

PSR

المركز الفلسطيني للبحوث السياسية والمسحية

Palestinian Center for POLICY and SURVEY RESEARCH

Poll

Survey Research Unit

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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



For further information, please contact

Dr. Khalil Shikaki or Walid Ladadweh
at the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research

Ramallah, Palestine
Telephone 02 296 4933
Fax 02 296 4934

e-mail: pcpsr@pcpsr.org
<http://www.pcpsr.org>

Press Release

Public Opinion Poll No (78)

Two thirds demand the resignation of president Abbas amidst a split around the resumption of coordination with Israel with a majority expressing the view that Israel came out the winner and fearing the step could expand Arab normalization deals with Israel and reduce the prospect for reconciliation and the holding of elections; but the majority expresses optimism about the Joe Biden election and support holding dialogue with the new U.S. administration

8-11 December 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 8-11 December 2020. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including the reversal of PA's May 2020 decision to end security and civil coordination with Israel and the resumption of that coordination, the election of Joe Biden as president of the US, the signing of a normalization agreement between Sudan and Israel, and the failure of Palestinian reconciliation efforts to reach an agreement on holding Palestinian elections. 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%.

For further details, contact PSR director, Dr. Khalil Shikaki, or Walid Ladadweh at tel. 02-296 4933 or email pcpsr@pcpsr.org.

Main Findings:

Findings of the last quarter of 2020 show a majority is opposed to the PA leadership decision to resume coordination with Israel. Yet, they also show that this opposition is not strong and that it is in fact closer to a split between support and opposition. Even when it comes to security coordination with Israel, attitudes reflect an almost even split. Nonetheless, the findings paint a dark public assessment of Palestinian conditions in light of the return to coordination with Israel. The majority believes that Israel is the one to come out a winner from this political battle over coordination and that the Palestinian side is the one that paid the heavy price for engaging in it. Moreover, the overwhelming majority believes Israel has not in fact agreed to honor its commitments under signed agreement; indeed, this overwhelming majority thinks Israel has not abandoned its annexation plans for the Jordan Valley and West Bank settlements. On top of all that, the public thinks that the resumption of coordination will lead to greater Arab

normalization with Israel, greater settlement expansion, and greater chances for annexation while at the same time diminishing the chances for reconciliation and the holding of elections. But the majority does express satisfaction with the resumption of coordination in the health sector; expects Israelis and Palestinians to resume negotiations; and a large minority expects an improvement in economic conditions.

The optimism about a resumption of negotiations seems linked more to public belief that the electoral victory of Joe Biden in the US elections will lead to an improvement in Palestinian-American relations. Similarly, the expectations about improved economic conditions seem to reflect the belief of two thirds of the public that the Biden Administration will resume financial aid to the PA. Despite the fact that the majority of the public does not expect Biden to abandon the Trump Plan, known as the deal of the century, or reverse the decision to transfer the US embassy to Jerusalem, a clear majority is in favor of resuming dialogue with the new administration.

Yet, despite the optimism generated by the election of Biden, support for the two-state solution remains low, unchanged from September. Moreover, three quarters do not expect the creation of a Palestinian state along side Israel in the next five years, and the majority thinks the two-state solution is no longer practical or realistic because of settlement expansion. Nonetheless, we see in this poll an increase in the percentage of those who prefer to reach a peace agreement with Israel compared to three months ago while the percentage of those who prefer waging an armed struggle against occupation declines during the same period. Still, the largest percentage of the public views armed struggle as the most effective means of ending occupation.

On domestic condition, findings show that the percentage of those demanding the resignation of president Abbas has increased to two-thirds despite the fact that the balance between Hamas and Fatah support remains unchanged compared to the previous six months. Findings show that three quarters of the public demand the holding of general legislative and presidential elections but only a third or less expects the PA to hold them. If elections are held under current conditions, findings show a sharp split among Fatah voters: the largest percentage of them is more likely to vote for an independent list formed by Marwan Barghouti than for an official Fatah list formed by Abbas and the Fatah leadership. Moreover, if Mohammad Dahlan forms his own independent list, he is more likely to take away from the official Fatah list about one fifth of Fatah voters, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Finally, findings show that only half of the public is willing to take the coronavirus vaccine, when available, while the other half refuses to take it.

(1) The resumption of PA coordination with Israel:

- A large minority of 44% (54% in the West Bank and 29% in the Gaza Strip) supports, and 53% oppose the decision by the PA leadership to resume civil and security coordination with Israel.
- When asked specifically about security coordination, 41% agreed, and 38% disagreed, with the statement that security coordination should be stopped even if it leads Israel to stop the transfer of clearance funds thereby stopping salary payment to PA employees; 18% said they neither agree nor disagree with the statement.
- A majority of 56% believes there is little or no chance the PA will reverse its decision and once again suspend security coordination with Israel; 13% think the chances of PA doing so are high or very high.
- A majority of 53% says that Israel came out the winner from the PA decision to stop and then resume coordination with Israel; only 9% think the PA came out a winner; 13% think both sides came out winners; and 22% think neither side came out a winner.
- A majority of 60% believes the Palestinians have paid a heavier price for stopping civil and security coordination with Israel while only 12% think Israel paid a heavier price.
- The overwhelming majority (82%) says that Israel has not in fact agreed to honor its signed commitments with the PA despite the written letter submitted to the PA; only 14% think Israel has indeed agreed to honor its commitments.

- Even if Israel agreed to honor its commitment to signed agreements with the PA, the overwhelming majority (89%) believes Israel will not in fact abide by such commitment; only 8% think Israel will abide by these commitments.
- Similarly, 87% believe that Israel has not abandoned its plan for the annexation of the Jordan Valley and the West Bank settlements; 8% think it has.
- Now, after the resumption of coordination with Israel, 43% expect, and 55% do not expect, an improvement in economic conditions.
- But two thirds (67%) expect, and 28% do not expect, the return of the Palestinian and Israeli sides to the negotiating table.
- A majority of 61% expects the resumption of coordination with Israel to lead to an increase in normalization agreements between Arab countries and Israel; 68% expect it to lead to greater settlement expansion; and 54% expect it to lead to greater chances for Israeli annexation of the Jordan Valley and the settlements in the West Bank.
- On the domestic implication of the resumption of coordination with Israel, 57% expect it to diminish the chances for reconciliation and the largest percentage (44%) expects it to diminish the chances for holding general Palestinian elections.
- But 60% are satisfied, and 36% are dissatisfied, with the resumption of PA coordination with Israel on health issues and the combating of the coronavirus pandemic.
- If Israel transfers partial clearance funds to the PA, the largest percentage (35%) thinks the PA should accept it and take Israel to the International Court of Justice to demand the rest of the funds; 28% say the PA should accept the partial transfer; and only 34% say the PA should not accept the partial transfer.

(2) Expectations from the Biden Administration and attitudes regarding resumption of Palestinian-American dialogue:

- Now that Biden has won the US presidential elections, a majority of 58% expects, and 36% do not expect, an improvement in Palestinian-American relations.
- In fact, two-thirds (68%) expect the new US administration to resume economic aid to the PA and 52% expect it to allow the reopening of PLO diplomatic mission in the US capital.
- Yet, only 37% expect the Biden Administration to re-open the US consulate in East Jerusalem; 29% expect it to abandon the Trump Plan, known as the deal of the century; 26% expect it to relocate the US embassy to Tel Aviv; and 22% expect it to reverse the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
- At the regional level, a large minority of 42% expects, and 46% do not expect, the new US administration to recommit itself to the nuclear deal with Iran.
- A majority of 59% supports and 36% oppose the resumption of Palestinian dialogue with the US under the new administration.
- But only 44% think, and 49% do not think, Palestinians should return to negotiations with Israel under US leadership.

(3) The Palestinian-Israeli Peace process:

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution declines to 40% and opposition stands at 59%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 39%.
- A majority of 62% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 34% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 75% 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 23% 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 38% of the public while 29% prefer waging “an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.” 10% prefer “waging a non-violent resistance” and 19% prefer to keep the status quo. Three months ago, 27% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel and 35% said they prefer waging an armed struggle.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation, 39% chose armed struggle, 35% negotiations, and 18% popular resistance. Three months ago, 41% chose armed struggle and 24% chose negotiations.
- When asked about support for specific policy choices, 68% supported joining more international organizations; 63% supported resort to non-violent resistance; 48% supported return to armed confrontations and intifada; 44% supported dissolving the PA; and 29% supported abandoning the two-state solution and embracing a one state solution for Palestinians and Israelis.

(4) Taking the Coronavirus vaccine and PA performance during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Only half of the public (50%) is willing to take the coronavirus vaccine when it is available and the other half refuses to take it.
- Half of the public (50%) is satisfied with the measure taken by the PA to contain the spread of coronavirus pandemic and 48% are dissatisfied.
- The majority is satisfied with the performance of the various entities and individuals involved in the management of the Coronavirus crisis: 65% express satisfaction with the performance of the security services deployed in their areas and 53% 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 45% today compared to 48% three months ago and 62% six months ago.
- The majority indicates that it has been harmed economically as a result of the pandemic: 73% say their income or salary has been reduced; 62% say their income or salary has been stopped; and 54% say they stopped working or became unemployed.

(5) Legislative and presidential election

- Three quarters demand the holding of general legislative and presidential elections; but only 32% expect such elections to be held soon in the Palestinian territories.
- Among those who demand the holding of elections, the majority (55%) says it should be for simultaneous legislative and presidential elections with no separation between them; 22% prefer holding simultaneous legislative and presidential elections but are not opposed to separating the two by holding them at different dates; and 21% prefer holding legislative elections first followed few months later by presidential elections. A majority of 56% supports, and 39% oppose, holding general elections if Israel does not allow holding them in East Jerusalem.
- We 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, 69% 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, 10% will vote for all other third parties combined, and 19% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 34% and Fatah at 38%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 43% (compared to 45% three months ago) and for Fatah at 29% (compared to 30% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 26% (compared to 23% three months ago) and Fatah at 45% (compared to 46% three months ago).
- If legislative elections are held today, 38% expect Fatah to win; 25% expect Hamas to win; 23% expect third parties and new lists that are unknown today to win.

- If Marwan Barghouti forms an electoral list independent of the official Fatah list formed by Abbas and Fatah leadership, 25% of the entire public say they would vote for this Barghouti list; only 19% say they would in this case vote for Fatah's official list. But if Mohammad Dahlan forms his own independent list, only 7% of the entire public (mostly in the Gaza Strip) would vote for his list while 27% would vote for the official Fatah list.
- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the former would receive 43% and the latter 50% of the vote (compared to 52% for Haniyeh and 39% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 32% of the vote (compared to 32% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives 64% (compared to 62% three months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 52% (compared to 46% three months ago) and Haniyeh 38% (compared to 42% three months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti receives 61% and Haniyeh 37%. If the competition is between prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyeh, the former receives 47% and the latter 47%. Three months ago, Shtayyeh received the support of 41% and Haniyeh 51%.
- 66% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 30% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 62% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 61% in the West Bank and 74% in the Gaza Strip.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 33% and dissatisfaction at 65%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 37% in the West Bank and 27% in the Gaza Strip. Three months ago, satisfaction with Abbas stood at 31% (36% in the West Bank and 24% in the Gaza Strip).
- We asked, in a close-ended question, about potential Abbas successors: If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 37% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 23% prefer Ismail Haniyeh. Mohammad Dahlan is preferred by 7% (2% in the West Bank and 15% in the Gaza Strip), Khalid Mishal by 4%, and Salam Fayyad and Mustafa Barghouti by 3% each.
- If Fatah nominates Abbas as its candidate for the presidential elections, a majority of 52% of the public would view him as the wrong choice believing that Fatah has other better candidates; only 25% of the public think his is the best Fatah candidate. When asked to name a better candidate, 42% selected Marwan Barghouti, 10% selected Mohammad Dahlan, and 7% selected Mohammad Shtayyeh.
- The largest percentage (28%) says that the top priority for Palestinian elections should be to restore unity between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; 24% say it is improving economic conditions; 18% say it is the removal of the siege and blockade over the Gaza Strip; 15% say it is to fight corruption; 6% say it is to bring back democracy; and another 6% say it is to strengthen resistance to occupation.
- 52% say if elections are held today under current conditions, they will not be fair and free; 41% do not agree with that. Moreover, 76% think that if Hamas wins the elections, Fatah will not accept the results and 58% think if Fatah wins the elections, Hamas will not accept the results.

(6) Domestic conditions and satisfaction with the Shtayyeh government:

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 5% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 19%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 72% and in the West Bank at 54%.
- 28% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 38% and in the West Bank at 21%.

Three months ago, 24% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate and only 25% of Gazans expressed the same desire.

- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 86%. Three months ago, 80% expressed a similar view. When asked about institutions controlled by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, only 63% indicated that there is corruption in these institutions.
- 45% of West Bankers think people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear while 51% think they cannot. In the Gaza Strip, 54% think people in the Strip can criticize Hamas authorities without fear and 46% think they cannot.
- The public is divided over its assessment of the PA: a majority of 55% views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 41% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, 62% viewed the PA as a burden.
- A year and nine months 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, 66% expect failure; only 27% 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 61% expects failure and 32% expect success. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 61% expects failure and 35% expects success.
- 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 22%, followed by Palestine TV, Al Aqsa TV, and Maan TV at 12% each, Palestine Today TV at 11%, Al Arabiya and al Mayadeen at 5% each, and finally al Manar at 1%.

(7) Reconciliation:

- An overwhelming majority (77%) thinks the reconciliation efforts are not serious and insufficient.
- Only 29% are optimistic and 68% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 37%.

(8) The Arab Peace Initiative, Arab normalization with Israel, and Arab visits to Jerusalem:

- Three quarters of the public (75%) believe the Arab Peace Initiative is a thing of the past while 19% think it remains standing.
- 81% expect Saudi Arabia will soon join the Arab normalization train while 15% do not expect that.
- Only 11% believe that Arab normalization agreements help in resolving the conflict with Israel while 57% think they cause damage to the efforts to resolve the conflict.
- 29% say they are for and 69% say they are against visits from Arab countries, particularly from the Gulf, to East Jerusalem and for praying at Al Aqsa Mosque. But a majority of 52% says that these visitors should be allowed to pray at the mosque or should be left alone without interference.

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

- 45% 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, 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 an identical percentage (13%) believes 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 29%, the continuation of occupation and settlement activities in the eyes of 26%, the spread of corruption in public institutions in the eyes of 20%, 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 11%.