

Press Release

## Public Opinion Poll No (89)

**Thirty years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, about two thirds describe conditions today as worse than they were before that agreement; two thirds think it has damaged Palestinian national interests, three quarters think Israel does not implement it; and a majority supports abandoning it despite the fact that about half believes that abandoning it would lead to the collapse of the PA and the return of the Israeli Civil Administration**

6-9 September 2023

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 6 and 9 September 2023. The period leading up to the poll witnessed a number of important developments, including the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Accords, the occupation of the Jenin refugee camp by the Israeli army and the killing of 12 Palestinian residents of the camp, and the visit of President Abbas to the camp after the withdrawal of the Israeli army. During this period, Palestinian faction leaders also met in City of El Alamein in Egypt in the presence of President Abbas but failed to agree on a joint statement. During this period, settler terrorist acts in Palestinian areas of the West Bank increased, as did armed attacks by Palestinians against settlers and Israelis. Finally, there have been press reports that there are US-Saudi negotiations to reach an agreement to normalize Saudi-Israeli relations and that Palestinian-Saudi and Palestinian-American meetings have been held to set Palestinian conditions for this normalization agreement. This press release addresses these issues and covers other matters such as the general conditions in the Palestinian territories, the peace process and 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:**

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Oslo Accords, we asked the public a series of questions to gauge their position today on this agreement and its outcome. As we found five years ago, a majority (this time just under two-thirds) believes that the situation today is worse than it was before the implementation of the Oslo Accords. The vast majority still believes that it was wrong to sign that agreement. Today, a majority wants the PA to abandon the agreement and just over two-thirds believe that the agreement has harmed Palestinian interests. Above all, more than three quarters of the public believe that Israel does not implement this agreement all or most of the time.

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*



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In light of recent talk of a possible normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, the poll asked the public what it thinks of the impact of such normalization on the chances of achieving Palestinian-Israeli peace. A majority says it would be detrimental to the chances of peace. However, the results indicate significant differences between the attitudes of residents of the Gaza Strip, some of whom tend to see positive aspects of normalization, and those of West Bankers, who show firm rejection of it. However, the largest percentage in both regions believes that normalization with Israel is not acceptable before the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved. Moreover, a large majority, more than 70%, opposes a Palestinian engagement with the Saudis or the Americans to discuss Palestinian conditions for accepting the Saudi normalization.

We also asked about internal Palestinian reconciliation. The poll found that the vast majority believes that the meeting of the leadership of factions in the Egyptian City of El Alamein, about two months ago, was a failure. Among those who view the meeting as a failure, the percentage that places the blame on the Fatah leadership is greater than those who blame Hamas. However, one-third of the public places the blame for the failure on other parties.

Despite the failure of the reconciliation meeting in El Alamein and the greater blame placed on the Fatah leadership, Hamas's popularity has not changed compared to three months ago. In fact, Fatah's popularity improved in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Perhaps the reason why Hamas' standing has not improved is the recent marches in the Gaza Strip demanding better living conditions. This may also have contributed to improving Fatah's image. As for President Abbas, although there are signs that his position might have improved slightly, in light of his decision to retire most governors, most of the indicators of improvement, such as the slight rise in his popularity if presidential elections were held between him and Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas, are due to the high percentage of boycott of presidential elections in which only these two candidates were competing.

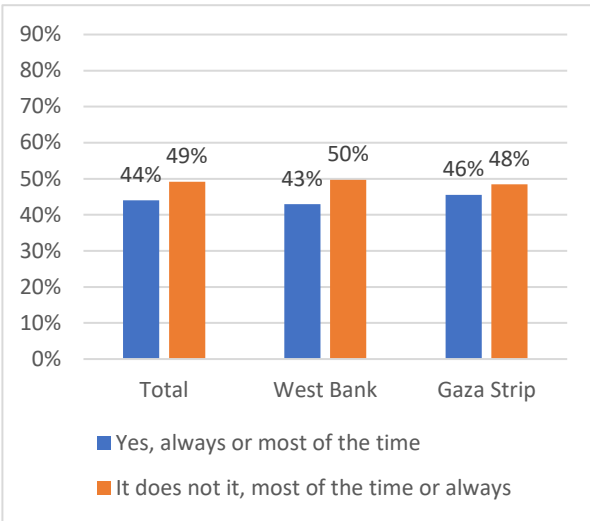
Finally, we asked about Palestinian-Israeli relations. The findings show a rise, higher than the margin of error, in support for the two-state solution, reaching about a third. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority still believes that this solution is no longer feasible due to settlement expansion. At the same time, these results indicate an increase in support for unarmed popular resistance, and a similar increase in support for a return to confrontation and armed intifada. Moreover, nearly half of West Bankers believe that the formation of armed groups from the towns and villages subjected to violent attacks by settlers is the most effective solution in combating settler terrorism.

### **(1) 30 years after the signing of the Oslo Agreement:**

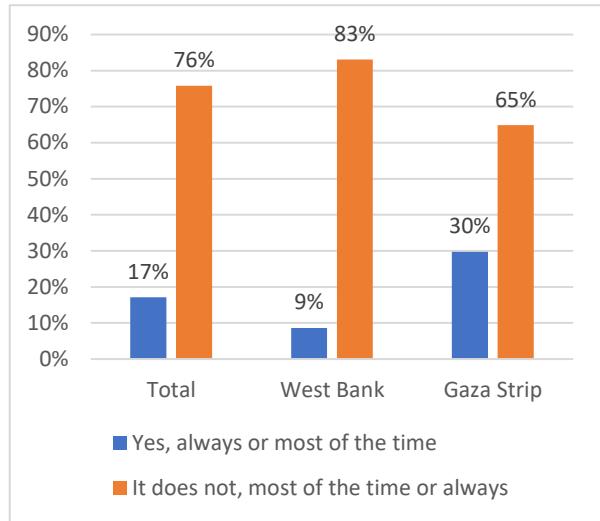
- A large majority of 73% knows the exact year in which the Oslo Accords were signed, but the rest do not know or chose the wrong year.
- 49% believe that the PA does not implement the Oslo agreement today while 44% believe it does that always or most of the time. When asked about the current Israeli government, 76% say it does not implement the Oslo agreement today while only 17% say it implements it all or most of the time.

As shown in the following two figures, Gazans are more likely than West Bankers to think that Israel is currently implementing the Oslo Agreement, while there are no differences in perception in the two areas regarding the PA implementation of that agreement.

**Figure (1): Based on what you see and hear, do you see the PA implementing or not implementing the Oslo Agreement?**

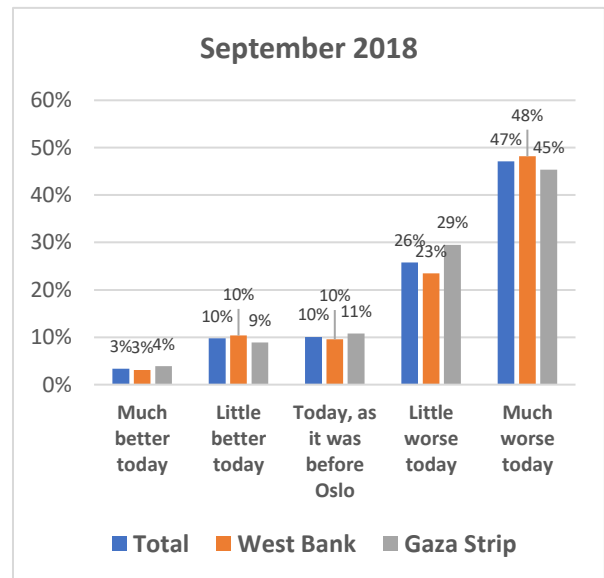
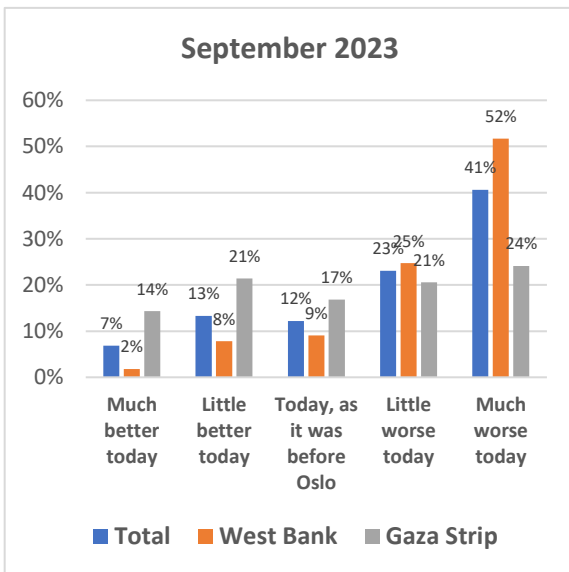


**Figure (2): What about the current Israeli government, is it implementing or not implementing the Oslo Agreement?**



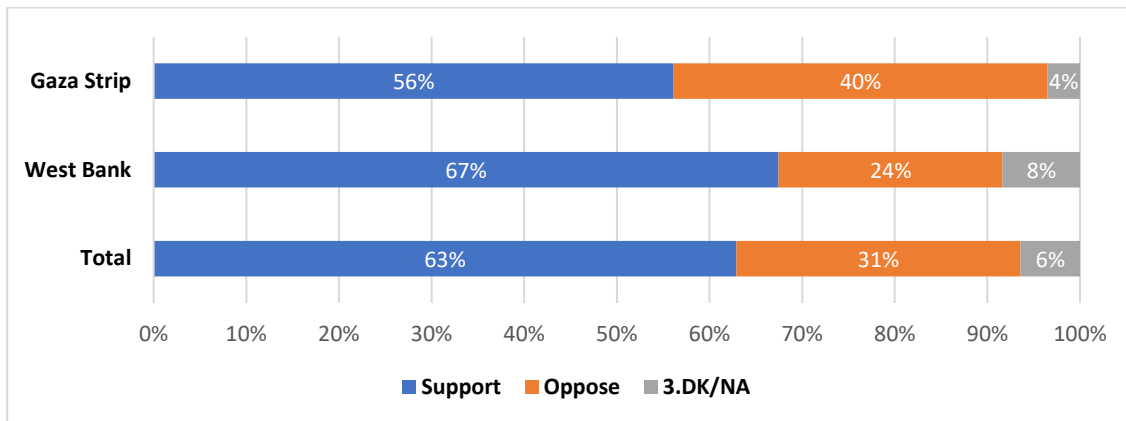
- A majority of 64% believes that the situation today is slightly worse or much worse than it was before the Oslo agreement while 20% believe it is much better or slightly better, and 12% believe the situation today is the same as before the Oslo agreement. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Accords (i.e. September 2018), 73% said the situation today is worse than before the Oslo Agreement while 13% said the situation is better than before the Oslo Agreement. As shown in figure (3) below, today, in contrast with the situation five years ago, Gazans are more likely than West Bankers to view the Oslo Agreement more positively.

**Figure (3): Public assessment of conditions before and after the Oslo Agreement, in 2018 and in 2023**



- A majority of 68% believes that the Oslo agreement harmed Palestinian interests while only 11% believe it served Palestinian interests and 17% believe it did not serve and did not harm Palestinian interests. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Accords, 65% said the agreement harmed Palestinian interests and 16% said it served Palestinian interests.
- A majority of 71% believes it was wrong for the PLO to sign the Oslo agreement while 23% believe it was right to do so.
- A majority of 63% supports the PA abandoning the Oslo agreement while 31% oppose it. As shown in figure (4) below, Gazans are much more likely than West Bankers to oppose the abandonment of the Oslo Agreement.

**Figure (4): support or oppose the Palestinian Authority's abandonment of the Oslo Accords**



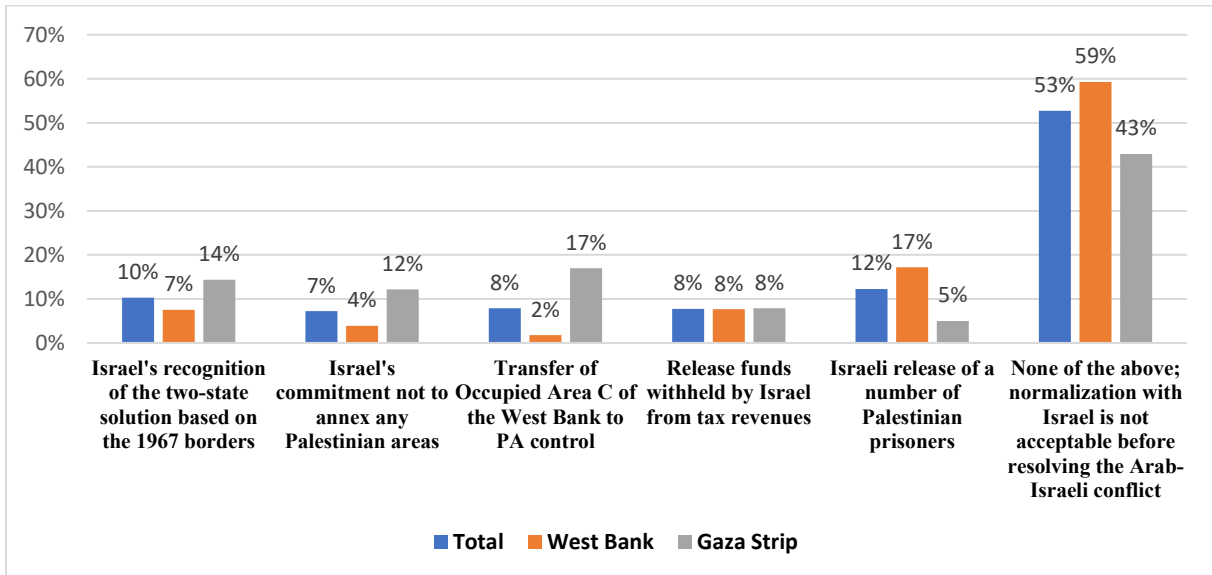
- 46% believe that the most likely scenario if the PA suspends the implementation of the Oslo agreement is the collapse of the PA and possibly the return of the Israeli Civil Administration while 40% believe that the most likely scenario if the PA stops implementing the Oslo agreement is a reversal of Israel's current policy, perhaps ending its settlement expansion and returning to negotiations.

## (2) Normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel:

- A majority of 56% believes that reaching an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel to normalize relations constitutes a harmful development that would negatively affect the chances of reaching a Palestinian-Israeli peace (this percentage reaches 69% in the West Bank and drops to 38% in the Gaza Strip). By contrast, 17% (29% in the Gaza Strip and 8% in the West Bank) believe such normalization could improve the chances for reaching Palestinian-Israeli peace; 24% believe it is neither harmful nor beneficial.
- We presented the public with five possible conditions related to the Palestinian-Israeli front that Saudi Arabia could demand from Israel in exchange for normalization with it and asked them to choose the condition they prefer the most. A majority of 53% (59% in the West Bank and 43% in the Gaza Strip) said it rejects all such conditions altogether because normalization with Israel is not permissible before resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. But 12% chose the release of a number of prisoners; 10% chose Israel's recognition of the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders; 8% chose to transfer Area C land to Palestinian control; another 8% chose the release of tax revenues funds withheld by Israel; and 7% chose Israel's commitment not to annex any Palestinian areas in the West Bank.

As shown in figure (5) below, Gazans are more willing than West Bankers to consider Palestinian conditions for Saudi normalization with Israel and that Gazans are interested mainly in the transfer of control over land to the PA and in an Israeli acknowledgement of the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders.

**Figure (5): If it is up to you, which of the following conditions should Saudi Arabia demand in order to normalize its relations with Israel?**



- We asked the public about support for a PA entry into negotiations with Saudi Arabia and the US over the setting of Palestinian conditions for Saudi normalization with Israel, such as Israeli transfer of land or the opening of the PLO representative office in Washington DC. An overwhelming majority (72%) opposes a PA entry into such negotiations (79% in the West Bank and 61% in the Gaza Strip) while 24% (38% in the Gaza Strip and 14% in the West Bank) support it.

### (3) Legislative and presidential elections:

- If new presidential elections were held today and only two candidates, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the voter turnout would be only 42%, and among those who would participate, Abbas would receive 37% of the vote and Haniyeh 58% (compared to 56% for Haniyeh and 33% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, the vote for Abbas stands at 33% and for Haniyeh at 64%, while in the West Bank Abbas receives 43% and Haniyeh 50%. If the competition is between Marwan Barghouti and Haniyeh, participation would rise to 59% and among those voting, Barghouti receives 60% and Haniyeh 37%. If the competition were between Mohammad Shtayyeh and Ismail Haniyeh, participation would drop to only 41%, with Shtayyeh receiving 33% and Haniyeh receiving 62%.
- In a closed question, we asked the public to select the person they prefer to see as President Abbas's successor. The largest percentage (34%) said they prefer Marwan Barghouti; 17% preferred Ismail Haniyeh; 6% preferred Mohammed Dahlan, 5% preferred Khaled Meshaal, 3% preferred Yahya al-Sinwar, Muhammad Shtayyeh, and Hussein al-Sheikh, and 30% said they did not know or chose someone else.

- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 22% and dissatisfaction at 76%. Satisfaction with Abbas stands at 21% in the West Bank and 24% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, satisfaction with Abbas stood at 17% and dissatisfaction at 80%. 78% want Abbas to resign while 19% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 80% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 78% in the West Bank and 79% in the Gaza Strip.
- If new parliamentary elections were held today with the participation of all political forces that participated in the 2006 elections, 64% say they would participate in them, and among these participants, Fateh receives 36%, Hamas' Change and Reform 34%, all other lists combined 9%, and 21% say they have not yet decided whom they will vote for. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 34% and Fatah at 33%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 44% (compared to 44% three months ago) and for Fateh at 32% (compared to 28% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 24% (compared to 25% three months ago) and Fatah at 40% (compared to 34% three months ago).
- 27% believe that Hamas is the most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people today while 24% believe that Fateh under the leadership of Abbas is more deserving; 44% believe both are unworthy of representation and leadership. Three months ago, 31% said Hamas is the most deserving, 21% said Fateh led by Abbas is the most deserving, and 43% said both are unworthy of representation and leadership.

#### **(4) Domestic conditions:**

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 10% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 21%. Despite this, perception of personal safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 69% and perception of security in the West Bank stands at only 48%. Three months ago, perception of security in the West Bank stood at 46% and in the Gaza Strip at 71%.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 87%; 72% believe that there is corruption in Hamas-run institutions in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, 84% said there is corruption in the PA institutions and 73% said there is corruption in public institutions run by Hamas.
- 42% of West Bankers believe that people can criticize the PA in the West Bank without fear while a majority of 56% believes it is not possible. Among residents of the Gaza Strip, 39% believe that criticism of the Hamas authority can be made without fear while 59% believe it is not possible.
- A majority of 62% believes that the PA has become a burden on the Palestinian people and only 35% believe it is an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, almost identical percentage of 63% said the PA is a burden and 33% said it was an achievement.
- 53% support, and 38% oppose, President Abbas' move to retire 12 governors in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; 53% agree that Abbas' move to retire the governors is a step in the right direction to reform the PA and inject new and young blood into it while 38% believe it is not.
- An overwhelming majority (78%) believes that Abbas' visit to Jenin refugee camp after the withdrawal of the Israeli army did not contribute to improving relations between citizens and the Palestinian leadership while 20% believe it did.
- 59% believe that the marches held in the Gaza Strip a month ago to demand better living conditions were a reaction to the difficulties of life while 35% believe they were motivated by foreign political agendas.

- 73% (82% in the West Bank and 60% in the Gaza Strip) believe that there are political prisoners in PA prisons while 21% believe there are none.
- A majority of 60% of the public (67% in the West Bank and 51% in the Gaza Strip) is concerned that clashes between members of armed groups and Palestinian security forces could lead to clashes and violence that could threaten stability in the PA.
- 39% believe that filing a complaint with the Public Prosecution office against AMAN (the Palestinian independent institution that monitors corruption), for publishing information about suspicions of corruption related to some officials in the case of the whitewashing of settlements' dates, will scare citizens and institutions from reporting suspicions of corruption while 32% believe it will encourage citizens and institutions to report suspicions of corruption; 20% believe that such a complaint will have no impact on reporting suspicions of corruption.
- When asked why the office of the president has filed a complaint against AMAN, 59% said it was to punish whistleblowers and 22% said it was because the information published was incorrect.
- We asked the participants which TV station they had watched the most over the past three months. Findings show that Al Jazeera TV viewership is the highest at 28%, followed by Al Aqsa TV (11%), Palestine TV (9%), Palestine Today (8%), Ma'an TV (7%), and Al Arabiya and Al Mayadeen (3% each).

#### **(5) Reconciliation and the reunification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip:**

- An overwhelming majority of the public (78%; 81% in the West Bank and 72% in the Gaza Strip) believes that the meeting of Palestinian factional leaders in El Alamein in Egypt in the presence of PA president Mahmoud Abbas was a failure while 12% believe it was a success.
- The largest percentage of those who believe that the meeting was a failure (34%; 38% in the West Bank and 26% in the Gaza Strip) blame the failure on the leadership of other forces and actors (other than Fateh and Hamas) while 29% (40% in the Gaza Strip and 23% in the West Bank) blame the failure on the leadership of Fateh, and 18% (25% in the Gaza Strip and 14% in the West Bank) place the blame on Hamas' leadership.
- The public is evenly divided in its position regarding Islamic Jihad's boycott of the meeting in El Alamein with 44% saying the movement should have participated while 43% believe the boycott was justified.
- 24% (38% in the Gaza Strip and 15% in the West Bank) are optimistic about the success of reconciliation while 73% are not optimistic. Three months ago, 22% said they were optimistic.

#### **(6) Palestinian-Israeli Relations and the Peace process:**

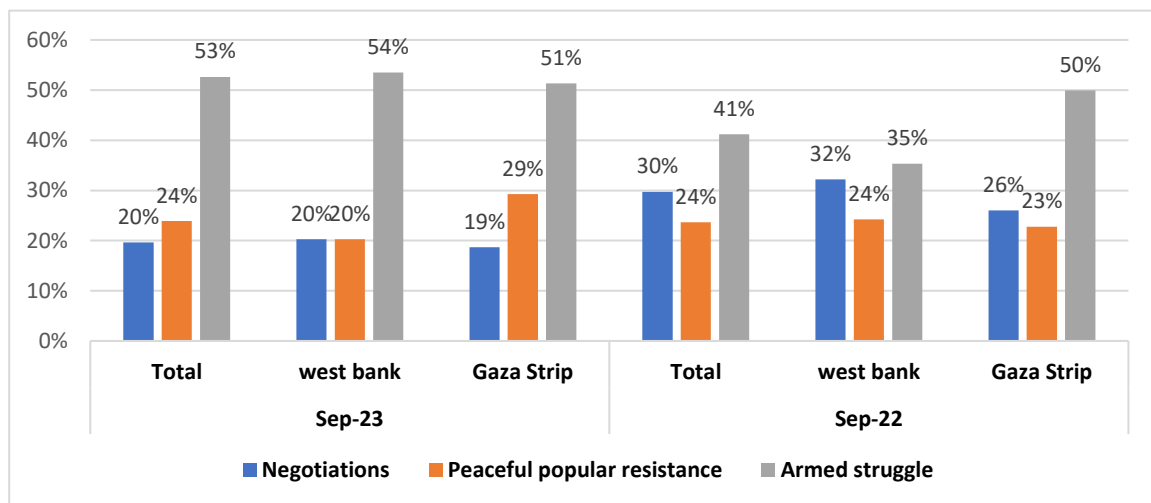
- 32% support and 67% oppose the idea of a two-state solution, which was presented to the public without providing details of the solution. Three months ago, support for this solution in a similar question stood at 28%. Support for the two-state solution is linked to public assessment of the feasibility of such a solution and the chances for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Today, 71% believe the two-state solution is no longer practical due to settlement expansion but 27% believe it is still practical. Moreover, 76% believe that the chances for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel in the next five years are slim or nonexistent, and 23% believe the chances are medium or high. Three

months ago, 71% said that the two-state solution is no longer practical due to settlement expansion.

- When asked about public support and opposition to specific policy measures to break the stalemate: 58% supported joining more international organizations; 53% supported resort to unarmed popular resistance; 58% supported a return to confrontations and armed intifada; 52% supported dissolving the PA; and 27% supported abandoning the two-state solution and demanding one state for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, 53% supported a return to confrontations and armed intifada; 49% supported the dissolution of the PA; and 26% supported abandoning the two-state solution in favor of one state.

As shown in figure (6) below, Palestinian support for resort to arms increase 10 percentage points since the formation of the current far right Israel government and that support for dissolving the PA has increase five percentage points.

**Figure (6): Comparison between public support and opposition to specific options to break the deadlock, today and a year ago**

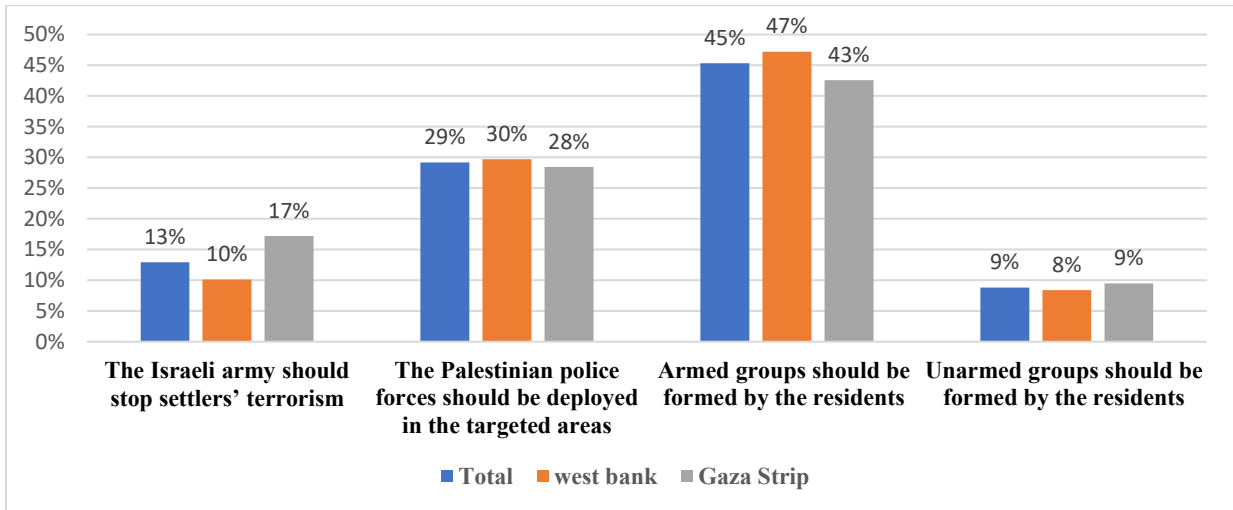


- When asked about the best way to end occupation and establish an independent state, the public was divided into three groups: a majority of 53% (51% in the Gaza Strip and 54% in the West Bank) said it was armed struggle; 20% said it was negotiations; and 24% said it was popular non-violent resistance. Three months ago, 52% said armed struggle was the best way and 21% said negotiations were the best way.
- An overwhelming majority (82%) believes that the Israeli army did not achieve its goal of arresting or killing fighters from the Jenin Brigade and other groups during its occupation of the camp more than two months ago.
- In light of the increase in settler terrorist attacks against Palestinian towns and villages, we asked the public what means are most effective in combating this terrorism that are also the most feasible. The largest percentage (45%, 47% in the West Bank and 43% in the Gaza Strip) chose the formation of armed groups by residents of the targeted areas in order to protect their areas; 29% chose to deploy Palestinian police forces in the targeted areas; 13% chose the demand that the Israeli army take measures to prevent settler terrorism; and only 9% chose to form unarmed groups of residents of the targeted areas to protect their areas.



Figure (7) below, show the extent of the public distrust, particularly in the West Bank, in the role of the Israeli army in protecting the vulnerable communities and that the trust of the public in the Palestinian police is much less than the trust it places in the armed groups.

**Figure (7): Which one of the following methods do you think is the most effective in combating settlers' terrorism, such as the attacks on Huwara, Turmusayya and Um, and at the same time the most realistic.**



- In light of demonstrations against the Netanyahu government, 39% believe the chances of these demonstrations turning into a civil war inside Israel are low, another 23% say they are nonexistent, and only 35% think they are high.

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

- 37% 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, 30% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 18% 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 and 14% believes it should be to establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians.
- In a question about the main problem confronting Palestinian society today, the largest percentage, 25% (11% in the Gaz Strip and 35% in the West Bank), say it is corruption; 24% (33% in the Gaza Strip and 18% in the West Bank) say it is unemployment and poverty; 18% say it is the continuation of the occupation and settlement construction; 17% (26% in the Gaza Strip and 10% in the West Bank) say it is continued siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip; 10% say it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and 4% say it is the weakness of the judiciary and the absence of liberties, accountability and democracy.
- When asked about the most pressing problem confronting the Palestinians today, the largest percentage (37%) said it is the Israeli occupation, while 22% said it is corruption, 15% said it is unemployment; 14% said it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 7% said it is the internal violence, and 1% said it is the inadequate infrastructure.