



المركز الفلسطيني للبحوث السياسية والمسحية

Palestinian Center for POLICY and SURVEY RESEARCH

POLL

Survey Research Unit

15 September 2020

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



PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

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Press Release

Public Opinion Poll No (77)

The overwhelming majority of the Palestinians views the decision of the UAE to normalize relations with Israel as a betrayal or abandonment of the Palestinian cause, one that serves only the interests of Israel. A similar majority thinks that Saudi Arabia and Egypt, by endorsing that normalization, have in effect abandoned the Palestinian leadership. But most Palestinians also place the blame on themselves because they are divided and have normalized relations with Israel long before others

9-12 September 2020

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 9-12 September 2020. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including a US announcement about an agreement between the UAE and Israel to normalize relations between the two countries. This normalization agreement stipulated an Israeli suspension or delay of the planned annexation of parts of the West Bank. The period also witnessed a rise in the daily number of coronavirus infections and continued stalemate in Palestinian-Israeli relations that followed a PA decision to sever all security and civil links with Israel which led during the past months to a significant financial loss to the PA. This PA decision came in response to an Israeli announcement about the intention to annex about 30% of the West Bank. This press release addresses 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 1270 adults interviewed face to face in 127 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is +/-3%.

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Main Findings:

Finding of the September 2020 poll show a great Palestinian public anger with the UAE decision to normalize relations with Israel viewing it as serving only the interests of Israel and as a betrayal or an abandonment of the Palestinian cause and at the same time as a big failure of Palestinian diplomacy. Additionally, the overwhelming majority estimates that the Palestinian leadership has lost its Arab allies as Saudi Arabia will soon follow the UAE in normalizing relations and that Egypt, by endorsing the deal, has in effect abandoned PA president Mahmoud Abbas. Nonetheless, most believe that the majority of the Arab public is opposed to the normalization deal. Findings show that the public blames the Palestinians

themselves for this development: the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the fact that they had normalized relations with Israel before many others may have hastened the arrival of this day.

The public does not show an appreciation of the fact that the UAE-Israel deal requires the suspension of the annexation plan. The reason for this is the fact that three quarters think that the suspension is only temporary and will soon take place, the normalization deal notwithstanding. Moreover, based on this assessment, the public is opposed to the restoration of PA-Israel security coordination despite the fact that half of the public wishes to restore civil and fiscal relations between the two sides.

Findings also show a significant decline in support for the two-state solution compared to the situation three months ago. They also show that the consensus in rejecting the Trump plan, the deal of the century, first documented in PSR's February 2020 poll, remains unchanged. Similarly, the overwhelming majority remains opposed to a resumption of contacts with the Trump administration. Despite the majority expectation that Trump will lose the upcoming US presidential elections, only one fifth expects positive policy change if the Democratic candidate Joe Biden wins.

Domestically, findings show continued satisfaction with the PA measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic despite significant decline in the level of satisfaction, especially with the prime minister's performance. Moreover, a majority is opposed to the severing of coordination and cooperation with Israel in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus.

Demand for the resignation of president Abbas rises in this poll. Parallel to this, satisfaction with the performance of the president has declined. As a result, if elections were held today, Hamas' Haniyyeh would win a majority of the public vote. This development might have been boosted by the current economic difficulties in the West Bank resulting from the severing of civil and fiscal coordination with Israel and the resulting inability of the PA to pay the public sector in full. Findings also show a drop in the perception of safety and security in the West Bank and an increase in the desire to emigrate. Despite these developments, the popularity of Fatah in the West Bank is not negatively affected; to the contrary, the findings show a little improvement in its popularity.

(1) UAE-Israel normalization agreement:

- A majority of 63% view the normalization agreement between the UAE and Israel as a major event that represents a significant regional shift while 32% view as minor development.
- Findings show a consensus (86%) that the agreement serves only the interests of Israel while 8% think it serves the interests of both the Palestinians and the Israelis and only 1% think it serves the interests of the Palestinians only.
- We asked the public to pick one word that represents its sentiments toward the normalization agreement: the majority (53%) picked "betrayal," 17% picked "abandonment" 13% "insult," 9% "indifference," 6% "sadness," while only 1% picked words like "satisfaction," "pride," and "joy."
- Most Palestinians (57%) believe that the majority among the Arab public is opposed to the normalization agreement while 20% believe an Arab majority supports it.
- A large majority (70%) believes that other Arab countries, such as Bahrain, Oman, Sudan, and Morocco, will sign similar agreements with Israel while 24% believe they will not do that.
- An overwhelming majority (80%) believes that Saudi Arabia has given the green light to the UAE to sign the normalization agreement and a similar majority (82%) believes that Saudi Arabia too will sign a similar public agreement.
- Similarly, an overwhelming majority of the public (78%) believes that the Egyptian position welcoming the agreement represents an abandonment of the Palestinian leadership led by Abbas while 18% do not share this view.
- A majority of 55% believes that Mohammad Dahlan was one of the participants in the making of the UAE-Israel normalization agreement while 24% do not share this view.

- Nonetheless, a majority of 53% believes that the blame for the normalization deal falls on the shoulders of the Palestinians themselves due to their division and due to the fact that they have recognized Israel and normalized relations with it long before the others; 42% disagree with this view.
- Also, a majority of 62% views the UAE defection from the previous declared Arab consensus on Palestine as a great failure for Palestinian diplomacy; 31% do not share this view.

(2) Annexation and the severing of relations with Israel in post UAE-Israel normalization:

- Three quarters of the public (75%) believe that the normalization agreement forces Israel to merely postpone annexation while 19% think it forces it to put an end to it.
- Now, after the normalization agreement, a majority of 62% is opposed to the restoration of security coordination with Israel while 32% are in favor of restoring it.
- But half of the public (50%) supports, and 45% oppose, the restoration of civil and fiscal coordination with Israel.
- If Israel conditioned resumption of civil and fiscal coordination with a resumption of security coordination, a majority of 59% will oppose, and 35% will support, the resumption of relations.
- In response to an actual Israeli annexation of Palestinian territories, the public is divided on how to respond. When asked to choose one of five possible responses, 28% favored resumption of armed struggle, 20% selected stopping the implementation of the Oslo agreement, another 20% favored return to negotiations with Israel and the US on the basis of a Palestinian peace plan, 19% preferred waging nonviolent resistance, and 6% selected the abandonment of the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution.
- The public indicates great worries about the future in case of continued severing of relations with Israel. For example, 74% say they are worried that Israel will stop transfer of clearance revenues, which would mean that the PA would not be able to pay the public sector. 75% say they are worried that patients would not be able to travel from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank or Israel for medical treatment. 77% are worried that they would soon witness shortages or complete cut-off in supplies of water and electricity from Israel. 59% are worried that armed clashes would erupt with Israel. Another 59% are worried that the PA would collapse or fail to deliver services. 70% are worried that security chaos and anarchy would return to Palestinian life. Finally, 60% say they are worried that they would not be able to travel abroad via Jordan.
- It is interesting to note that despite the great worry, a majority of the public (63%) does not believe that the PA has in fact ended security coordination with Israel and only 30% believe it indeed did.
- A majority of 61% does not expect Israel to resume its military rule and that of its civil administration now after Abbas' decision to sever relations with Israel and his invitation to Israel to assume full responsibility for the occupied territories. One third (32%) expects Israel to do so.
- A large majority of 75% says it does not prefer the return of Israeli military rule or civil administration while only 21% say they do prefer that.

(3) The Peace process and the US “Deal of the Century”:

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution declines to 39% and opposition stands at 58%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 45%.
- A majority of 62% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 31% believe that the solution remains

practical. Moreover, 77% 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 20% 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 27% of the public while 36% prefer waging “an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.” 14% prefer “waging a non-violent resistance” and 14% prefer to keep the status quo. Three months ago, 28% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel and 38% said they prefer waging an armed struggle.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation, 41% chose armed struggle, 24% negotiations, and 26% popular resistance. Three months ago, 45% chose armed struggle and 24% chose negotiations.
- We asked the public about the Trump plan, known as the “deal of the century:” 92% say they oppose it and 5% say they support it. Three months ago, 88% expressed opposition to the plan.
- If the Palestinians accept the Deal of the Century, what are the chances that such acceptance would lead to the end of the Israeli occupation and to the building of a Palestinian state? 55% think the chances are zero; 26% think the chances are less than 50%; and only 16% think that the chances are 50% or more.
- A majority of 71% is opposed and 19% are 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. Three months ago, 69% said they were opposed to the resumption of dialogue with the US.
- A majority of 61% expects president Trump to lose the next US presidential election and 30% expect him to win it. Nonetheless, only 21% expect a positive change if Biden wins while 34% believe US policy will not change and 35% expect it to become worse.

(4) PA performance during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- A two-third majority (68%) is satisfied with the measure taken by the PA to prevent travel between the various governorates in order to contain the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Similarly, the findings show that the majority is satisfied with the performance of the various entities and individuals involved in the management of the Coronavirus crisis. For example, 64% express satisfaction with the performance of the security services deployed in their areas and 57% are satisfied with the performance of the governor in their area. On the other hand, satisfaction with the performance of the prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh stands at 48% today compared to 62% three months ago.
- The majority indicates that it has been harmed economically as a result of the pandemic: 70% say their income or salary has been reduced; 61% say their income or salary has been stopped; and 52% say they stopped working or became unemployed.
- A majority of 55% say that are dissatisfied with the PA decision during the past several months to stop cooperation and coordination with Israel in the health sector with the aim of combating the coronavirus, 42% are satisfied with that decision.

(5) Legislative and presidential election

- 62% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 31% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 58% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas’ resignation stands at 54% in the West Bank and 74% in the Gaza Strip.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 31% and dissatisfaction at 63%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 36% in the West Bank

and 24% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, satisfaction with Abbas stood at 36% (44% in the West Bank and 24% 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 39% and the latter 52% of the vote (compared to 42% for Abbas and 49% for Haniyeh three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 32% of the vote (compared to 32% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives 62% (compared to 61% three months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 46% (compared to 51% three months ago) and Haniyeh 42% (compared to 38% three months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti receives 55% and Haniyeh 39%. If the competition is between prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyeh, the former receives 41% and the latter 51%.
- We asked in an open-ended question about potential Abbas successors: If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 22% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 18% prefer Ismail Haniyeh. Mohammad Dahlan is preferred by 7% (1% in the West Bank and 15% in the Gaza Strip), Mohammad Shtayyeh is preferred by 5%, Mustafa Barghouti by 4%, Khalid Mishal by 3%, and Salam Fayyad by 2%.
- We also asked the public about its willingness to participate in the upcoming elections and if so, to whom it will vote. If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 61% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 34% say they will vote for Hamas and 38% say they will vote for Fatah, 8% will vote for all other third parties combined, and 20% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 34% and Fatah at 36%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 45% (compared to 47% three months ago) and for Fatah at 30% (compared to 28% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 23% (compared to 23% three months ago) and Fatah at 46% (compared to 42% three months ago).

(6) Domestic conditions:

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 5% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 16%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 71% and in the West Bank at 57%.
- 24% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 25% and in the West Bank at 24%. Three months ago, only 18% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 80%. Three months ago, 81% expressed a similar view.
- The public is divided over its assessment of the PA: a majority of 62% views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 33% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, only 52% viewed the PA as a burden.
- A year and a half since the formation of the Shtayyeh government, findings indicate persistent pessimism. Responding to a question about expectations regarding the ability of the Shtayyeh government to make progress in reconciliation and reunification, 60% expect failure; only 31% expect 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 33% expect success. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 61% expects failure and 32% expects success.
- An overwhelming majority of the public (80%) is opposed to the arrest by the PA security services of activists who were planning to demonstrate or were demonstrating against corruption in the PA while 17% support these arrests.

- 56% (66% in the West Bank and 41% in the Gaza Strip) believes that it will not receive a fair trial if it finds itself in a Palestinian court while 36% (23% in the West Bank and 55% in the Gaza Strip) believe that will receive a fair trial. Six month ago, 42% said it believes it will receive a fair trial.
- A majority of 64% (75% in the West Bank and 49% in the Gaza Strip) thinks that the Palestinian judiciary rules according to whims and interests; 31% disagree and believe that it rules according to the law. Six month ago, 41% said the judiciary and courts rule according to the law.
- We asked the public about its viewership habits in the last three months. Findings indicate that Al Jazeera TV viewership remains the highest, standing at 19%, followed by Palestine TV (15%), Al Aqsa TV (13%), Maan TV at 12%, Palestine Today TV at 11%, Al Arabiya and al Mayadeen at 4% each, and finally al Manar at 2%.

(7) Reconciliation:

- 37% are optimistic and 59% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. three months ago, optimism stood at 29%.
- Similarly, 41% believe that unity will not be resumed and that two separate entities will evolve in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip while 45% believe unity will eventually return but only after a long time and only 11% believe unity will return soon.

(8) Muslims in China:

- 80% of the Palestinians believe that if press reports about the treatment of the Uighur Muslims in China are true, Palestinians should condemn the Chinese policy towards its Muslim community and 15% disagree with that.
- An overwhelming majority of 79% indicates that it does not believe the statement of the Chinese government that the camps built by China to allegedly detain the Uighur Muslims are in fact teaching centers aiming at eradicating extremism; 10% believe the Chinese statement.
- Similarly, an overwhelming majority of 83% believes that world Muslims should express solidarity with the Uighur Muslims against the Chinese government while 10% disagree with that.
- An overwhelming majority of 80% approves of the Turkish president Erdogan's decision to transform the Hagia Sophia museum into a mosque; 16% disapprove.

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

- 42% 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, 29% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 15% believe that the first and most vital goal should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings; 13% believe it 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 27%, the spread of corruption in public institutions in the eyes of 25%, the continuation of occupation and settlement activities in the eyes of 24%, the continued siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings in the eyes of 13%, and the lack of national unity in the eyes of 10%.