

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 Foundation in Ramallah



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung

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

Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (54)

Four months after the Gaza War, optimism about national reconciliation decreases, popularity of Hamas and Ismail Haniyeh is higher than that of Fatah and Abbas, support for violence rises and extreme worry about Israel's agenda for al Haram al Sharif drives greater support for violence against Israelis

3-6 December 2014

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 3-6 December 2014. The period before the poll witnessed increased tension in al Haram al Sharif (Noble Sanctuary, known to Israeli Jews as the Temple Mount) and the Jerusalem area leading to repeated clashes and various knife and other attacks. The period also witnessed continued stalemate in the implementation of the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement. But the ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel remained in effect with both sides observing it. Palestinian efforts to secure international support for statehood recognition gained an added momentum while Israeli-Palestinian violence continued to rise. Domestically, the PA arrested and then released the head of the union of public sector employees while declaring the union illegal. This press release covers public perception of domestic developments such as reconciliation, elections, and balance of power. It also covers aspects of the Gaza War and the 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:

Four months after the end of the latest Gaza war, the initial findings are still strongly felt. Despite a relative improvement in the balance of power in favor of Abbas and Fatah, the popularity of Hamas and Ismail Haniyeh remains higher. Indeed, Hamas can easily win a new presidential election if one is held today. Hamas can also do better than Fatah in a new parliamentary election. Most Palestinians continue to believe that Hamas won the war. Today, an overwhelming majority of Palestinians continues to support launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip if the blockade is not lifted.

Findings also show that the level of support for a return to an armed intifada remains high; indeed support for armed struggle has increased compared to our previous findings three months ago particularly in light of the dangerous tension in Jerusalem and the holy places. The Palestinian public believes the worst regarding Israeli intentions and goals for al Haram al Sharif, the Nobel Sanctuary, and half of the public fears that Israel will succeed in achieving those goals. Perhaps driven by this fear, the overwhelming majority tends to support those acts of violence, such as knifing and run-over, that have become lately more frequent in Jerusalem.

Optimism regarding the chances for a successful implementation of the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas continues to diminish. Similarly, satisfaction with the performance of the reconciliation government and the performance of President Abbas continues to drop. Despite the fact that most of the public does have much confidence in the union of the public sector employees, about two thirds views as unacceptable the steps taken by the PA government against the union and its head.

Finally, we asked the public about its views on the group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Findings show that the overwhelming majority believes that the group does not represent true Islam. But the belief that it does represent true Islam was found twice as much in the Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank. Findings also show that the majority of the public, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, supports the current war against ISIS.

(1) Al Haram al Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary):

- An overwhelming majority (86%) believes that al Haram al Sharif is in grave danger: 56% believe that Israel intends to destroy al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock and replace them with a Jewish temple; 21% 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 6% believe that Israel is interested in maintaining the status quo without change.
- Half of the public believes that Israel will indeed succeed in implementing its plans for al Haram al Sharif.

(2) Presidential and Legislative Elections:

- If new presidential elections are held today and only two were nominated, Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmoud Abbas, the former would win a majority of 53% (compared to 55% three months ago) and the latter 42% (compared to 38% three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 44% and Haniyeh 54%. In the West Bank, Abbas receives 41% and Haniyeh 53%.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of Abbas drops to 35% (compared to 39% three months ago). Satisfaction with Abbas stood at 50% before the Gaza war.
- If presidential elections were between Marwan Barghouti and Haniyeh, the former would receive 52% and the latter would receive 43% of the participants' votes. Three months ago, Barghouti received 48% and Haniyeh 46%. Before the Gaza War Barghouti received the support of 58% and Haniyeh 38%.
- If presidential elections were between three: Mahmud Abbas, Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Abbas would receive 24%, Barghouti 33%, and Haniyeh 40%.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 70% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 36% say they would vote for Hamas and 34% say they would vote for Fatah, 11% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 20% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 39% and Fatah at 36%. Before the Gaza war vote for Hamas stood at 32% and Fatah 40%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands in this poll at 42% and for Fatah at 34%. In the West Bank vote for Hamas stands at 32% and Fatah at 33%. These findings indicate a drop in Hamas' popularity in the West Bank compared to the findings three months ago when it stood at 38%. They also indicate a drop in support for Fatah in the Gaza Strip from 39% to 34% during the same period.
- A majority of 71% wants elections to take place within few to six months from today, 8% want them to take place after a year or more, and 16% do not want elections.

(3) Domestic Conditions:

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 10% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 23%.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip increase from 31% three months ago to 46% in this poll. Six months ago, before the Gaza war, the percentage of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stood at 64%. In the West Bank perception of safety and security drops from 47% three months ago to 38% in this poll; three months ago, it stood at 51%.
- Findings show that the percentage of Gazans who say they seek immigration to other countries stands at 43%; in the West Bank, the percentage stands at 23%.
- Viewership of Hamas TV, al Aqsa, drops from 24% three months ago to 18% in this poll. Al Jazeera viewership rises from 24% to 26%, Palestine TV from 20% to 22%, Maan-Mix from 12% to 13%, and al Arabiyya from 7% to 8%.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 81% compared to 78% three months ago.
- 21% say there is press freedom in the West Bank and 20% say the same about the status of the press in the Gaza Strip.
- 30% of the Palestinian public say people in the West Bank can criticize the authority in the West Bank without fear. By contrast, a larger percentage of 34% say people in the Gaza Strip can criticize the authorities in Gaza without fear.
- In the West Bank, 33% say they believe the union of the West Bank public sector employees works first and foremost for the benefit of the employees while 51% believe it only serves political and partisan agenda. Despite this lack of trust in the union, 65% of West Bankers consider the arrest of the head of the union, Bassam Zakarnah, and his deputy unacceptable or illegal while only 16% consider it acceptable or legal.
- In the Gaza Strip, 49% believe the union of the Gazan public sector employees works first and foremost for the benefit of the employees while 47% believe it serves political and partisan agenda. Nonetheless, 70% of Gazans consider the arrest of Zakarnah and his deputy to be unacceptable or illegal.
- 18% of the public (11% in the West Bank and 28% in the Gaza Strip) say that they have received loans from the local banks. Among those who have received loans, 88% say they are currently repaying them. Loans have been received mostly to buy or build homes, followed by investments in projects, buying cars, or marriage. Half of the public is satisfied with the facilities received from the banks and the other half is dissatisfied.

(4) The reconciliation government and its role in Gaza after the war:

- Optimism about the success of reconciliation and the end of the split drops from 53% three months ago to 40% in this poll. Pessimism rises from 43% to 58%.
- Satisfaction with the performance of the reconciliation government drops from 36% three months ago to 26% in this poll. Dissatisfaction rises from 54% to 67%. It is worth mentioning that six months ago, right after its establishment, 61% had confidence in the reconciliation government.
- 49% (61% in the Gaza Strip) want to place the reconciliation government in charge of the Rafah crossing, but 36% (26% in the Gaza Strip) prefer to keep it under Hamas' control. The same applies to the crossings with Israel with 50% (58% in the Gaza Strip) wishing to place them under the control of the reconciliation government.
- 46% want the reconciliation government to be in charge of the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and 35% want it placed in the hands of Hamas.
- Satisfaction with the implementation of the reconciliation agreement drops from 48% three months ago to 36% in this poll.
- 44% believe that Hamas has established a shadow government in the Gaza Strip and 41% reject this claim. But the belief that Hamas was responsible for hindering the functioning of the reconciliation government does not exceed 21% while 32% believe that the PA and president Abbas were to blame for that and 15% blame the head of the reconciliation government.
- In light of the dissatisfaction with the performance of the reconciliation government, 55% believe the PA has become a burden on the Palestinian people and only 40% believe it is an accomplishment. Six months ago, right after the formation of the reconciliation government, 50% said the PA was an accomplishment and 45% said it was a burden.
- The largest percentage (40%) believes that radical groups, not from Fatah or Hamas, were behind the explosions that targeted cars and homes of Fatah leaders in the Gaza Strip while 18% blame Fatah or groups within Fatah and 17% blame Hamas or groups within Hamas for these explosions. 10% blame others, most prominently Israel.

(5) Gaza War and the peace process:

- Belief that Hamas has won the Gaza War drops from 69% three months ago to 66% in this poll; 22% believe the two sides were losers. In the Gaza Strip, only 58% say Hamas came out a winner.
- Percentage of satisfaction with war achievements compared to the human and material losses sustained by the Gaza Strip drops from 49% a month ago to 42% in this poll. 56% are currently dissatisfied with the achievements. In the Gaza Strip, 66% are dissatisfied with war achievements.
- Despite that, an overwhelming majority of 77% supports the launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip at Israel if the siege and blockade are not ended.
- Opposition to disarming Gazan armed groups stands at 49%. In the Gaza Strip opposition to disarming these groups stands at 45%.
- About two thirds (66%) believe that Iran, Turkey and Qatar combined have given the Gaza Strip the ability to remain steadfast against Israeli attacks and to be able to continue to launch rockets during the war; only 8% believe Egypt too has contributed to that.
- Only 46% of the public has heard about President Abbas' plan to set a deadline for ending occupation and building a state. Among those who have heard about the plan 69% support it and 28% oppose it. Only 43% of those who have heard about the plan believe the chances for its success were medium or high and 56% believe its chances for success were low or non-existent.
- The public is divided over the most effective means of ending occupation and building a Palestinian state: 42% believe that armed confrontation is the most effective means; 26% believe negotiation is the best means, and 28% believe that popular non-violent resistance is the most effective route to statehood. Three months ago, 44% said armed confrontations were the most effective means while 29% selected negotiations, and 23% selected popular non-violent resistance.
- 58% say that the two-state solution is no longer practical due to Israeli settlement expansion and 38% think it is still practical. Similarly, 70% believe that the chances for establishing a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel in the next five years are slim or non-existent. Despite that, only 28% support and 71% oppose the abandonment of the two-state solution and the adoption of the one-state solution.
- In the absence of viable negotiations, 80% support joining more international organizations; 73% support joining the International Criminal Court; and 60% favor resort to popular non-violent resistance; 56% support return to an armed intifada, and 49% support dissolving the PA. Three months ago, support for a return to armed intifada stood at 50% and six months ago at 41%.
- A majority of 79% favors Hamas way of resisting occupation; this percentage stood at 81% three months ago. Furthermore, 62% favor the transfer of Hamas' armed approach to the West Bank and 36% oppose that. Three months ago support for this transfer stood at 63%.
- In this regard, only 28% support the merging of Hamas' al Qassam Brigades into the PA's National Security Forces as a way of meeting the demand for disarming Hamas and 68% oppose that.
- In light of the tension in East Jerusalem and the increase in the level of mutual violence, 80% support and 20% oppose attempts by individual Palestinians to stab or run over Israelis in Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank.

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

- 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, 31% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 16% believe that it should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings, and 9% 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 29% of the public, while 25% say it is the spread of corruption in some public institutions; 23% say it is poverty and unemployment; and 18% believe it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings.

(7) The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

- Three quarters of the public believe that ISIS is a radical group that does not represent true Islam and 12% believe it does represent true Islam. 14% are not sure or do not know. In the Gaza Strip, 19% (compared to 8% in the West Bank) say ISIS represents true Islam.
- 74% of those who say ISIS does not represent true Islam support, and 20% oppose, the war currently waged by Arab and West countries against the group.
- 61% of those who say ISIS represents true Islam believe that an Islamist movement loyal to the group should be established in the Palestinian territories; 36% of them oppose that.