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Press Release

Pre-local elections: Palestinian Public Opinion Poll

Six months after the postponement of the legislative elections and months after the Hamas-Israel fourth War and the killing of Nizar Banat, and two months before the holding of the first phase of the local elections, Fatah recovers some of its lost support which gives it the ability to compete in the first phase of the local election but it remains unable to win in the second phase

14-23 October 2021

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 14-23 October 2021. The six-month period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several important developments including the indefinite postponement of the parliamentary elections that were planned for May 2021, the eruption of popular confrontations in East Jerusalem in protest against conflict over access to Muslim holy places and the threat of expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in al Shaikh Jarrah which were followed by the fourth Hamas-Israel war that was triggered by these confrontations. The Palestinians were also preoccupied with the killing of a political activist, Nizar Banat, by the Palestinian security services. PA president Mahmoud Abbas met with the Israeli defense minister Benny Gantz in Ramallah to talk about Palestinian-Israeli relations and means of improving them while strengthening the PA by implementing various trust-building measures. The period witnessed the escape and recapture of six Palestinian prisoners from the Gilboa prison in Israel. Finally, the period witnessed the setting of the month of December 2021 as a date for the holding of local elections in villages and small towns with population of less than 11,000. This press release addresses a selected number of domestic issues such as the evaluation of the status of Palestinian democracy and human rights, the internal balance of power, and the results of legislative and presidential elections if they were to take place today. It also covers attitudes regarding Israeli-Palestinian relations, such as the two-state solution, return to negotiations, and the best means to end the Israeli occupation given the current stalemate. Total size of the sample is 1800 adults interviewed face to face in 120 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is +/-3%.

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Main Findings:

This poll was conducted six months after the indefinite postponement of legislative elections that were scheduled to take place in May 2021 and two months before the holding of the first phase of local elections, scheduled for December 2021. The past six months witnessed important developments that significantly decreased the popularity of Fatah and president Abbas,

most importantly in addition to the postponement of elections, the fourth war between Hamas and Israel and the killing of the opposition activist Nizar Banat by members of a Palestinian security service.

In order to analyze the findings, we compared the levels of support for Fatah and Hamas before and during these developments. We also compared public attitudes regarding domestic issues and Palestinian-Israeli relations. Specifically, we compared the results obtained in March 2021 in the areas that will now go to the first phase of the local elections with the current findings for the same exact areas. The number of the relevant areas that were part of our sample in March and are part of the current sample is 27 and the total number of respondents is 270 in March and 405 in the current poll.

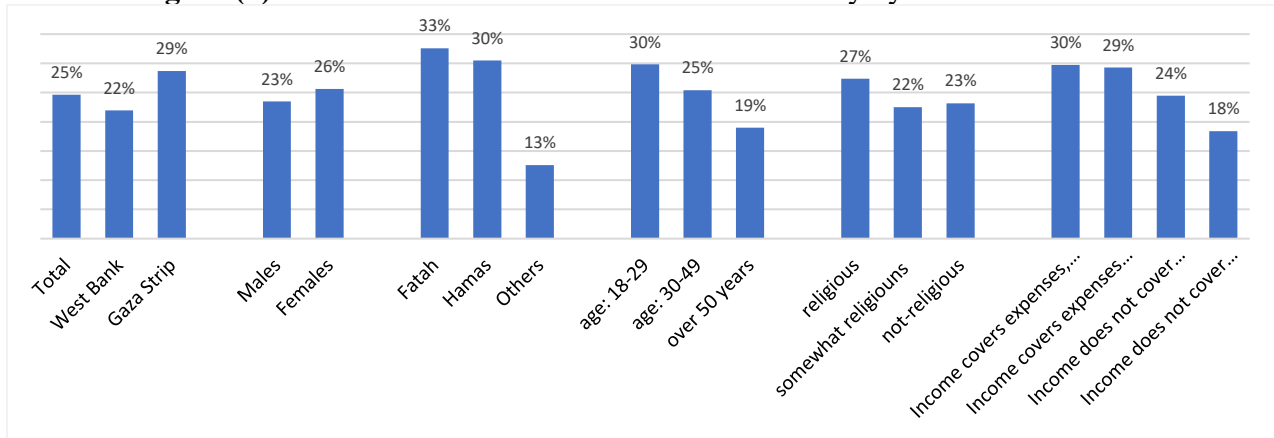
The current findings show that Fatah continues to suffer the consequences of the developments of the past six months but they also show that it has managed to narrow the gap with Hamas which gives it the ability to effectively compete in the upcoming first phase of the local elections, which will take place in places that are mainly rural. But it remains unable to win in the second phase of the local elections, which will take place mostly in cities and big towns. The findings show that the overall support for Fatah has increased and it is now higher than that of Hamas. But the gap between the two parties today, five percentage points in favor of Fatah, is smaller than the one that prevailed in March, which stood at 13 percentage points in favor of Fatah. Nonetheless, the current findings represent a huge improvement for Fatah compared to the findings of June 2021 when the gap between the two stood at 11 percentage points in favor of Hamas. The levels of dissatisfaction with the performance of president Abbas and the demand for his resignation remain very high as about three quarters continue to make that demand. Perhaps one reason for the rise in Fatah's popularity might be the implementation by Israel of some of the confidence building measures that the PA and Israel agreed to recently, such as family unifications and the rise in the number of laborers working in Israel. It is worth mentioning that a month ago, in our September 2021 poll, majority of the Palestinians supported such measures.

The current findings indicate a significant rise in support for the two-state solution compared to our findings during the past six months. Similarly, the current poll shows an increase in public belief in the effectiveness of negotiations. Indeed, for the first time in six months the percentage of those who prefer to change the status quo through negotiations is higher than those who prefer to do so through waging armed struggle. It is possible that this change is driven by the same dynamics that increased the support for Fatah.

(1) Domestic conditions: democracy, elections, the performance of the president, and the balance of power:

- We asked Palestinians to evaluate people's ability to criticize the authority without fear in the area where they live, 71% of West Bankers believe that people in their area cannot criticize the PA without fear. In the Gaza Strip, 62% say people in that area cannot criticize Hamas' authority without fear; 28% of West Bankers and 38% of Gazans say people in their areas can do that without fear.
- We asked the public to evaluate the status of democracy and human rights in the areas where they live, under the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and under Hamas' control in the Gaza Strip: 22% of West Bankers and 29% of Gazans describe these conditions as good or very good, 50% of West Bankers and 35% of Gazans describe them as bad or very bad, and the rest describe the conditions as neither good nor bad.
- As indicated in chart (1) below, positive (good or very good) evaluation of democracy and human rights is higher among those with the highest income (30%) compared to those with the lowest income (18%), among supporters of Fatah and Hamas (33% and 30% respectively) compared to supporters of third or other parties (13%).

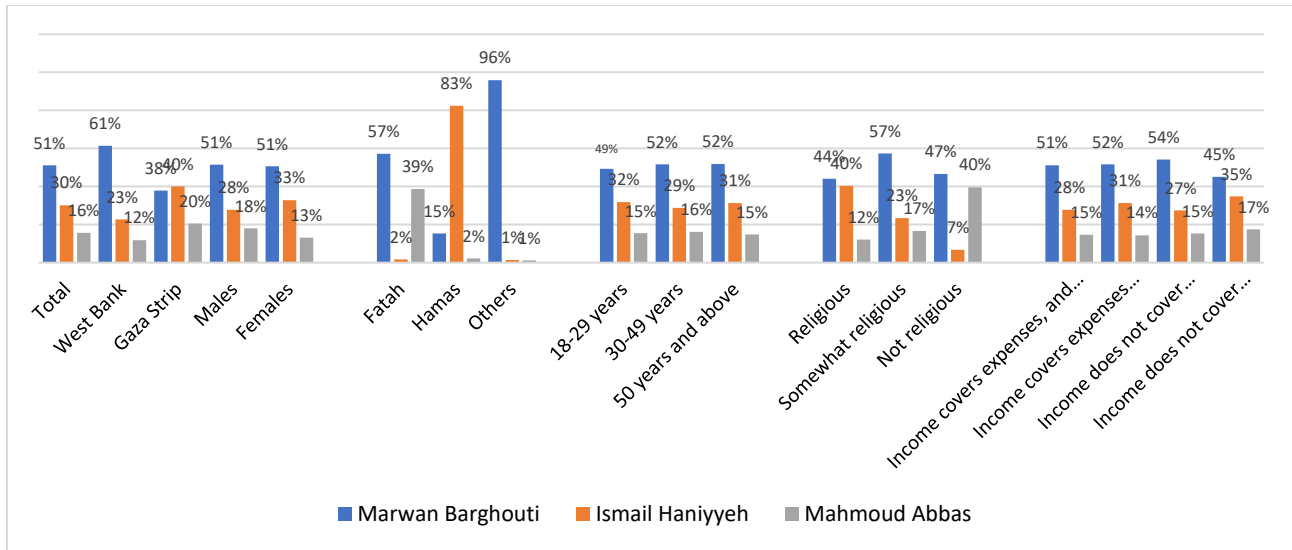
Figure (1): Positive evaluation of Palestinian democracy by selected indicators



- If parliamentary and presidential elections were to take place today, the following should, in the eyes of the public, be the top five priorities that these elections should aim to achieve: the unification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (selected by 29% of the public), followed by improving economic conditions (25%), combating corruption (15%), lifting the siege and blockade over the Gaza Strip (14%), and strengthening the resistance to occupation (9%). The percentage of those who selected “improving economic conditions” stands at 35% in the Gaza Strip, making it the top priority for Gazans, while the percentage of selecting “combating corruption” stands at 20% in the West Bank, making it the second priority in that area after the “unification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,” which is selected by 33% of the West Bankers.
- When asked about the party or faction that is better able to achieve the priority selected by the respondents, 26% selected Hamas while only 18% selected Fatah and 14% selected third or other parties. One third (33%) believe all factions and parties have equal ability to achieve the priorities selected. Hamas is selected as the most able by those who selected the following priorities: strengthen the resistance to occupation (45% selected Hamas as most able), lift the siege and blockade (39%), combat corruption and unify the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (24% each). Those who select Fatah are more likely to have selected the improvement of economic conditions (25%) and making progress in the peace process (21%). The peace process was not among the top five priorities selected by the Palestinian public. Those who selected the priority of creating a democratic political system with periodic elections, another priority that was not among the top five, selected third parties as the most able faction or political party (30%).
- Satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 27% and dissatisfaction at 71%. About three quarters (74%) want Abbas to resign while 22% want him to stay in the office. Demand for Abbas’ resignation stood at 78% in September 2021.
- If new presidential elections were to take place today with three candidates competing, president Abbas, Ismail Haniyyeh from Hamas, and Marwan Barghouti from Fatah 64% of the public would participate and from among those the first receives 16%, the second 30%, and the third 51%. Vote for Barghouti in this three-way competition is higher in the West Bank (61%) compared to the Gaza Strip (38%), among supporters of third parties and Fatah (96% and 57% respectively) compared to supporters of Hamas (15%), among the somewhat religious (57%) compared to the religious and the not religious (47% and 44% respectively), among those working in the private sector (60%) compared to those who work in the public sector (39%), among those with the highest income (51%) compared to those with the lowest income (45%). Vote for Haniyyeh is higher in the Gaza Strip (40%)

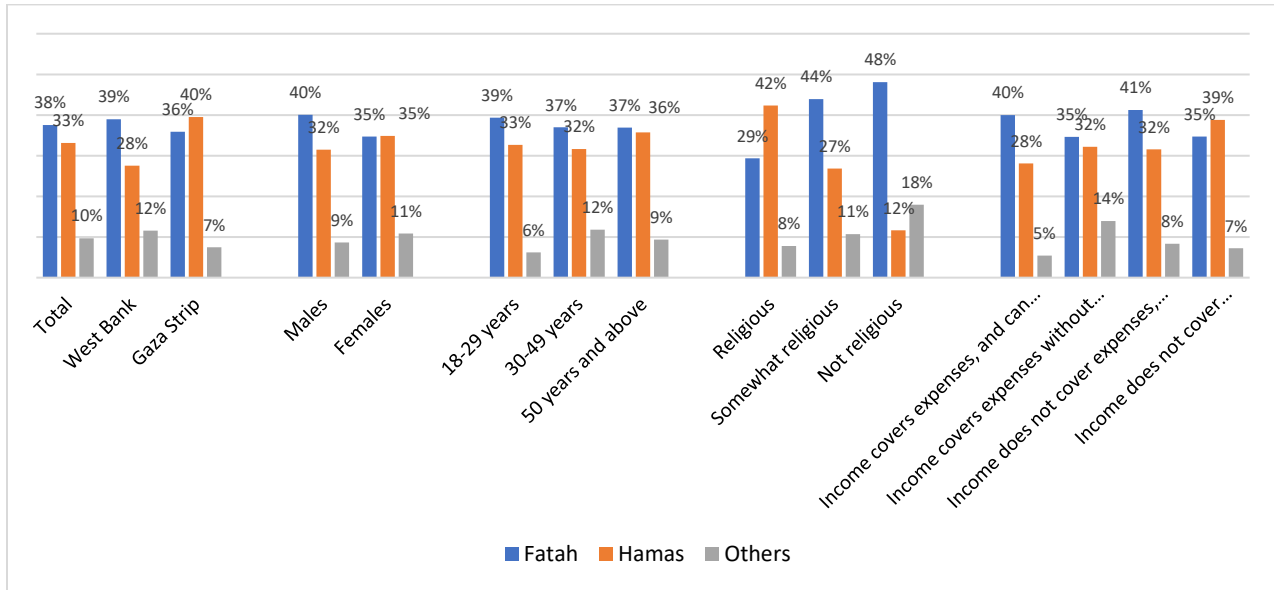
compared to the West Bank (23%), among women (33%) compared to men (28%), among the religious (40%) compared to the not religious and the somewhat religious (7% and 23% respectively), among supporters of Hamas (83%) compared to supporters of third parties and Fatah (1% and 2% respectively). Vote for Abbas is higher in the Gaza Strip (20%) compared to the West Bank (12%), among men (18%) compared to women (13%), and among supporters of Fatah (39%) compared to supporters of third parties and Hamas (1% and 2% respectively).

Figure (2): vote in three-way presidential elections by selected indicators



- If the competition was between two, Abbas and Haniyeh, only 46% say they would participate and from among those the former receives 39% and the latter 55%. But if the competing two candidates were between Marwan Barghouti and Haniyeh, 62% would participate and from among those, the former would receive 65% and the latter 32%.
- If new parliamentary elections were to take place today, 60% would participate and from among those Fatah receives 38%, Hamas 33%, and the third parties combined 10%; 20% are undecided. It is worth mentioning that in September, Hamas received 37% of the vote and Fatah 32%. Voting for Fatah is higher in the West Bank (39%) compared to the Gaza Strip (36%), among men (40%) compared to women (35%), among those with the highest income (40%) compared to those with the lowest income (35%). Vote for Hamas is higher in the Gaza Strip (40%) compared to the West Bank (28%), among the religious (42%) compared to the not religious and the somewhat religious (12% and 27% respectively), and among those with the least income (39%) compared to those with the highest income (28%).

Figure (3): vote in parliamentary elections by selected indicators



- 43% 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, 33% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 13% 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 10% believes it should be to establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians.

2) Comparing attitudes in areas of the first phase of local elections with attitudes in other areas:

- In order to assess attitudes of the residents of the villages and towns in which local elections will take place in December 2021, we divided respondents into three categories: those residing in the areas of the first phase of the local election, residents of cities and other urban areas in which the second phase of the local elections will take place, and residents of refugee camps who will not participate in local elections. Here below are the main attitudinal differences between the three areas:
 1. Fatah enjoys more support than Hamas and third parties (41%, 27%, and 7% respectively) in those areas where the first phase of the local election will take place. It is worth mentioning that back in March 2021 Fatah received the support of 56% of respondents in those areas that will participate in the first phase of the local elections while Hamas received the support of only 23% in those same areas. These findings are confirmed when looking at the outcome of a three-way presidential elections in which Marwan Barghouti receives 59% compared to Ismael Haniyyeh (23%) and Mahmoud Abbas (14%). It is worth mentioning that Fatah receives the highest percentage of the vote in the refugee camps followed by the areas participating in the first phase of the local elections and thirdly in cities and other urban areas that will participate in the second phase of the local elections: 48%, 41%, and 35% respectively. Hamas receives its highest vote from cities and other

urban areas that will participate in the second phase of the local elections followed by areas that will participate in the first phase of the local elections, and finally in refugee camps (35%, 28%, and 27% respectively). In other words, Hamas and Fatah have exactly the same level of support in the areas that will participate in the second phase of the local elections.

2. Satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 33% in the areas that will participate in the first phase of the local elections while standing at 24% in the urban areas that will participate in the second phase and 37% in refugee camps. Demand for Abbas resignation in the areas of the first phase of the local elections stands at 68% compared to 66% in refugee camps and 77% in cities and other urban areas that will participate in the second phase of the local elections.
3. Evaluation of the status of democracy and human rights, standing at 25%, is the lowest among the residents of the areas that will participate in the first phase of the local elections, followed by the urban areas that will participate in the second phase of the local elections (24%) and refugee camps (28%).
4. Support for the two-state solution is the lowest in the areas that will participate in the first phase of the local elections (40%) compared to urban areas which will participate in the second phase (46%) and finally in refugee camps (50%).
5. Support for waging an armed struggle against the occupation is the lowest in the areas that will participate in the first phase of the local elections, standing at 30% only, compared to 34% in the cities and urban areas and 38% in refugee camps.
6. Support for a return to negotiations under US leadership is the lowest in the areas that will participate in the first phase of the local elections (27%) while standing at 35% in urban areas and 37% in refugee camps.

Comparing attitudes of those residing in the areas that will participate in the first phase of the local elections to other areas

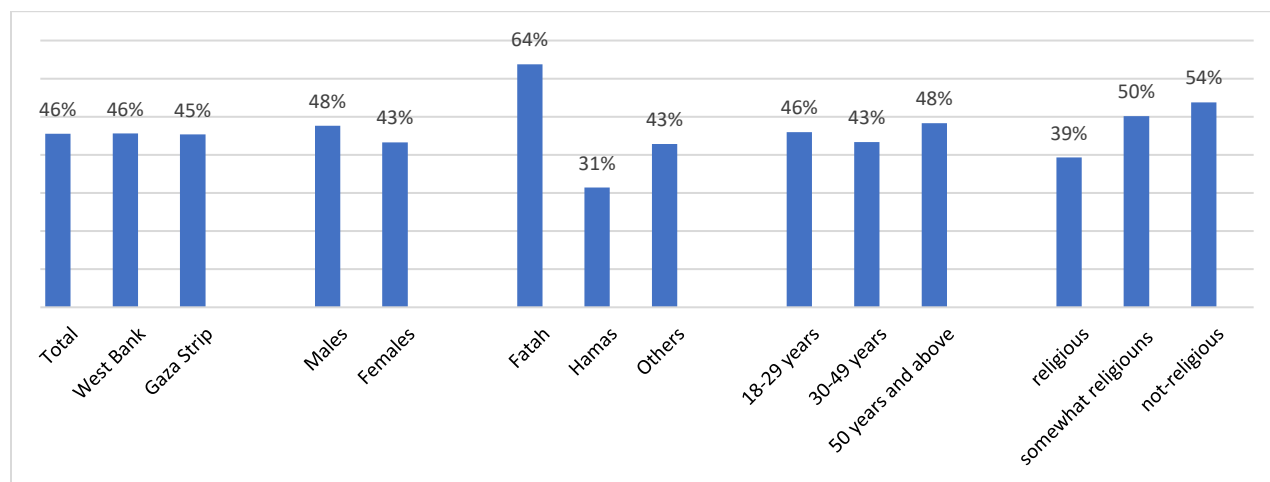
		Local elections		
		Phase 1	Refugee camps	Phase 2
1) If new elections are held today in agreement between all factions in which the same list that participated in the 2006 elections were to participate, you would vote for:	1) Fatah	41.0%	47.6%	35.4%
	2) Hamas	27.1%	27.5%	35.4%
	3) Others	7.2%	8.6%	10.5%
	4) None/undecided	14.0%	11.8%	13.0%
	5) DK/NA	7.6%	4.6%	4.5%
	6) NA	3.0%	0.0%	1.3%
2) What if the competition was between Marwan Barghouti, Ismael Haniyyeh, and Mahmoud Abbas, to whom you would vote?	1) Marwan Barghouti	59.0%	44.6%	49.8%
	2) Ismael Haniyyeh	22.8%	26.1%	32.7%
	3) Mahmoud Abbas	13.7%	24.4%	15.0%
	4) DK/NA	4.6%	4.9%	2.5%
3) Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of president Abbas since his election?	1) Very satisfied	4.1%	2.8%	4.5%
	2) Satisfied	29.4%	34.5%	19.2%
	3) Dissatisfied	36.8%	31.6%	32.1%
	4) Not satisfied at all	25.9%	28.1%	42.3%
	5) DK/NA	2.6%	2.2%	1.3%
	6) NA	1.2%	.9%	.5%
4) If it is up to you, you would want president Abbas to resign or stay in office?	1) Certainly resign	35.8%	33.2%	48.2%
	2) Resign	31.8%	33.0%	28.8%
	3) Stay in office	20.8%	24.8%	15.4%

	4) Certainly stay in office	5.0%	4.2%	4.4%
	5) DK/NA	5.3%	4.0%	2.5%
	6) NA	1.3%	.9%	.6%
5) If you want to evaluate the status of democracy and human rights in the area where you live (West Bank under the PA and Gaza Strip under Hamas), you would say it is:	1) Good/very good	25.3%	27.7%	24.0%
	2) Neither good nor bad	29.3%	37.2%	29.6%
	3) Bad/very bad	43.9%	35.0%	45.3%
	4) DK/NA	1.4%	.1%	.9%
	5) NA	.2%	0.0%	.2%
6) Do you support or oppose the solution based on the establishment of a Palestinian state along side the state of Israel, knows as the two-state solution?	1) Support	40.4%	49.9%	46.4%
	2) Oppose	56.7%	48.9%	52.4%
	3) DK/NA	2.6%	.5%	.9%
	4) NA	.3%	.7%	.3%
7) The following four alternatives point to what can be done now regarding Palestinian-Israeli relations. Which one you prefer?	1) Maintain the status quo	20.8%	13.4%	18.7%
	2) Wage armed struggle	30.1%	38.1%	34.0%
	3) Wage non-violent resistance	8.7%	10.0%	8.6%
	4) Reach a peace agreement with Israel	37.3%	36.5%	36.2%
	5) Other	.5%	1.8%	.7%
	6) DK/NA	2.7%	.3%	1.1%
	7) NA	0.0%	0.0%	.6%
8) Do you support or oppose the return to negotiations with Israel led by the US under the Biden administration?	1) Support	26.9%	36.5%	34.5%
	2) Oppose	68.5%	61.6%	62.6%
	3) DK/NA	4.6%	1.3%	2.2%
	4) NA	0.0%	.7%	.7%

(3) The Palestinian-Israeli Peace process:

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 46% and opposition stands at 53%. No description or details were provided for the concept. One months ago, support for the concept stood at 36%. Support for the two-state solution is higher among men (48%) compared to women (43%), among the not-religious and the somewhat religious (54% and 50% respectively) compared to the religious (39%), among supporters of Fatah (64%) compared to supporters of third parties and Hamas (43% and 31% respectively). More than three quarters (76%) 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.

Figure (4): support for the two-state solution based on selected indicators



- One third (33%) support return to negotiations with Israel under US leadership but a majority of 64% oppose it. Support is higher in the Gaza Strip (35%) compared to the West Bank (32%), among the somewhat religious and the not-religious (37% and 34% respectively) compared to the religious (29%), among supporters of Fatah and third parties (51% and 38% respectively) compared to supporters of Hamas (20%).
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation, the public split into three groups: 44% chose armed struggle, 36% negotiations, and 16% popular resistance. One month ago, 48% chose armed struggle and 28% chose negotiations. Support for armed struggle is higher in the Gaza Strip (50%) compared to the West Bank (40%), among men (50%) compared to women (39%), among supporters of Hamas (74%) compared to supporters of Fatah and third parties (28% and 45% respectively). Support for negotiations is higher among women (38%) compared to men (34%), among those whose age in between 40 and 59 years (36%) compared to those whose age is between 18 and 22 years (29%), and among supporters of Fatah (51%) compared to supporters of Hamas and third parties (16% and 27% respectively).
- The most preferred way out of the current status quo is “reaching a peace agreement with Israel” according to 36% of the public while 34% prefer waging “an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.” 9% prefer “waging a non-violent resistance” and 19% prefer to keep the status quo. One month ago, 28% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel and 39% said they prefer waging an armed struggle. The percentage of those who prefer waging an armed struggle is higher in the Gaza Strip (39%) compared to the West Bank (30%), among men (38%) compared to women (30%), among the youth between the ages of 18 and 29 years (37%) compared to those whose age is between 40 and 59 years (32%), and among supporters of Hamas (61%) compared to supporters of Fatah and third parties (20% and 35% respectively).

Figure (5): Preference for waging armed struggle according to selected indicators

