

Center for Palestine Research & Studies (CPRS)

Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (48)

30 March - 1 April 2000

The Peace Process, Bir Zeit University Incident, the Status of Palestinian Democracy, Corruption, Elections for the President and vice-President, and Political Affiliation

30 March - 1 April 2000

1. The Peace Process

- **71% support the current peace process and 25% oppose it**
- **44% support armed attacks against Israelis and 49% oppose them**
- **Level of confidence in Barak's government continues to drop reaching 13%, and 77% do not trust it**
- **Only 33% believe that it is possible to reach a mutually acceptable permanent settlement to all issues of final status negotiations and 59% do not believe that it is possible**
- **46% expect, and 28% do not expect, the current peace process to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the near future**
- **49% support the establishment of a Palestinian state in September 2000 even without an agreement with Israel and 38% prefer to wait until a mutual Israeli-Palestinian agreement is reached**
- **53% describe their economic conditions as worse than they were before the peace process and 9% describe them as better**
- **Optimism about the future remains high at 63% and pessimism at 31%**

The overall picture emerging from the values of the peace indicators measured in this poll shows a growing discontent with the peace process among Palestinians. Despite the fact that the percentage of support for the current peace process remains unchanged as in the February 2000 poll (71%), the results show an increase in the percentage of support for armed attacks against Israelis from 39% to 44% during the same period. Confidence in Barak's government continues its slow decrease reaching 13% in this poll. Confidence in Barak's government peaked in July 1999 reaching 29%.

The results also show a decline in the percentage of those who believe that the current peace process will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the near future from 50% in

December 1999 to 46% in this poll. The percentage of those who describe their economic condition today as being worse than it was before the start of the peace process also rose from 51% to 53%, and the percentage of those who describe their conditions as being better than before declined from 13% to 9% during the same period. A slight increase has also been recorded in the percentage of those who do not believe that it is possible to reach a mutually acceptable solution to issues of final status negotiations reaching 59% in this poll.

Despite the change in the peace indicators during the past few months, the level of optimism regarding Palestinian future remains high at 63%. Also, the percentage of those who support the establishment of a Palestinian state in September 2000 even without an agreement with Israel remains unchanged at 49%.

2. Bir Zeit University Incident:

- **30% supported demonstration and stone throwing by Bir Zeit University students at the French Prime Minister while 38% supported the demonstration and opposed the stone throwing, and 14% opposed both the demonstration and the stone throwing**
- **66% opposed the PA step of arresting Bir Zeit University students accused of throwing stones at the French Prime Minister while 14% supported it**
- **30% view, and 47% do not view, France as a friend of the Palestinian people**

The results show a wide spread support for Bir Zeit University students who were arrested by the Palestinian security services in the aftermath of demonstrations and stone throwing at the French Prime Minister Jospin during his visit to the university. These demonstrations and the stone throwing reflected students' anger at Jospin's characterization of Hizbullah attacks against Israelis as acts of terrorism. Nonetheless, only 30% supported, while 52% opposed, the stone throwing, and 38% supported the demonstrations alone.

Support for the demonstrations and stone throwing increases in Rafah (41%) and Hebron (39%) and decreases in Jabalia and Khanyounis (25% each) and Bethlehem (26%). Support also increases among men (34%) compared to women (26%); among holders of BA degree (35%) compared to those with elementary education (28%); among the unemployed (39%) and students (36%) compared to employees (25%) and housewives (26%); and among supporters of Hamas (44%) and the PFLP (39%) compared to supporters of Fateh (26%).

The results also show that two thirds of the Palestinians opposed the step taken by the Palestinian Authority in arresting Bir Zeit University students who were accused of participating in the stone throwing. The level of opposition to the PA step increases in the West Bank (69%) compared to the Gaza Strip (62%); in Rafah (86%), Ramallah (77%) Jerusalem (78%) and Hebron (70%) compared to Jabalia (50%) and Khanyounis (52%). It also increases among men (68%) compared to women (64%); among residents of refugee camps (71%) compared to residents of cities and towns (65%); among holders of BA degree (72%) compared to illiterates (55%); among students (79%) compared to housewives (59%); among those with the highest income (66%) compared to those with the lowest income (61%); and among supporters of Hamas and the PFLP (72% each) compared to supporters of Fateh (61%).

Finally, the results show an unexpectedly high level of belief (47%) that France is not a friend of the Palestinian People, while the percentage of those who believe that it is a friend does not exceed 30%. It is possible that this result may only reflect a Palestinian response to the statement made by Jospin and does not reflect the normal evaluation of the status of France as seen by the Palestinians especially in light of the declared French support for Palestinian rights. The belief that France is a friend increases in the Gaza Strip (33%) compared to the West Bank (28%); in Ramallah (46%) and Khanyounis (43%) compared to Jabalia (20%) and Hebron (24%); among men (35%) compared to women (24%); among residents of cities and towns (31%) compared to residents of refugee camps (23%); among holders of BA degree (36%) compared to illiterates (23%); among professionals (57%) and students (42%) compared to housewives (21%) and craftsmen (23%); among those with the highest income (53%) compared to those with the lowest income (27%); and among supporters of Fateh (42%) compared to supporters of Hamas (15%).

3. Domestic Conditions: Perception of Corruption and Democracy:

- **71% believe that corruption exists in PA institutions**
- **66% of those who believe in the existence of corruption believe that it will increase or remain the same in the future**
- **Positive evaluation of Palestinian democracy drops to 22%**
- **65% believe that people can not criticize the PA without fear**

The results show negative trends in all indicators of domestic conditions. The percentage of those who believe that corruption exists in PA institutions increased from 60% in the last poll in February 2000 to 71% in this poll. The percentage of those who believe that corruption will increase or remain the same increased from 64% to 66% during the same period. The percentage of the positive evaluation of Palestinian democracy decreased from 28% in February to 22% in this poll. Finally, the percentage of those who believe that people can not criticize the PA without fear increased from 62% to 65% during the same period.

These results, and those in the next section, are the worst to be recorded since 1996. They reflect the frustrating conditions of the Palestinians since the Petition of the Twenty including the events of the past few weeks such as the Bir Zeit university incident, the teachers' strike, and the events at al Deheisha refugee camp in the aftermath of the Pope's visit.

4. Elections for the President and vice-President and Political Affiliation:

- **In elections for the presidency, Arafat's popularity drops to 39% for the first time since 1994, while Haider Abdul Shafi receives 12% and Ahmad Yasin 14%**
- **In elections for the vice-presidency among four candidates, Abdul Shafi receives the largest percentage (37%) followed by Faisal al Hussein (23%), Ahmad Qurie' (13%), and Mahmud Abbas (12%)**
- **Fateh receives the support of 35%, Hamas 13%, PFLP 3%, Islamic Jihad 4%, and the non-affiliated 39%**

The results show a significant decline in the popularity of Yasir Arafat from 47% last February to 39% in this poll. The current percentage is the worst since we began asking about Arafat's popularity in 1994. The lowest percentage recorded in the past was 43%. The popularity of Haidar Abdul Shafi remained unchanged at 12% while that of Ahmad Yasin increased from 10% last February to 14% in this poll.

Arafat's popularity increases in the Gaza Strip (41%) compared to the West Bank (37%); in Nablus (47%) and Khanyounis (46%) compared to Hebron (28%) and Jerusalem (32%); among residents of villages and towns (41%) compared to residents of refugee camps (33%); among illiterates (40%) compared to holders of BA degree (30%); among workers and farmers (40%) and housewives (41%) compared to students (30%) and merchants (31%); and among supporters of Fateh (74%) compared to supporters of Hamas (12%).

In a competition for the office of the vice president among eight candidates, Haidar Abdul Shafi received the largest percentage of votes (17%) followed by Faisal al Hussein and Sa'eb Eriqat (8% each), Mahmud Abbas and Farouq al Qaddumi (5% each), Hanan Ashrawi and Ahmad Qurie' (4% each), and Nabil Sha'ath (2%). In a competition among four candidates only, Abdul Shafi receives 37% of the votes followed by al Hussein (23%), Ahmad Qurie' (13%) and Mahmud Abbas (12%). These results are similar to those obtained last February.

Fateh's popularity continued to drop reaching 35% in this poll while Hamas' increased from 10% last February to 13% in this poll.

**Results of Public Opinion Poll # 48
30 March - 1 April 2000**

	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %
Unemployment	17.0	12.0	25.0

Total % West Bank % Gaza Strip %

1. Do you support or oppose the current peace process between Palestinians and Israelis?

1) Support	71.1	70.5	71.9
2) Oppose	25.4	25.9	24.7
3) No Opinion	3.5	3.6	3.3

2. Do you trust the intentions of the Israeli government headed by Barak towards reaching an Israeli-Palestinians peace settlement?

1) Yes	12.6	12.4	12.9
2) No	76.5	74.6	79.4
3) No Opinion	10.9	13.0	7.7

3. Regarding the permanent status negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides over Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and settlements, I believe

1) There is a possibility to reach a solution acceptable to the two parties.	33.2	31.6	35.6
2) There is no possibility to reach a solution acceptable to the two parties.	58.6	59.0	58.1
3) No Opinion	8.2	9.3	6.4

4. Do you expect the current peace process to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian State in West Bank and Gaza Strip in the coming years?

1) Yes	46.4	46.6	46.1
--------	------	------	------

2) No	27.5	26.9	28.4
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	26.1	26.4	25.5

5. The deadline for reaching a permanent Israeli-Palestinian settlement ends on September 13th 2000. Some people see the necessity of transforming the PA into a Palestinian State at that date even if Israel objected. Others argue that the establishment of the state should wait until an agreement is reached with Israel. What do you think?

1) Support waiting till reaching an agreement with Israel.	38.4	38.7	37.8
2) Support establishing a Palestinian state right after the end of the deadline on 13 September 2000 even if no agreement was reached with Israel at that time	49.4	47.6	52.1
3) Others (specify_____)	4.9	4.7	5.3
4) No Opinion /Don't know	7.4	9.0	4.8

6. During the visit of the French Prime Minister to Bir Zeit University, some students demonstrated against him, for the views he expressed with regard to Hizbullah, and some threw stones at him. How do you view the behavior of the students?

1) I support the demonstration and the throwing of stones	30.1	31.2	28.4
2) I oppose the demonstration and the throwing of stones	14.0	14.1	13.8
3) I support the demonstration and oppose the throwing of stones	38.1	36.8	40.2
4) I have not heard of these incidents	15.5	15.5	15.6
5) Others	0.9	0.9	0.8
6) No opinion/Don't Know	1.4	1.5	1.1

7. In the aftermath of the Bir Zeit University incident, the Palestinian Authority arrested some students accusing them of throwing stones at the French Prime Minister during his visit to the University. Have you supported or opposed this PA step?

1) I have supported it	13.5	10.5	18.0
2) I have opposed it	66.0	68.7	61.9
3) I have not heard of it	15.6	14.3	17.6
4) Others	2.0	2.5	1.2
5) No opinion/ Don't Know	2.9	3.9	1.3

8. How do you view France? Do you view it, or not view it, as a friend of the Palestinian People?

1) I view it as a friend	29.7	27.6	32.8
2) I do not view it as a friend	46.7	46.5	47.0
3) Others	5.1	5.1	5.1
4) No opinion/ Don't know	18.4	20.7	15.1

9. Following the peace process and the implementation of autonomy, your economic situation and standard of living have become :

1) Better	8.6	7.1	10.9
2) Worse	53.1	48.3	60.2
3) Stayed the same	37.9	44.4	28.1
4) Don't Know	0.4	0.2	0.7

10. Are you optimistic or pessimistic with regard to the future of the Palestinian people?

1) Optimistic	63.2	61.2	66.2
2) Pessimistic	31.2	33.5	27.6
3) No Opinion/Don't Know	5.6	5.2	6.2

11. If separate elections for a Vice President of the Palestinian Authority were

held today, and the following names were nominated as candidates, whom would you choose?

1) Ahmad Qurai' (Abu Ala')	3.5	4.2	2.5
2) Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazin)	4.7	4.9	4.5
3) Farouq Kaddomi (Abu Lutuf)	4.9	6.5	2.6
4) Nabil Sha'ath	2.1	1.1	3.6
5) Sa'eb Erikat	7.9	8.0	7.7
6) Hanan Ashrawi	4.0	4.7	2.9
7) Faisal Husseini	8.2	9.0	6.9
8) Haidar Abdul Shafi	16.6	12.2	23.1
9) Other (Specify_____)	0.4	0.3	0.5
10) No one	28.3	29.4	26.6
11) I will not participate in the elections	14.4	14.8	13.8
12) No Opinion /Don't Know	5.1	4.9	5.3

12. If separate elections for a Vice President of the Palestinian Authority were held today, and the following names were nominated as candidates, whom would you choose?

1) Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazin)	12.2	13.5	10.4
2) Faisal Husseini	22.9	26.7	17.6
3) Haidar Abdul Shafi	36.9	29.5	47.1
4) Ahmad Qurai' (Abu Ala')	12.6	14.1	10.5
5) Other (Specify_____)	8.3	8.0	8.6
6) No Opinion /Don't Know	7.2	8.1	5.9

13. Do you think that there is corruption in PA institutions?

1) Yes	70.7	67.0	76.3
2) No	13.5	14.8	11.6

3) Not Sure	15.8	18.2	12.1
-------------	------	------	------

14. Will this corruption in PA institutions increase, decrease or remain as it is in the future?

1) Increase	58.5	55.8	62.0
2) Remain as it is	7.7	7.3	8.3
3) Decrease	24.1	25.6	22.1
4) Don't Know/ No Opinion	9.7	11.3	7.6

15. If you want to evaluate the status of democracy and human rights under the Palestinian Authority, you would say it is:

1) Very Good	2.6	2.6	2.5
2) Good	19.8	20.8	18.4
3) Fair	34.9	37.1	31.6
4) Bad	24.3	20.4	30.1
5) Very Bad	12.3	10.9	14.6
6) Don't Know/ No Opinion	6.0	8.2	2.8

16. In your opinion, can people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip criticize the Palestinian Authority without fear?

1) Yes	28.7	28.9	28.3
2) No	64.8	63.9	66.0
3) Do not know	6.6	7.1	5.7

17. If separate elections for the president of the Palestinian Authority were held today, whom would you choose?

1) Haidar Abdul Shafi	12.3	10.0	15.7
2) Yasir Arafat	38.6	37.3	40.5
3) Ahmad Yasin	14.0	14.0	14.1
4) No one	0.8	1.0	0.4
5) Others	20.0	21.6	17.5

6) I will not participate	11.4	12.2	10.2
7) No Opinion / Don't Know	2.9	3.9	1.5

18. Concerning armed attacks against Israeli targets, I...

1) Support	44.0	44.1	43.8
2) Oppose	49.2	48.4	50.4
3) No Opinion /Don't Know	6.8	7.4	5.8

19. Which of the following political parties do you support?

1) PPP	0.8	0.9	0.6
2) PFLP	2.8	2.4	3.4
3) Fateh	35.0	34.2	36.2
4) Hamas	12.9	13.3	12.2
5) DFLP	0.5	0.5	0.5
6) Islamic Jihad	4.0	4.2	3.8
7) Fida	0.1	0.1	0.1
8) Independent Islamists	2.9	3.1	2.6
9) Independent Nationalists	2.7	2.1	3.5
10) None of the above	36.7	36.9	36.3
11) Others	1.7	2.3	0.8