

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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Press Release

Public Opinion Poll No (81)

While almost all Palestinians followed the news about the Gilboa prison break on daily basis viewing it as inspiring to popular resistance, the killing of the opposition activist Nizar Banat and the PA behavior in its aftermath damage the standing of the PA as almost 80% of the public demand the resignation of president Abbas

15-18 September 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 15-18 September 2021. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including the killing of a political activist, Nizar Banat, right after his arrest and severe beating by the Palestinian security services, the eruption of widespread demonstrations against the PA demanding justice for Banat, the escape of six Palestinian prisoners from the Gilboa prison in Israel and the capture of four of them (just before the fieldwork began), the continued Egyptian-mediated Hamas-Israeli negotiations to strengthen the ceasefire reached in May and begin the process of reconstruction, the meeting of PA president Mahmoud Abbas 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. 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:

Findings of the third quarter of 2021 show the centrality of domestic issues on shaping public attitudes. Three developments in particular are worth observing: the killing of the political activist Nizar Banat by PA security services, the manner in which PA security services dealt with protests during the last few months, and the residual impact of the last Hamas-Israel war of May 2021. Findings also show the great importance attached by the public to the issue of prisoners in Israeli jails. Impacted by all of the above, findings reflect continued PA loss of status and support.

A large majority rejects that the notion that the killing of Banat was a mistake unintentionally made by security officers. Instead, the public is confident that the death of the political activist was premeditated, ordered by the political or security leadership. Because of that, the public is not

satisfied with the step taken by the PA to ensure justice by putting all security officers involved on trial. The public is also angry with the manner in which the PA cracked down on public protests that demanded justice in the Banat case. In fact, three quarters view the behavior of the security services as a violation of liberties and human rights.

Findings show that the overwhelming majority of the public has been following, on daily basis, the news regarding the escape of six Palestinian prisoners from the Gilboa prison in Israel. The overwhelming majority views the prisoners' behavior, even after they were captured, as inspiring to the Palestinians to rise and take the initiative to resist the occupation. Yet, on this issue of public consensus, one in which the PA is not a party, the Palestinian leadership and the security establishment do not come out looking good at all. While the public is easily convinced by Hamas' proclamations and plans for freeing the prisoners, the PA is distrusted with the majority believes that the PA security services would not defend the prisoners.

The impact of the May 2021 confrontations in Jerusalem and the war between Hamas and Israel is still strongly felt in this poll. An overwhelming majority still thinks Hamas came out the winner and that Hamas goal has been to defend East Jerusalemites and al Aqsa Mosque. Indeed, the largest percentage (but not the majority) believes that Hamas is more deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people. The majority calls upon Hamas to relaunch rockets against Israel if East Jerusalemites are expelled from their homes in the city or if restrictions are imposed on Palestinian access to al Aqsa Mosque. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that now, after three months have passed since our last poll, we do see some decline in some of those indicators that measure the ascendance of Hamas. In almost all indicators, we see a small decline ranging between two to eight percentage points.

If new presidential and parliamentary elections were to take place today, Hamas would do relatively well compared to Fatah. This is particularly true for a presidential election, assuming president Abbas is Fatah's candidate. The outcome would be dramatically different and more beneficial to Fatah if its candidate for the presidency is Marwan Barghouti. Most importantly for Fatah, findings show a significant increase in the demand for Abbas' resignation, with almost 80% making the demand, an unprecedented PSR finding.

Findings show that in the context of increased Covid-19 infection rates, the majority is in favor of mandatory vaccination; but opposition is slightly more than a third. Yet, even among those who reject making vaccination mandatory to all of the public, a minority favors making it mandatory to those working in the public sector such as schools and ministries.

Findings on the peace process show continued but slow decline in support for the two-state solution. They also show high levels of support for armed struggle as the best means of ending the occupation with almost half of the public endorsing this position. Consistent with that we find a slim majority opposing a resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations under the sponsorship of the Quartet. Despite this, a majority of Palestinians view positively the confidence building measures that would improve living conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

(1) Prisoners escape from the Gilboa prison:

- An overwhelming majority of Palestinians (86%) says that it has heard about and followed on daily basis the news about the escape of the six Palestinian prisoners from the Gilboa prison in Israel and the capture of some of them while 12% say they did that occasionally and only 2% say they have not heard about or followed the news
- Similarly, 87% say the escape of the six prisoners and the capture of some of them will serve as an inspiration to Palestinians outside the prison to take the initiative and actively work toward the ending of occupation; only 7% think the escape and capture will have the opposite impact of bringing frustration and despair; 5% say it will have no impact.

- 81% believe that Hamas will soon succeed in making a deal with Israel on a prisoners' exchange that will include the release of the escaped and recaptured prisoners; 14% believe no such exchange will take place soon.
- On the other hand, if the escaped prisoners managed to reach the Palestinian territories, only 24% think the PA security services would in this case protect them while 68% think they would not do so.

(2) The death of Nizar Banat:

- A majority of 63% of the public believes that the killing of Nizar Banat soon after his arrest by PA security officials was a deliberate measure ordered by the PA political or security leaders while only 22% believe it was an unintentional mistake by those who arrested him.
- 63% support and 28% oppose the demonstrations that erupted after the death of Banat demanding the departure of the president from office and the removal of his government.
- A large majority of 69% feels the measures take by the PA to ensure justice in the Banat case, including putting on trial all 14 security officials who took part in his arrest, are insufficient; only 20% think they are sufficient.
- Almost three quarters (74%) believe the steps taken by the PA security services in arresting the demonstrators who demanded justice for Banat is a violation of liberties and human rights while only 18% view these measures as a legitimate enforcement of law and order.

(3) Three months after the Jerusalem confrontations and the war between Hamas and Israel:

- An overwhelming majority of Palestinians (71%) believes that Hamas has come out a winner in its last war with Israel while only 3% think Israel came out a winner; 21% say no one came out a winner and 3% think both sides came out winners. Three months ago, 77% thought Hamas came out the winner. Moreover, 63% think that Hamas has achieved its declared goal behind firing rockets at Israel: to force Israel to stop the expulsion of the families in al Shaikh Jarrah and to bring to an end Israeli restriction on Muslim access to al Aqsa; 29% think it did not. Three months ago, 65% said Hamas has achieved its declared goal
- 67% think that Hamas' decision to launch rockets at Israeli cities came in defense of Jerusalem and al Aqsa Mosque while 10% think it came as a protest against the PA cancelation of elections with the aim of weakening the PA leadership; 19% think Hamas' decision was motivated by these two drivers. Three months ago, 72% thought that Hamas' decision came in defense of Jerusalem and al Aqsa Mosque.
- In light of the recent confrontations with Israel, 45% think Hamas is most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people while only 19% think Fatah under president Abbas is the most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinians; 28% think neither side deserve such a role. Three months ago, 53% thought Hamas is more deserving of representation and leadership and 14% thought Fatah under the leadership of Abbas is the more deserving.
- If Israel expels the families of al Shaikh Jarrah or reimposes restrictions on access to al Aqsa Mosque, 60% believe the response in this case should be the launching of rockets at Israeli cities, while 20% think it should be the waging of non-violent resistance, and 13% believe Palestinians should respond by submitting a complaint to the UN and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

(4) Legislative and presidential elections:

- 73% say they support the holding of presidential and legislative elections in the Palestinian territories in the near future while 23% say they do not support that. Demand for elections

stands at 82% in the Gaza Strip and 67% in the West Bank. But a majority of 56% (63% in the Gaza Strip and 52% in the West Bank) believe no legislative or legislative and presidential elections will take place soon.

- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, only 51% would participate and from among those, Abbas would receive 34% and Haniyeh 56% of the votes (compared to 59% for Haniyeh and 27% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 34% of the votes (compared to 30% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives 61% (compared to 60% three months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 33% (compared to 25% three months ago) and Haniyeh 52% (compared to 59% three months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, participation would increase to 66% and from among those Barghouti receives 55% and Haniyeh 39%. If the competition is between prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyeh, participation rate would decrease to 49% and from among those the former receives 31% and the latter 60%. Three months ago, Shtayyeh received the support of 26% and Haniyeh 63%.
- If Abbas does not run for elections, the public would vote for the following: 33% say they want Marwan Barghouti, 22% say Ismail Haniyeh, 6% say Dahlan and another 6% say Yahia Sinwar, Khalid Mishaal and Mustafa Barghouti 3% each, and Salam Fayyad 2%.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 24% and dissatisfaction at 73%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 22% in the West Bank and 26% in the Gaza Strip. Satisfaction with the performance of Abbas six months ago stood at 32% and dissatisfaction at 65%. Moreover, 78% of the public want president Abbas to resign while only 19% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 68% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 78% in the West Bank and 77% in the Gaza Strip.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions that participated in the 2006 elections, 68% say they would participate. Of those who would participate, 37% say they will vote for Hamas and 32% say they will vote for Fatah, 13% will vote for all other third parties combined, and 18% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 41% and Fatah at 30%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 47% (compared to 45% three months ago) and for Fatah at 27% (compared to 28% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 28% (compared to 38% three months ago) and Fatah at 38% (compared to 32% three months ago).

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

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 7% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 23%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 67% and in the West Bank at 59%.
- 27% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 36% and in the West Bank at 21%. Three months ago, 15% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate and 42% of Gazans expressed the same desire.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 83%. When asked about institutions controlled by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, 61% indicated that there is corruption in these institutions. Three months ago, 84% said there is corruption in PA institutions and 57% said there is corruption in public institutions controlled by Hamas.
- 38% of West Bankers think people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear while 58% think they cannot. When asked to evaluate the status of democracy and human rights in the West Bank, 18% of West Bankers said it was good or very good. In the Gaza

Strip, 58% think people in the Strip can criticize Hamas' authorities without fear and 37% think they cannot. When asked to evaluate the status of democracy and human rights in the Gaza Strip, 43% of Gazans said it was good or very good.

- In its assessment of the PA, a majority of the Palestinians (59%) views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 34% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, 56% viewed the PA as a burden and 35% viewed it as an asset.
- 32% are optimistic and 63% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 41%.
- After more than two years 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, 70% expect failure; only 22% expect success. When asked about the ability of the government to organize legislative or legislative and presidential elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 29% of the public expect success and 63% expect failure. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 64% expects failure and 30% expects success.
- We asked the public about its view regarding the demands for a change in the current PA government. A majority of 54% expresses support for comprehensive change leading to the appointment of a new government and a new prime minister, while 26% want only to change some of the ministers, and 14% do not want to make any change and want the government to stay as it is.
- We also asked the public about its views on the recurring internal violence similar to the one witnessed recently in which an incident between two individuals led to widespread family and tribal violence. A majority of 57% expressed the view that such incidents indicate a weak public trust in the justice system including law enforcement agencies; but 35% expressed the view that such incidents reflect the traditional nature of Palestinian society that is difficult or impossible to change.
- When asked how should the PA deal with such incidents, 66% expressed the view that first and foremost, the PA should strengthen the law enforcement authorities while 27% expressed the view that the PA should strengthen the tribal reform committees and cooperate with them.
- We asked the public about its viewership habits in the last three months. Findings indicate that al Jazeera TV has the highest viewership, standing at 23%, followed by Palestine TV (14%), al Aqsa TV (12%), Palestine Today (11%), Maan (10%), al Mayadeen (4%), al Arabiya (3%), and al Manar (2%).

(6) The Coronavirus: Mandatory vaccination and PA performance during the pandemic:

- With the big rise in the number of Covid infections, we asked the public about the steps it thinks the PA government should take in order to protect people from the pandemic: 39% said it should follow the normal procedures of enforcing social distance, face masks, and payment of fines for violators; a similar percentage (37%) said it should make vaccination mandatory to all those who are allowed to take it; 5% said it should impose a full closure; and 15% said they are in favor of all of the above.
- When asked specifically about mandatory vaccination, a majority of 63% expressed support while 35% expressed opposition.
- Among those who reject mandatory vaccination, 29% are in favor, and 69% are not in favor, of making it mandatory to those who work in the public sector such as those working in schools and ministries.
- 48% (55% in the West Bank and 39% in the Gaza Strip) report that they have already received the coronavirus vaccination; 27% (19% in the West Bank and 38% in the Gaza

Strip) says that they are willing to take the vaccine when available; and 24 say they and their families are not willing to take the vaccine when it becomes available to them.

- 74% (84% in the Gaza Strip and 68% in the West Bank) are satisfied with the efforts made by the government to obtain the vaccine and 24% are dissatisfied.
- 45% are satisfied with the measures taken by the PA to contain the spread of the coronavirus while 53% are dissatisfied.
- The majority is satisfied with the performance of the various actors involved in the management of the Coronavirus crisis: 59% express satisfaction with the performance of the security services deployed in their areas and 63% are satisfied with the performance of the ministry of health. But satisfaction with the performance of the prime minister in the management of the Coronavirus crisis stands at only 39%.

(7) The Palestinian-Israeli Peace process and the new Israeli government:

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 36% and opposition stands at 62%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 39%.
- A majority of 63% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 32% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 73% 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 28% of the public while 39% prefer waging “an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.” 10% prefer “waging a non-violent resistance” and 18% prefer to keep the status quo. Three months ago, 27% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel and 39% said they prefer waging an armed struggle.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation, the public split into three groups: 48% chose armed struggle, 28% negotiations, and 19% popular resistance. Three months ago, 49% chose armed struggle and 27% chose negotiations.
- We asked the public to speculate about the reasons for the lack of mass popular participation in non-violent resistance and provided the following list: trust in leadership and parties, burden of living conditions, or loss of will to fight. The largest percentage (44%) replied that it is due to lack of trust in the PA political leadership and; 39% said it has to do with the preoccupation and the burden of daily living conditions; and only 16% selected the loss of the will to fight.
- Under current conditions, a majority of 61% opposes and 24% support an unconditional resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.
- When asked about support for specific policy choices, 63% supported joining more international organizations; 54% supported resort to non-violent resistance; 54% supported return to armed confrontations and intifada; 47% supported dissolving the PA; and 27% supported abandoning the two-state solution and embracing a one state solution for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, 60% supported a return to confrontations and armed intifada, 47% supported dissolving the PA, and 20% supported the abandonment of the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution.
- 58% are opposed, and 36% are supportive, of a return to dialogue with the new US administration under president Joe Biden. Support for a return to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations under the leadership of the international Quartet stands at 39% and 52% are opposed. Moreover, 49% do not believe, and 41% believe, that the election of Biden and

the resumption of American aid to the PA opens the door for a return to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations within the framework of the two-state solution.

- We asked the public about its views regarding Palestinian-Israeli confidence building measures that would improve living conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, such as approval of family unification permits or making available to the PA additional financial resources. A majority of 56% said it looks positively, while 35% said it looks negatively, at such measures.

(8) American withdrawal from Afghanistan:

- 40% view the events leading to the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan as a victory for Taliban against the US and its Afghani allies. But a third (33%) thinks that the events leading to the US withdrawal were orchestrated ahead of time between the US and Taliban; 27% say they not know.
- The largest percentage of the public (43%) does not expect what happened in Afghanistan to happen in Palestine in case of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, a scenario in which such withdrawal would lead to the collapse of the PA and its government and the takeover of armed Islamist groups, such as Hamas; but 36% believe this scenario could indeed happen and 21% do not know.
- Moreover, 46% believe the Palestinians should learn a lesson from what happened in Afghanistan by strengthening the forces of armed resistance, but not the PA and its government, while 28% think the lesson should lead us to strengthen the PA and its legitimacy so that it would not collapse as the Afghani government did.

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

- 44% 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, 32% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 12% 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.
- In a question about the two main problems confronting the Palestinians today, the largest (36%; 31% in the Gaz Strip and 40% in the West Bank) said it is the continued siege and blockade percentage of the Gaza Strip, 23% said it is the unemployment and poverty, 13% said it is the continuation of the occupation, 12% said it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 10% said it is the spread of corruption, and 6% said it is the weakness of the judiciary and the absence of liberties, accountability and democracy.