, 45% had such expectations. It is possible that Israeli news reports concerning the possibility of an Israeli recognition of a Palestinian state may have been responsible for the rising expectations.

On other matters related to the peace process, 46% of the Palestinians say that they have confidence that the Palestinian leadership will remain committed to declared and basic rights of the Palestinians in its final status negotiations with the Israelis. About 28%, however, have no such confidence. The Level of confidence increases in towns and villages (50%)

compared to refugee camps (42%) and cities (44%), among women (49%) compared to men (44%), among illiterates (50%) compared to holders of BA degree (42%), among housewives (50%) compared to merchants (36%) and retired persons (30%), among those employed in the public sector (54%) compared to those employed in the private sector (40%), and among supporters of Fateh (63%) compared to supporters of Hamas (40%) the PFLP (37%) and the nonaffiliated (35%).

The results also show that most Palestinians (65%) are optimistic about the future. The current percentage of optimism represents an increase of about four percentage points compared to the situation in June 1999. The lowest level of optimism was recorded in March 1994 when it stood at 21% in the aftermath of the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre. Despite the high level of optimism, most respondents (51%) describe their economic situation as worse than it was when the peace process started, while only 13% describe it as being better, and 34% as being the same.

2. Katz's statement on refugees' rights and the Israeli response:

- **13% believe that the Israeli response to the statements made by Israeli Knesset member Yossi Katz on refugees' rights indicates a positive development in Israeli thinking**
- **Half of the Palestinians has not heard of Katz's statement or the Israeli response to it**

The results show that the statement made by Israeli member of Knesset from the Labor Party, Yossi Katz, on the possibility of the return of some Palestinian refugees to Israel and the Israeli response to that statement did not leave a noticeable positive impact on the Palestinian street. The percentage of those who saw some positive aspects to the Israeli debate about this issue did not exceed 13%, while about a third believed that it reflected continued Israeli insistence on refusing to deal positively with refugees' right of return. It is interesting to note that about half (49%) of the Palestinians did not hear about Katz's statement or the response to it.

The percentage of those who saw the statement and the response as reflecting continued insistence on denying refugees' right of return increases in the Gaza Strip (36%) compared to the West Bank (31%), among residents of refugee camps (42%) compared to residents of towns and villages (30%), among men (44%) compared to women (23%), among holders of BA degree (48%) compared to illiterates (21%), among housewives (20%) compared to merchants (56%) and retired persons (63%), and among supporters of Hamas (36%) and the PFLP (38%) compared to supporters of Fateh (30%).

The percentage of those unaware of Katz's statement and the ensuing Israeli debate increases in towns and villages (53%) compared to refugee camp residents (41%), among women (60%) compared to men (38%), among illiterates (55%) compared to holders of BA degree (33%), among farmers (66%) and housewives (61%) compared to merchants (27%), employees (33%) and retired persons (19%), and among those with the lowest income (52%) compared to those with the highest income (35%).

3. Safe Passage:

- **57% are pleased with the way the safe passage affected Gaza-West Bank relations and 26% are concerned**
- **Reasons for concern are economic (mostly in the West Bank) and social (in both areas)**

Most Palestinians (57%) are pleased with the way the opening of the safe passage has affected the relationship between the residents of the West Bank on one hand with those in the Gaza Strip on the other. But 26% feel concerned. The percentage of those who are pleased with the impact of the safe passage opening increases among residents of the Gaza Strip (63%) compared to residents of the West Bank (54%), among residents of Nablus (67%) Jabalia (70%), and Rafah (71%) compared to residents of Ramallah (48%), Qalqilia (49%), and Jenin (51%). The percentage of those who are concerned about the impact of the opening of the safe passage is equal in the two areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. But it increases in Ramallah (33%), Deir al Balah (36%), and Hebron (32%).

The reasons for concern are either economic or social or both. About 29% describe their reasons as being economic in nature, 31% describe them as social, and 13% describe them as being both social and economic. The concerned residents of the West Bank have more economic reasons (44%) than those in the Gaza Strip (9%), while both areas are equally concerned about social matters. The most repeated economic reasons have been the expected increase in economic competition and the fear of the resultant increase in unemployment. Reasons of social nature ranged from the fears of some West Bankers of misbehavior, or unacceptable behavior, of some Gazans, to the fears of some Gazans of the more liberal social behavior of some West Bankers.

4.Events in Nazareth:

- **One third is unaware of the events in Nazareth and 34% see it as a quarrel among brothers in the family**
- **Only 1% view the events as a violation committed by some Muslims against some Christians while 15% view them as a violation committed by some Christians against some Muslims**

The results indicate that Palestinians do not view with alarm the events that have taken place in Nazareth over the issue of building a new mosque in an area adjacent the Church of Annunciation in the center of the city. One third did not hear about them, while another third viewed them as a domestic quarrel among brothers in the family. Only 16% viewed the events as transgression of one side against the other; from among those, the majority tended to blame the Christians (15% of the total sample), while the percentage of those who saw the events as a violation committed by some Muslims against some Christians did not exceed 1% of the total sample.

The percentage of those unaware of the events in Nazareth increases in the areas of Nablus (39%), Jenin and Tulkarm (37% each) compared to areas of Jerusalem (26%), Ramallah (22%), and Bethlehem (18%), among residents of villages and towns (35%) compared to residents of cities (26%), among women (43%) compared to men (18%), among illiterates (45%) compared to holders of BA degree (10%), among housewives (45%) compared to employees (10%) and professionals (5%), and among those with the lowest income (36%) compared to those with the highest income (18%). The percentage of those who see the events as a violation committed by some Christians increases in the West Bank (18%) compared to the Gaza Strip (11%), in Hebron (23%) compared to Rafah (5%), Ramallah (8%) and Khanyounis (9%), among men (19%) compared to women (12%), and among supporters of Hamas (25%) compared to supporters of Fateh (14%).

5. Situation of Refugees in Lebanon:

- **One quarter is unaware of the situation of Palestinian refugees in camps in Lebanon**
- **70% are concerned about the way refugees are being treated by the Lebanese government and only 3% are not concerned**

The results show that almost all Palestinians who are aware of the situation of the refugees in Lebanon (70% of the total sample) are concerned about the way they are being treated by the Lebanese government. The results show that about one quarter of the Palestinians is unaware of that situation. The percentage of the respondents who are unaware of the refugee situation in Lebanon increases in areas of Rafah (39%), Jabalia (36%), Ramallah, Nablus, and Jenin (28% each) compared to areas of Khanyounis and Deir al Balah (15% each), among residents of villages and towns (26%) compared to those of refugee camps (21%), among women (32%) compared to men (15%), among illiterates (29%) compared to holders of BA degree (10%), among housewives (34%) compared to professionals (5%) and employees (15%), and among those with the least income (26%) compared to those with the highest income (18%).

6. The Transfer of Hamas Leaders by Jordan:

- **21% did not hear of Jordan's transfer of four Hamas Leaders to Qatar**
- **67% see in the transfer a negative step toward the Palestinians by the Jordanian government and only 4% see it as a positive step**

The results show a near consensus among those Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza who are aware of the step taken by Jordan to transfer four Hamas leaders to Qatar to view it as a negative step toward the Palestinians. The percentage of those who view the step as such increases among men (77%) compared to women (58%), among holders of BA degree (75%) compared to the illiterates (56%), among students, laborers and merchants (77%, 77% and 76% respectively) compared to housewives (56%), among those with the highest income (79%) compared to those with the lowest income (65%), and among supporters of Hamas (78%) compared to supporters of Fateh (65%). These differences reflect mainly the relative lack of awareness of the situation among women, the illiterates, housewives, those with the least income, and supporters of Fateh.

7. Corruption and Status of Democracy and Human Rights:

- **68% believe that corruption exists in PA institutions**
- **62% believe that corruption will increase or remain the same in the future**
- **Positive evaluation of the status of democracy and human rights under the PA reaches 23%**
- **61% believe that people can not criticize the PA without fear**

The results show an increase in the percentage of those who believe in the existence of corruption in PA institutions from 63% last October to 68% in this survey. There has also been a decrease in the positive evaluation of the status of democracy and human rights under the PA from 32% to 23% during the same period. Moreover, there has been an increase in the percentage of those who believe that people can not criticize the PA without fear from 56% to 61%. It should be indicated that this poll was conducted during the events that accompanied the release of the so-called the “Statement of the Twenty.” The statement accused the PA of corruption, violation of human rights, and absence of democracy. The PA, it should be recalled, arrested at the time several members of those who signed the statement. Although the poll did not ask about it, the street’s response, as indicated by this poll, indirectly reveals a clear disappointment and perhaps opposition to the steps taken by the PA. The poll also indirectly reveals that the street tends to believe the accusations made in the statement to be true.

8. Elections for the President and the Vice President and Political Affiliation:

- **In elections for the office of the president, Yasir Arafat receives 45%, Haydar Abdul Shafi 12%, and Ahmad Yasin 10%**
- **In elections for the office of the vice president, Abdul Shafi receives 39%, followed by al Faisal al Husseini (22%), Mahmud Abbas (14%), and Ahmad Qurei’ (11%)**
- **Support for Fateh stands at 37%, Hamas 9%, PFLP 3%, and the nonaffiliated 41%**

The results show that Arafat’s popularity has not been negatively affected by the “Statement of the Twenty” or by the steps taken by the PA against those who signed it. Arafat’s popularity rose from 42% last October to 45% in this poll. Haydar Abdul Shafi’s popularity remained the same at 12%, while the popularity of Ahmad Yasin stood at 10%. Arafat’s popularity stands at 51% in the Gaza Strip and 40% in the West Bank.

In the election for the office of the vice president, little has changed compared to the situation last October. Abdul Shafi comes first with 39%, followed by Faisal al Hussieni with 22%, Mahmud Abbas (14%) and Ahmad Qurei’ (11%).

Fateh remained the strongest political faction with the support of 37% of the population, while Hamas received the support of 9%, and the PFLP 3%. The nonaffiliated rose from 39% last October to 41% in this poll.

Results of Public Opinion Poll # 45
2-4 December 1999

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
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Unemployment	19.0	15.0	26.0
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1. Do you support or oppose the current peace process between Palestinians and Israelis?

1) Support	74.7	74.5	75.0
2) Oppose	20.9	20.6	21.6
3) No Opinion	4.4	4.9	4.4

2. Six months after the establishment of the new Israeli government led by Barak, do you trust the intentions of the new government toward the peace process with the Palestinians?

1) Yes	17.9	16.2	20.8
2) No	71.1	72.1	69.3
3) No Opinion	11.0	11.7	9.9

3. 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.	30.0	27.4	34.2
2) There is no possibility to reach a solution acceptable to the two parties.	58.4	60.2	55.6
3) No Opinion	11.6	12.4	10.2

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	50.3	49.1	52.2
2) No	27.2	29.0	24.3
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	22.5	21.9	23.5

5. Following the peace process and the implementation of autonomy, your economic situation and standard of living have become :

1) Better	13.3	12.5	14.7
2) Worse	50.7	47.3	56.3
3) Stayed the same	34.2	38.5	27.3
4) Don't Know	1.8	1.7	1.7

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

1) Optimistic	65.1	46.2	66.6
2) Pessimistic	30.6	32.2	28.2
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	4.3	3.6	5.2

7. With regard to the situation of the Palestinian refugees in the camps of Lebanon, are you satisfied or concerned about the way they are being treated by the Lebanese government?

1) Satisfied	3.0	2.8	3.3
2) Concerned	70.4	70.4	70.3
3) Unaware of their situation	23.8	23.2	24.9
4) Others	0.2	0.2	0.2
5) Do Not Know	2.6	3.4	1.3

8. For several weeks now, Safe Passage has been opened between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, are you pleased with the way it affected the relationship between the residents of the two areas?

1) Pleased	57.3	53.6	63.2
2) Concerned	26.1	26.0	26.3
3) No opinion/Do not know	16.6	20.4	10.5

8-1 Reasons for not being pleased

1) Economic reasons	29.0	44.0	9.0
2) Social reasons	31.0	30.0	32.0
3) Social and economic reasons	13.0	13.0	14.0

4) Others	27.0	13.0	45.0
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9. The Jordanian government has transferred four leaders of Hamas from Jordan to Qatar after arresting them for more than a month. How do you view this step?

1) A positive step taken by the Jordanian government toward the Palestinians	4.0	3.9	4.3
2) A negative step taken by the Jordanian government toward the Palestinians	67.4	67.6	67.2
3) Unaware of the step	20.9	20.6	21.5
4) Others (Specify _____)	1.5	1.8	0.9
5) No opinion/Don not know	6.2	6.1	6.1

10. How do you view the events that have taken place among the Palestinians of Nazareth?

1) A violation committed by some Muslims against some Christians	1.1	1.4	0.7
2) A violation committed by some Christians against some Moslems	15.2	17.9	10.8
3) Neither, it is a simple quarrel between brothers in the family	33.9	31.0	38.8
4) Unaware of the events	30.8	30.2	31.6
5) Other	13.4	13.7	12.8
6) No opinion/Do not know	5.6	5.8	5.3

11. A statement issued by a member of the Israeli Knesset from the Labor Party regarding the possibility of the return of a number of Palestinian refugees to Israel caused a mixed reaction in Israel. How do you view this reaction?

1) Point to a positive development in the Israeli thinking toward the recognition of the refugees' right of return	12.6	14.2	10.0
2) Point to continued Israeli insistence on refusing to deal positively with the right of return	32.9	30.9	36.0

3) Unaware of the Israeli reaction/unaware of the statement itself	48.8	49.0	48.4
4) No Opinion/Do not know	5.7	5.9	5.6

12. Currently, final status negotiations are being conducted by the Palestinian and Israeli sides. Are you presently confident that the Palestinian leadership will remain committed to Palestinian basic rights and declared positions (i.e., return to the 1967 borders, right of return or compensation, sovereignty over Jerusalem, and evacuation of settlers)?

1) Yes	46.4	46.9	45.6
2) No	27.5	28.0	26.5
3) Not Sure	19.3	17.6	22.1
4) Others	0.3	0.3	0.4
5) No Opinion /Don't Know	6.5	7.2	5.4

13. The Sharm al-Sheikh agreement stipulated that the Palestinian and Israeli sides should reach a framework agreement on the final status issues by February 2000. Do you expect that the two sides will in fact reach such an agreement in the specified date?

1) Yes	13.5	13.8	13.0
2) No	55.6	58.6	50.8
3) Not Sure	23.9	19.7	30.7
4) No Opinion /Don't Know	7.0	7.9	5.5

14. If separate elections for a Vice President of the Palestinian Authority were held today, and the following names were nominated as candidates, whom would you choose?

1) Ahmad Qurai' (Abu Ala')	3.6	4.2	2.7
2) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazin)	5.0	4.0	6.6
3) Farouq Kaddomi (Abu Lutuf)	3.9	5.0	2.1
4) Nabil Sha'ath	2.2	1.3	3.7
5) Sa'eb Erikat	7.0	7.8	5.8
6) Hanan Ashrawi	4.1	4.3	3.8
7) Faisal Hussein	8.2	8.8	7.1
8) Haidar Abdul Shafi	17.1	13.7	22.6

9) Other (Specify_____)	0.9	0.9	0.9
10) No one	29.7	31.2	27.3
11) I will not participate in the elections	13.2	13.5	12.7
12) No Opinion /Don't Know	5.1	5.3	4.7



15. If separate elections for a Vice President of the Palestinian Authority were held today, and the following names were nominated as candidates, whom would you choose?

1) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazin)	13.7	14.1	13.0
2) Faisal Hussein	21.9	25.2	16.8
3) Haidar Abdul Shafi	39.1	33.5	47.6
4) Ahmad Qurai' (Abu Ala')	10.6	13.7	5.8
5) Other (Specify_____)	9.6	8.9	10.6
6) No Opinion /Don't Know	5.1	4.6	6.2

16. Do you think that there is corruption in PA institutions?

1) Yes	68.2	65.7	72.3
2) No	15.0	16.0	13.3
3) Not Sure	16.8	18.3	14.4

17. Will this corruption in PA institutions increase, decrease or remain as it is in the future?

1) Increase	53.7	53.0	54.7
2) Remain as it is	8.2	6.6	10.6
3) Decrease	26.2	27.7	23.9
4) Don't Know/ No Opinion	11.9	12.7	10.8

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

1) Very Good	3.5	3.6	3.4
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2) Good	19.8	22.1	16.0
3) Fair	34.1	32.8	36.2
4) Bad	21.3	21.3	21.1
5) Very Bad	13.2	10.5	17.6
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	8.1	9.7	5.7

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

1) Yes	30.5	32.3	27.8
2) No	61.4	59.7	64.1
3) Do not know	8.1	8.1	8.2

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

1) Haydar Abdul Shafi	12.3	11.9	12.9
2) Yasser Arafat	44.5	40.3	51.3
3) Ahmad Yasin	9.6	10.1	8.7
4) No one	0.5	0.6	0.5
5) Others	18.6	20.6	15.2
6) I will not participate	11.2	12.1	9.8
7) No Opinion / Don't Know	3.3	4.4	1.7

21. Concerning armed attacks against Israeli targets, I....

1) Support	35.6	36.4	34.3
2) Oppose	54.8	52.2	58.8
3) No Opinion /Don't Know	9.6	11.4	6.9

22. Which of the following political parties do you support?

1) PPP	0.5	0.6	0.3
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2) PFLP	3.2	2.5	4.3
3) Fateh	37.1	38.2	35.2
4) Hamas	9.0	10.0	7.5
5) DFLP	1.3	0.9	1.9
6) Islamic Jihad	2.0	2.1	1.8
7) Fida	0.1	0.1	-----
8) Independent Islamists	3.1	2.0	4.8
9) Independent Nationalists	3.2	2.5	4.3
10) None of the above	38.5	38.5	38.6
11) Others	2.0	2.6	1.3