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This poll is part of PSR series of regular polls.

This poll has been conducted in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Ramallah



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PRESS RELEASE

Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (55)

Popularity of Abbas and Fatah improve and the public shows support for and satisfaction with PA turn to the ICC, the decision to stop security coordination, and the boycott of selected Israeli products. But the public is highly dissatisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government and worried about the future given the outcome of the Israeli elections.

19-21 March 2015

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 19-21 March 2015. The period before the poll witnessed the conduct of the Israeli elections and the victory of Netanyahu. Earlier, the PA joined the International Criminal Court (ICC), a step that led to an Israeli decision to suspend the transfer of PA custom funds. As a result, the PA was unable to pay the full salaries of the public sector. Palestinians responded by taking a decision to stop security coordination with Israel and to wage a boycott campaign against selected Israeli products. The period also witnessed a failure in implementing the reconciliation agreement due to the inability of the reconciliation government to take control over Gaza from Hamas. This failure greatly slowed down reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip as donors were unwilling to provide the necessary funds due to the absence of the PA. This press release covers attitudes regarding the Israeli elections, Palestinian elections, conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the salary crisis, reconciliation, the peace process, ICC, security coordination and the boycott of Israeli products. Total size of the sample is 1262 adults interviewed face to face in 127 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is 3%.

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Main Findings:

Findings show that the public views negatively the outcome of the Israeli elections, believing it will increase the number and intensity of Palestinian-Israeli confrontations and will diminish the opportunity to resume negotiations. Despite this, and despite public concerns about the Israeli suspension of the transfer of PA custom funds, which constrained the ability of the PA to pay the salaries of its public sector, half of the public is optimistic about the chances for ending the suspension, now that the election in Israel is over.

Findings also show a reversal in some of the effects generated by the Gaza war nine months ago. This is particularly true regarding the internal balance of power as well as attitudes regarding the war outcome. The popularity of Abbas has improved considerably allowing him to run neck to neck with Hamas' candidate Ismail Haniyeh. This change might have been generated by public satisfaction with Abbas' decision to join the ICC. Similarly, Fatah's popularity improved, particularly in the West Bank where it gains greater support than Hamas for the first time since June 2014, before the Gaza war.

Findings show a significant decline in the belief that Hamas had won the 2014 Gaza war and the level of satisfaction with the outcome of the war drops considerably. Despite this, support for launching rockets against Israel if the siege and blockade over Gaza do not end remains very high. Similarly, support for an armed intifada—which witnessed some decline—remains high. Hamas' armed approach remains preferable to the public and the majority supports implementing it in the West Bank.

The public shows considerable satisfaction for joining the ICC despite the Israeli retaliation by suspending PA's custom funds. Indeed, an overwhelming majority wants the PA to submit a complaint to the ICC against Israeli settlement policy. The public supports the PLO decision to stop security coordination but a majority believes that the PA will not implement that decision. Similarly, an overwhelming majority supports the boycott of selected Israeli products but one third say that they have not stopped buying such products. The public is opposed to the confiscation or destruction of boycotted products found in Palestinian shops; instead, it supports enacting a law banning displaying them in shops or alternatively waging a popular campaign to convince the public to stop buying these products.

Finally, a large majority remains dissatisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government. The public wants the government to assume control over crossings of the Gaza Strip and to supervise the reconstruction efforts. It also wants it to take full control over all civil and security institutions in the Gaza Strip. A clear majority wants the reconciliation government to have full control over the police force in the Gaza Strip and rejects the current status quo whereby Hamas remains in charge. The public wants the government to pay the salaries of the public sector that worked before reconciliation for the Hamas government. Finally, the public wants the reconciliation government to organize presidential and parliamentary elections within six months.

(1) Israeli Elections:

- After the Israeli right-wing electoral victory, 47% expect increased confrontations and worsening security conditions while 18% expect the opposite: less confrontations and better security conditions. 32% expect conditions to remain as they are today.
- Furthermore, 36% expect fewer chances to renew negotiations and 23% expect greater chances. 38% expect chances to remain as they are today.
- Half of the public expects Israel, now with the elections behind it, to resume transfer of PA custom funds and 43% expect it will not do so.
- Given the outcome of the Israeli elections, only 16% support an unconditional return to negotiations with Israel. By contrast, 42% support return to negotiations only if Israel agreed to freeze settlement construction. Still, 36% oppose return to negotiations even if Israel agreed to freeze settlement construction.

(2) Palestinian Elections:

- If new presidential elections are held today and only two were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the former would win 48% (compared to 42% three months ago) and the latter 47% (compared to 53% three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 46% and Haniyeh 52%. In the West Bank, Abbas receives 50% and Haniyeh 42%.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of Abbas rises to 40% (compared to 35% three months ago). Satisfaction with Abbas stood at 50% in June 2014 in the aftermath of the Shati reconciliation declaration but before the Gaza war.
- If presidential elections were between Marwan Barghouti and Haniyeh, the former would receive 58% and the latter would receive 38% of the participants' votes. Three months ago, Barghouti received 52% and Haniyeh 43%.
- If presidential elections were between three: Mahmud Abbas, Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Abbas would receive 25%, Barghouti 37%, and Haniyeh 35%.

- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 71% 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, 9% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 21% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 36% and Fatah at 34%. In June 2014, just before the Gaza war, vote for Hamas stood at 32% and Fatah 40%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands in this poll at 39% (compared to 42% three months ago) and for Fatah at 36% (compared to 34% three months ago). In the West Bank vote for Hamas stands at 27% (compared to 32% three months ago) and Fatah at 41% (compared to 33% three months ago).
- A majority of 69% wants elections to take place within few to six months from today, 9% want them to take place after a year or more, and 16% do not want elections.

(3) Domestic Conditions, salary payment crisis, and ISIS:

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 8% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 30%.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 45%. In the West Bank perception of safety and security stands at 51%.
- Findings show that the percentage of Gazans who say they seek immigration to other countries stands at 45%; in the West Bank, the percentage stands at 25%.
- Al Jazeera viewership is the highest, standing at 24%; Al Arabiyya stands at 7%. Viewership of PA's Palestine TV stands at 20% and Hamas' al Aqsa TV at 16%. Maan-Mix viewership stands at 19%.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 77% compared to 81% three months ago.
- 23% say there is press freedom in the West Bank and 18% say the same about the status of the press in the Gaza Strip.
- 33% of the Palestinian public say people in the West Bank can criticize the PA authority in the West Bank without fear. An identical percentage say people in the Gaza Strip can criticize the authorities in Gaza without fear.
- If Israel continues to suspend transfer of PA custom funds, 38% say the PA should borrow from banks to pay the public sector, 44% say the PA should either reduce salaries (29%) or reduce the size of the public sector (15%).
- A majority of 56% believes that continued withholding of PA custom funds, and the subsequent inability to pay the public sector salaries, will lead, if it lasts long, to the collapse of the PA; 40% do not believe that.
- An overwhelming majority of 86% believes that ISIS is a radical group that does not represent true Islam and 8% believe it does represent true Islam. 6% are not sure or do not know. In the Gaza Strip, 13% (compared to 5% in the West Bank) say ISIS represents true Islam.
- 12% of the public support and 84% oppose allowing IS supporters to demonstrate publicly in the Palestinian areas (as they did in the Gaza Strip few months ago). In the Gaza Strip, support for allowing IS supporters to demonstrate stands at 20% compared to only 8% in the West Bank.

(4) The reconciliation government and its role in Gaza:

- Optimism about the success of reconciliation and the end of the split stands today at 42% and pessimism at 54%.
- Satisfaction with the performance of the reconciliation government stands at 28%; dissatisfaction stands at 62%. It is worth mentioning that nine months ago, right after its establishment, 61% had confidence in the reconciliation government.
- 51% (59% in the Gaza Strip) want to place the reconciliation government in charge of the Rafah crossing, but 30% (26% in the Gaza Strip) prefer to keep it under Hamas' control. The same applies to the crossings with Israel with 51% (55% in the Gaza Strip) wishing to place them under the control of the reconciliation government.
- 44% want the reconciliation government to be in charge of the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and 30% want it placed in the hands of Hamas.
- Satisfaction with the implementation of the reconciliation agreement stands at 33% and dissatisfaction at 62%.
- 45% believe that Hamas has established a shadow government in the Gaza Strip and 39% reject this claim. But the belief that Hamas was responsible for hindering the functioning of the reconciliation government does not exceed 24% while 30% believe that the PA and president Abbas were to blame for that and 17% blame the head of the reconciliation government.

- 73% believe that the reconciliation government should be responsible for paying the salary of the Gazan civil public sector that used to work for the previous Hamas government. A similar percentage (72%) believes that the reconciliation government is also responsible for paying the salary of the Gaza police and security personnel who used to work for the previous Hamas government.
- 64% wants the reconciliation government, not Hamas, to be in charge of the Gaza police force and security personnel who used to work for the previous Hamas government; 30% believe Hamas should be the one in charge.
- If money to pay the Gazan public sector that used to work for the previous Hamas government is not readily available, 47% support reducing the salary of the current PA public sector by 15% thus allowing the reconciliation government to have the resources to pay that Gazan public sector. A slim majority of 51% is opposed to the reduction of the salary of the current PA public sector.
- 72% support the unification of the police forces in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including those who used to work for the previous Hamas government, under the full command and control of the reconciliation government. But 23% prefer to maintain the current status quo in the Gaza Strip, i.e., continued Hamas control of the police in the Gaza Strip.
- 49% believe the PA has become a burden on the Palestinian people and only 42% believe it is an accomplishment. Nine months ago, right after the formation of the reconciliation government, 50% said the PA was an accomplishment and 45% said it was a burden.

(5) Gaza War and the peace process:

- Belief that Hamas has won the Gaza War drops from 66% three months ago to 60% in this poll; 24% believe the two sides were losers. In the Gaza Strip, only 51% say Hamas came out a winner. Six months ago, 66% said Hamas came out a winner.
- Percentage of satisfaction with war achievements compared to the human and material losses sustained by the Gaza Strip drops from 42% three months ago to 37% in this poll. 62% are currently dissatisfied with the achievements. In the Gaza Strip, 60% are dissatisfied with war achievements.
- Despite that, a majority of 68% supports the launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip at Israel if the siege and blockade are not ended.
- A majority of 51% supports the two-state solution and 48% oppose it. But the public is more divided over the most effective means of ending occupation and building a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel: 37% believe that armed confrontation is the most effective means; 29% believe negotiation is the best means, and 30% believe that popular non-violent resistance is the most effective route to statehood. Three months ago, 42% said armed confrontations were the most effective means while 26% selected negotiations, and 28% selected popular non-violent resistance.
- 60% say that the two-state solution is no longer practical due to Israeli settlement expansion and 38% think it is still practical. Similarly, 71% believe that the chances for establishing a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel in the next five years are slim or non-existent. Despite that, only 31% support and 68% oppose the abandonment of the two-state solution and the adoption of the one-state solution.
- 46% support and 51% oppose the Arab Peace Initiative; but only 39% support recognition of Israel as the state for the Jewish people in return for an Israeli recognition of Palestine as the state for the Palestinian people.
- In the absence of viable negotiations, 82% support joining more international organizations; 68% favor resort to popular non-violent resistance; 48% support return to an armed intifada, and 43% support dissolving the PA. Three months ago, support for a return to armed intifada stood at 56% and nine months ago, i.e., before the Gaza war, at 41%.
- A majority of 74% favors Hamas way of resisting occupation; this percentage stood at 79% three months ago. Furthermore, 56% favor the transfer of Hamas' armed approach to the West Bank and 40% oppose that. Three months ago support for this transfer stood at 62%.
- The percentage of those who are worried that they would be hurt by Israel or that their land would be confiscated or homes demolished stands at 77%. 23% are not worried.
- An overwhelming majority of 82% believes that Israel's long term aspiration is to annex the lands occupied in 1967 and expel their population or deny them their rights. When asked about the long term aspiration of the PA and the PLO, 63% said that it is to recover all or parts of the land occupied in 1967 while 28% said it was to conquer the state of Israel or conquer the state of Israel and kill most of the Jews.

- An overwhelming majority believes that al Haram al Sharif is in grave danger: 47% believe that Israel intends to destroy al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock and replace them with a Jewish temple; 20% believe that it intends to divide the plateau on which the two mosques sit so that Jews would have a synagogue alongside the Muslim holy places; and 10% believe that Israel intends to change the status quo prevailing in the plateau since 1967 by allowing Jews to pray there. Only 14% believe that Israel is interested in maintaining the status quo without change. More than half of the public (52%) believes that Israel will indeed succeed in implementing its plans for al Haram al Sharif and 43% believe it will not succeed.

(6) ICC, security coordination, and the boycott campaign

- Despite the fact that the PA decision to become a member in the ICC has led Israel to suspend transfer of PA custom funds, 69% believe that the PA decision was a correct one and 26% believe it was the incorrect decision. Now, after joining ICC, 86% want the PA to submit a complaint against Israel for building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. Despite that, public confidence in the effectiveness of the court is not high: only 42% believe it will be effective in reducing or stopping settlement construction and 54% believe it will not be effective.
- A majority of 60% favors and 35% do not favor stopping security coordination with Israel. But a majority of 57% believes that the PA will not implement the decision of the PLO Central Council to stop security coordination with Israel; only 34% believe the PA will implement it.
- 85% support the local and international campaign to boycott Israel and impose sanctions against it; 13% oppose it. 54% say that they have stopped buying boycotted Israeli products from Tnova and Strauss; 14% say they did not buy these products in the past; and 31% say they have not stopped buying them. Two thirds (65%) believe that the boycott of Israeli products will be effective in contributing to ending occupation and 34% do not believe that. The public is divided over the question of what to do to convince shops from selling boycotted Israeli products: one third (32%) supports confiscating or destroying these products; a second third (31%) wants the PA to enact a law banning selling them; and finally 34% want the PA to encourage people not to buy these boycotted products. In the West Bank, only 23% are in favor of confiscating or destroying these products (11% favor confiscation and 12% favor destruction).

(7) Most vital Palestinian goals and the main problems confronting Palestinians today:

- 39% 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, 36% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 14% believe that it should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings, and 12% 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 is poverty and unemployment in the eyes of 28% while 26% of the public say that it is the continuation of occupation and settlement activities; 22% say it is the spread of corruption in some public institutions; and 19% believe it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings.