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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

### **Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (59)**

**A Majority backs a two-state solution and support for knifing attacks drops, but majorities in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip continue to support a return to an armed intifada and 60% of West Bankers and three quarters of Gazans believe that if the current confrontations develop into an armed intifada, it would help achieve national rights in ways negotiations could not**

17-19 March 2016

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 17 and 19 March 2016. The period before the poll witnessed continued limited Palestinian-Israeli confrontations with a number of stabbings by young Palestinians in the West Bank and in Israel and stone throwing at checkpoints and other areas of friction. It also witnessed efforts to move forward Hamas-Fatah reconciliation efforts with a meeting held in Doha. The fieldwork started few days after the government and the teachers reached an agreement that ended a strike that was declared by the teachers in order to increase their wages and improve their work conditions. This press release addresses many of those issues and covers attitudes regarding Palestinian elections, conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, teachers' strike, reconciliation, Palestinian-Israeli confrontations, and other internal and international issues. 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 first quarter of 2016 indicate significant changes in some of the findings obtained in the second half of 2015. A majority now backs a two-state solution and support for stabbing attacks against Israelis has dropped, particularly among West Bankers. Nonetheless, a majority in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip continues to support an armed intifada and continues to believe that such an intifada would help Palestinians achieve national rights in ways that negotiations could not. Demand for Abbas' resignation remains unchanged with about two thirds supporting it. As we found in our previous two polls, in September and December 2015, the "Oslo generation" of youth between the ages of 18 and 22 are the least supportive of the two-state solution, the most supportive of stabbing attacks, and the most likely to think that an armed intifada would help Palestinians achieve national rights in ways that negotiations could not.

Findings show a significant drop in the support for stabbing attacks compared to our December 2015 poll. This is particularly true in the West Bank where a majority is opposed to such attacks. Indeed, only a little over one third believes that if the current confrontations continue as they are now they would help achieve national rights in ways that negotiations could not; the majority does not believe that. By contrast, a majority in the West Bank, reaching about 60% (and 75% in the Gaza Strip), believes that if the current confrontations develop into an armed intifada it would help achieve national rights in ways that negotiations could not. Nonetheless, this West Bank percentage is four percentage points fewer than what we found in the West Bank three months ago. In other words, there is a notable drop in the West Bank in the support for knifing attacks due, it seems, to a rising perception in its inefficacy, and a large majority continues to view an armed intifada as more effective than these attacks. We also see a drop in the level of support for abandoning the Oslo agreement, but a large majority continues nonetheless to support such an abandonment.

Support for the two-state solution is on the rise in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but it remains higher in the former than in the latter. Findings also show that the public rejects the proposed idea of separation advanced recently by the head of the Israeli opposition Labor party which calls for separation between Palestinians and Israelis in East Jerusalem and the West Bank within a context of temporary unilateral interim arrangements.

If new presidential elections are held today in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Hamas' candidate Ismail Haniyeh would win against Mahmud Abbas with a margin of 11 percentage points. But if the competition is between Marwan Barghouti, for Fatah, and Haniyeh, the former would win by a margin of 18 percentage points. If new parliamentary elections are held today, Fatah and Hamas are likely to obtain almost identical results. Nonetheless, findings show a small increase in support for Fatah and a small decrease in support for Hamas in the West Bank; in the Gaza Strip we see the reverse: a small decrease for Fatah and a small increase for Hamas. It is possible that reaching an agreement with the striking teachers have contributed to the slight improvement of Fatah standing in the West Bank. Yet, it is clear that this development did not have an impact on Abbas' standing (despite a minor improvement in the West Bank) as a majority in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip continues to demand his resignation. It should be noted that an overwhelming majority of the public sympathizes with the teachers and their demands and rejects the government policy regarding the teachers' strike. If the poll was conducted before reaching an agreement to end the strike, it is likely that support for Fatah and Abbas would have been less than today's findings show. It is also possible that the talk about negotiations to build a seaport in the Gaza Strip and the recent reconciliation talks between Hamas and Egypt have contributed to the improvement of Hamas' standing in the Gaza Strip. It should be noted that an overwhelming majority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip looks positively at the idea of Hamas-Israeli negotiations under Turkish sponsorship to establish a seaport for Gaza.

### **(1) Popular Palestinian-Israeli confrontations:**

- Support for use of knives in the current confrontations with Israel drops from 67% three months ago to 58% in this poll. Support for knifing attacks in the Gaza Strip stands at 82% and in the West Bank at 44%. Three months ago, support among West Bankers for knifing attacks stood at 57% and among Gazans at 85%.
- 29% believe that the current confrontations will develop into a new armed intifada, 15% believe they will develop into wide scale peaceful popular confrontations, and 17% believe they will develop in both directions. By contrast, 22% believe the confrontation will stay as they are now and 14% believe they will gradually dissipate. Three months ago, 37% said that the current confrontations will develop into an armed intifada.
- In the absence of peace negotiations, 56% support a return to an armed intifada; 77% support joining more international organizations; 64% support a popular non-violent resistance; 46% support the dissolution of the PA. Three months ago, 60% supported return to armed intifada. In the West Bank, current level of support for an armed intifada stands at 52% (compared to 60% three months ago).
- 65% of the public (75% in the Gaza Strip and 59% in the West Bank) believe that if the current confrontations develop into an armed intifada, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not. Three months ago, 66% (71% in the Gaza Strip and 63% in the West Bank) said that if the current confrontations develop into an armed intifada, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not.
- 54% of the public (68% in the Gaza Strip and 46% in the West Bank) believe that if the current confrontations develop into wide scale peaceful popular confrontations, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not. Three months ago, 50% said that if the current confrontations develop into wide scale peaceful popular confrontations, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not.
- 43% of the public (54% in the Gaza Strip and 36% in the West Bank) believe that if the current confrontations stay as they are now, they would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not. Three months ago,

51% (62% in the Gaza Strip and 43% in the West Bank) said that if the current confrontations stay as they are now, such a development would serve Palestinian national interests in ways that negotiations could not.

- We asked the public about the efforts made by the PA security services during the current confrontations to contain the violence, leading, according to a statement by PA head of intelligence Majid Faraj, to the prevention of 200 attacks against Israelis. 30% of the public indicated its support for the action taken by the PA security services while 65% indicated opposition. Support for the action in the West Bank stands at 34% and opposition at 59% and support in the Gaza Strip stands at 22% and opposition at 74%.
- When comparing the level of support of various parties for the current confrontations, Hamas comes on top with 70% of the public believing that it supports them, followed by the PFLP, receiving 62%, Fatah (55%), and al Mubadara or the Initiative (52%). By contrast, only 29% say president Abbas supports the confrontations, 23% say Jordan supports them, and only 13% say Egypt supports them.
- After Iran announced that it intends to provide financial assistance to the families of martyrs and the families whose homes are destroyed by Israel in the current confrontations, 69% say that their impression of Iran is now positive and only 24% say their impression of Iran is negative.

## **(2) The future of the Oslo agreement:**

- 91% of the public believe that Israel does not abide by the Oslo agreement and 5% believe it does.
- 63% support and 30% oppose abandoning the Oslo agreement. Three months ago, 68% of the public supported the abandonment of the Oslo agreement and 25% opposed it. Support for the abandonment of the Oslo agreement stands at 64% in the West Bank and 62% in the Gaza Strip.
- But 65% of the public believe that despite his statement to the contrary, president Abbas is not serious about abandoning Palestinian Oslo obligations and only 26% think he is serious. Three months ago, 67% expressed the view that the president is not serious.

## **(3) Palestinian Elections:**

- 64% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 31% want him to remain in office. These results are almost identical to those obtained in our previous poll three months ago. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 63% in the West Bank and 66% in the Gaza Strip.
- If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 33% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 24% prefer Ismail Haniyeh; Ramil al Hamdallah, Khalid Mishal, and Mustapha Barghouti receive 5% each; Mohammad Dahlan receives 4%; and Salam Fayyad receives 3%.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 36% which is similar to the level of satisfaction we obtained three months ago. Satisfaction with Abbas stands at 38% in the West Bank and 32% in the Gaza Strip.
- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmoud Abbas, the former would win 52% (compared to 51% three months ago) and the latter 41% (compared to 41% three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 41% of the vote (compared to 47% three months ago) and Haniyeh receive 54% (compared to 48% three months ago). In the West Bank Abbas receives 41% (compared to 37% three months ago) and Haniyeh 50% (compared to 53% three months ago).
- If presidential elections were between Marwan Barghouti and Haniyeh, the former would receive 57% and the latter would receive 39% of the participants' votes. If presidential elections were between three: Mahmud Abbas, Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Abbas would receive 22%, Barghouti 37% and Haniyeh 39%.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 73% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 33% say they would vote for Hamas and 34% say they would vote for Fatah, 10% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 23% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 33% and Fatah at 33%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 38% (compared to 35% three months ago) and for Fatah at 34% (compared to 37% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 29% (compared to 32% three months ago) and Fatah at 34% (compared to 30% three months ago).

## **(4) Domestic Conditions:**

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 14% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 22%.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 47%. In the West Bank perception of safety and security stands at 39%. Three months ago, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stood at 50% and in the West Bank at 29%.

- Findings show that the percentage of Gazans who say they seek to immigrate to other countries stands at 48%; in the West Bank, the percentage stands at 21%. Three months ago 41% of Gazans and 24% of West Bankers said they seek to emigrate. The largest percentage (37%) of those who seek to emigrate indicates that the main motivation is search for jobs; 22% say difficult conditions imposed by Israeli occupation forces them to seek to emigrate; 15% say it is the lack of security and 10% say it is the lack of freedoms and democracy that push them out.
- Hamas' al Aqsa TV viewership is the highest, standing at 21%, followed by Palestine TV (20%), Maan-Mix at 19%, Al-Jazeera at 17%, and Al Arabiya at 6%.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 79%.
- 17% say there is press freedom in the West Bank and 20% say the same about the status of the press in the Gaza Strip.
- 29% of the Palestinian public say people in the West Bank can criticize the PA authority in the West Bank without fear.

#### **(5) Reconciliation, the National Reconciliation government and Gaza seaport negotiation:**

- Optimism about the success of reconciliation and the end of the split stands today at 38% and pessimism at 59%. Three months ago optimism stood at 30% and pessimism at 66%.
- 26% say they are satisfied and 65% say they are dissatisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government. In the Gaza Strip, dissatisfaction stands at 70% and in the West Bank at 62%.
- Belief that Hamas was responsible for hindering the functioning of the reconciliation government does not exceed 20% (12% in the West Bank and 33% in the Gaza Strip) while 34% believe that the PA and president Abbas were to blame for that and 17% blame the prime minister of the reconciliation government.
- 72% believe that the reconciliation government should be responsible for paying the salary of the Gazan civil public sector that used to work for the previous Hamas government. A similar percentage (70%) believes that the reconciliation government is also responsible for paying the salary of the Gaza police and security personnel who used to work for the previous Hamas government.
- In return, 65% want the reconciliation government, not Hamas, to be in charge of the Gaza police force and security personnel who used to work for the previous Hamas government; only 25% believe Hamas should be the one in charge. Similarly, 75% support the unification of the police forces in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including those who used to work for the previous Hamas government, under the full command and control of the reconciliation government. But 21% prefer to maintain the current status quo in the Gaza Strip, i.e., continued Hamas control of the police in the Gaza Strip.
- We presented the public with the news that negotiations between Israel and Hamas, with Turkish mediation, were underway to build a Gaza seaport in return for a long term truce between Hamas and Israel and asked if respondents supported or opposed such a deal: 70% of the public indicated support and 27% indicated opposition for such a deal.

#### **(6) Teachers' strike:**

- 73% of the public believe that the teachers' wages are not fair and 23% think they are fair.
- Three quarters of the public believes that it was the government policy that was responsible for the closure of the schools and the interruption of teaching during the teachers' strike; only 22% blame the teachers.
- An overwhelming majority of 84% indicates that it views as unacceptable the behavior of the PA security services in establishing checkpoints to prevent striking teachers from reaching the government headquarter in Ramallah; only 14% find that behavior acceptable.
- Now after an agreement has been reached between the government and the teachers to end the strike, only 32% express the view that the teachers have gained most of their demands; 63% believe the teachers did not gain most of their demands.

#### **(7) Peace Process and Israel's long term aspirations:**

- 51% support and 48% oppose the two-state solution. Three months ago, 45% supported and 54% opposed this solution. Support for the two-state solution stands at 53% in the West Bank and 49% in the Gaza Strip.
- Findings also show that 47% support the Arab Peace Initiative and 50% oppose it. Similarly, only 39% support a mutual recognition of national identity of Israel as the state for the Jewish people and Palestine as the state for the Palestinian people and 60% oppose it.
- We asked the public about the separation plan proposed by the head of the Israeli opposition Labor party, Isaac Herzog, which talks about a temporary interim arrangement that would lead to separation from the Palestinians along

the following lines: (1) place 28 Palestinian villages and towns currently inside Jerusalem under the control of the PA; (2) cessation of settlement construction in the West Bank with the exception of building inside the large settlements; (3) removal of settlers' outposts in the West Bank; (4) transfer civil jurisdiction over most of the West Bank to the PA with the exception of the large settlement blocs which Israel wants to annex in the final status agreement; and (5) the Israeli army stays in its current deployment in the West Bank until a final status agreement is reached. Only 30% of the public said they are in favor of the plan and 66% indicated opposition.

- Palestinian views on the most effective means of establishing a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel vary: 42% think that armed action is the most effective, 29% think negotiation is the most effective, and 24% think popular non-violent resistance is the most effective. Three months ago, 46% said armed action was the most effective and 26% said negotiation was the most effective.
- A majority of 61% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical due to settlement expansion while 37% say it is still practical.
- Despite this, only 29% support, and 70% oppose, a one-state solution in which Arabs and Jews enjoy equal rights.
- 74% believe that the chances for establishing a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel in the next five years are slim to non-existent and 24% believe the chances are high or medium.
- The percentage of those who are worried that they would be hurt by Israel or that their land would be confiscated or homes demolished stands at 82%; 18% are not worried.
- Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of 82% believes that Israel's long term aspiration is to annex the lands occupied in 1967 and expel their population or deny them their rights. 17% believe that Israel's long term aspiration is to insure its security and withdraw from all or most of the territories occupied in 1967.
- When asked about the long term aspiration of the PA and the PLO, 61% said that it is to recover all or parts of the land occupied in 1967 while 25% said it was to conquer the state of Israel or conquer the state of Israel and kill most of the Jews.
- An overwhelming majority believes that al Haram al Sharif is in grave danger: 52% believe that Israel intends to destroy al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock and replace them with a Jewish temple; 20% believe that it intends to divide the plateau on which the two mosques sit so that Jews would have a synagogue alongside the Muslim holy places; and 9% believe that Israel intends to change the status quo prevailing in the plateau since 1967 by allowing Jews to pray there. Only 9% believe that Israel is interested in maintaining the status quo without change.

#### **(8) Hezbollah, the Arab World and ISIS:**

- 60% disagree and 33% agree with the resolution of the Council of the Arab League labeling Hezbollah a terrorist organization.
- 76% say the Arab World is too preoccupied with its own concerns, internal conflicts, and the conflict with Iran and that Palestine is no longer the Arab's principal or primary issue or cause. 23% think Palestine remains the Arab's principle cause.
- 64% believe that there is an Arab Sunni alliance with Israel against Iran despite the continued Israeli occupation of Arab land while 28% believe that the Arabs would not ally themselves with Israel until it ends its occupation and allows the creation of a Palestinian state.
- An overwhelming majority of 88% believes that ISIS is a radical group that does not represent true Islam and 7% believe it does represent true Islam. 5% are not sure or do not know. In the Gaza Strip, 13% (compared to 4% in the West Bank) say ISIS represents true Islam.
- 80% support and 17% oppose the war waged by Arab and Western countries against ISIS.

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

- 48% 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, 12% believe that it should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings, and 11% believe that the first and most vital goal should be to establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians.
- The most serious problem confronting Palestinian society today is the continuation of occupation and settlement activities in the eyes of 30% of the public; 25% say it is poverty and unemployment; 23% say it is the spread of corruption in some public institutions; 17% believe it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings.