

## Survey Research Unit

14 June 2023

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 (88)

**On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nakba, the Palestinian public sees the WBGS split as the most damaging development that has happened since 1948, followed by the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967. But two-thirds of the public do not fear a repeat of the Nakba; to the contrary, two-thirds say Israel will not celebrate the centenary of its establishment, and the majority believes that the Palestinian people will be able in the future to recover Palestine and return its refugees to their homes.**

11-7 June 2023

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 7 and 11 June 2023. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several important developments including the passing of 75 years since Nakba and the rocket exchange between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Hamas' student body, the Islamic Bloc won student elections at Birzeit University and al Najah University. In a speech at the UN, president Abbas asked for international protection for the Palestinian people. In Israel, widespread demonstrations by the opposition to the Israeli government judicial reforms continued while in the West Bank violent confrontations between Palestinian armed groups and the Israeli army led to increased exposure to violence. Regionally, an Iranian-Saudi rapprochement create shock waves throughout the Middle East. 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:**

This poll examines the 75th anniversary of the Nakba. Findings indicate that the overwhelming majority of Palestinians blame Arab or international parties or the Zionist movement for the Nakba, while internal Palestinian weakness comes at the bottom of the list. Although this outcome was expected, the small percentage that saw Palestinian weakness as responsible for the Nakba indicates the persistence of a huge Palestinian sense of victimhood. However, when asked about the most damaging developments since the Nakba, the largest percentage referred to internal division, the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while the Israeli 1967 occupation came in the second place. When asked about the best thing that

happened to the Palestinians since the Nakba, about two-thirds listed two: the establishment of the PLO in the 1960s and the establishment of the PA in the 1990s, while a quarter believed that the formation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad and their entry into armed struggle in the 1980s was the best development followed by those who selected the formation of Fatah in the 1960s and its launch of armed struggle.

Findings also indicate that about two-thirds of the public do not fear a repeat of the Nakba. To the contrary, two-thirds of the public do not believe that Israel will celebrate its centenary, and a majority, albeit a small one, believes that the Palestinian people will, in the future, be able to recover Palestine and return its refugees to their homes.

The results of the second quarter of 2023 also indicate a decline in the popularity of Fatah and President Abbas in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, accompanied by a decline in satisfaction with the president's performance, especially in light of his recent speech at the United Nations. The increased dissatisfaction led to greater demand for Abbas' resignation, reaching 80%. The PA's standing is also worsening, with the percentage of those who believe that its continued existence is in Israel's interest increasing by six percentage points in three months while half of the public says that the collapse or dissolution of the PA serves the Palestinian interest.

We asked about the recent armed confrontations between the Gaza Strip and Israel. Although a small percentage of the Palestinian public believed that Hamas did not participate or participated to a small extent in these confrontations, Hamas's popularity was not damaged in either the West Bank or the Gaza Strip.

We explored attitudes on the peace process. Support for the two-state solution remains as low as it was three months ago. So does the support for the one-state solution with equal rights for Palestinians and Israeli Jews. We also asked about the most effective way to end the Israeli occupation. Although the majority still sees armed struggle as the best way to achieve this goal, this percentage has fallen by three points compared to three months ago. Expectations of a third intifada have also dropped dramatically in the West Bank, falling by 15 points.

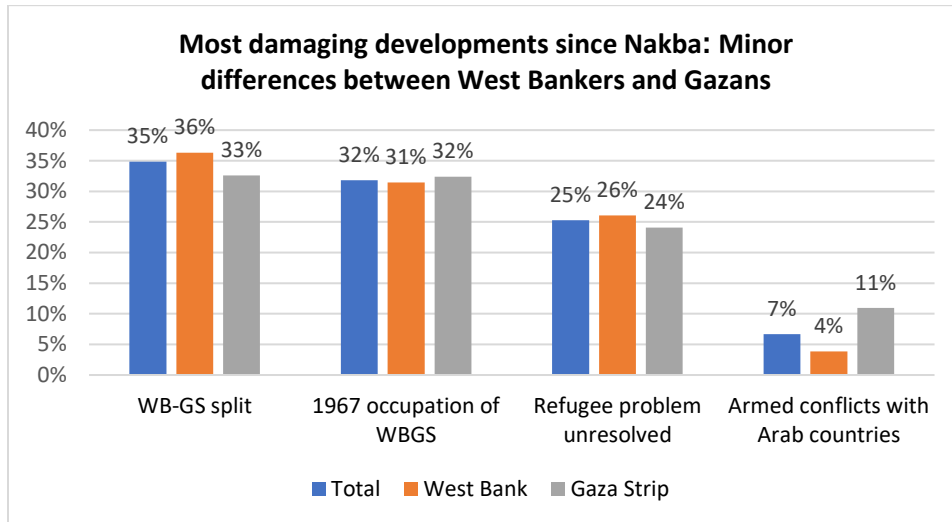
Findings show that a quarter of the public views the pro judiciary protest demonstrations in Israel with admiration, with the largest percentage saying that the Israeli judicial system is independent while the Palestinian judiciary is subordinate to the president or the government. In comparing the two judicial systems, the Palestinian and the Israeli, only one-fifth of the Palestinian public believes that the Palestinian judiciary is independent of the executive branch.

On regional developments, the largest percentage believes that the Saudi-Iranian reconciliation will not have a negative or positive impact on the Palestinian issue in general or on the prospects for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, or on Saudi-Palestinian relations, or on Arab normalization with Israel, or even on stopping the war in Yemen. But between one-fifth and one-third expect the impact on all these issues to be positive.

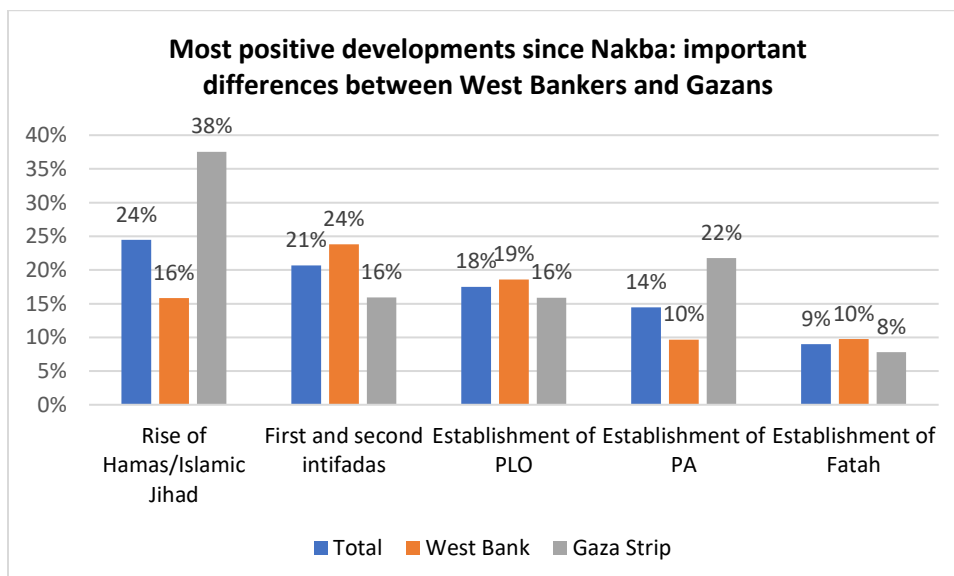
### **(1) 75 years after the Nakba:**

- On the occasion of the Nakba, the overwhelming majority places the blame for it on non-Palestinian parties while only 7% believe that the weakness of the Palestinian people is primarily responsible. The "weak and conspiratorial Arab role" comes first with 38%, followed by the British Mandate with 36%, and Zionist organizations and movements with 16%.
- The largest percentage (35%) believes that the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is the most damaging development that has befallen the Palestinian people during the

past seventy-five years; 32% believe that the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967 was the most damaging since the Nakba. With 25% selecting it, comes the inability of the refugees to return to their homes and the unresolved nature of the refugee problem; 7% believe that armed conflicts between Palestinians and Jordan, Syria and Lebanon were the most damaging development that happened during the past 75 years. The following figure shows that there are no significant differences in the perceptions of the Palestinian public in the West Bank compared to the Gaza Strip regarding these four damaging developments.



- When asked what has been the most positive or the best thing that has happened to the Palestinian people since the Nakba, the largest percentage (24%) said that it was the establishment of Islamic movements, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad and their participation in armed struggle; 21% said that it was the eruption of the first and second intifada; 18% said the establishment of the PLO; 14% said the establishment of the PA in the mid-nineties, and 9% said it was the establishment of Fateh in the sixties and the launch of the armed struggle. The following figure shows that there are significant differences in the perceptions of the Palestinian public in the West Bank compared to the Gaza Strip regarding these positive developments.



- About two thirds (64%) say they do not fear a recurrence of the Nakba while 33% say they fear it will happen again.
- When asked about the most important lesson from the Nakba for the Palestinian people, the largest percentage (44%, of which 54% in the West Bank and 28% in the Gaza Strip) said it is the need to remain steadfast on the ground and to remain in the land even in the event of war; 23% believe it is the necessity of self-reliance rather than the reliance on Arab or friendly countries; and only 9% (15% in the Gaza Strip and 5% in the West Bank) believe it is the need to seek political solutions to the conflict with Israel.
- We asked about the main reasons for the flight of refugees from their homes in 1948: the largest percentage (43%) said it was the mass displacement by armed Zionist forces; a similar percentage (40%) said it was fear of massacres; and 15% said it was a desire to seek safer places.
- In comparing the current Palestinian leadership with the one that led the Palestinian people during the Nakba, the largest percentage (40%) said that neither leadership is better than the other as the performance of the two leaderships is not good; 23% said that the leadership of the Nakba was better than the current leadership while a similar percentage (22%) said the current leadership is the best; 10% said that neither is better than the other because both performed well.
- In describing the standing of the State of Israel today, the largest percentage of the public (42%; 51% in the West Bank and 28% in the Gaza Strip) said Israel is one of the most powerful countries in the world economically and militarily. By contrast, 35% (44% in the Gaza Strip and 28% in the West Bank) believe Israel is a weak and fragmented state on the verge of collapse; and 21% believe it is a normal state like most other small states in the world.
- When asked whether Israel will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a majority of two thirds (66%) says it will not do so while 27% say it will; 7% say it does not know.
- When asked whether the Palestinian people will be able in the future to regain Palestine and repatriate the refugees, a slim majority of 51% says that this will indeed happen while 45% believe that this will not happen.

## **(2) Rocket exchange between the Gaza Strip and Israel:**

- The largest percentage of the Palestinian public, 32% (41% in the West Bank and only 18% in the Gaza Strip), believes that no side has won the recent rocket confrontations between Israel and the Gaza Strip. One quarter believes that all armed resistance groups in the Gaza Strip have emerged victorious. Additionally, 19% believe that Islamic Jihad has emerged victorious while 6% believe Hamas has won, i.e. 50% of the public believe that the Palestinian side emerged victorious. By contrast, 14% (23% in the Gaza Strip and 9% in the West Bank) believe that Israel has won.
- We asked the public what it thinks of Hamas's role in the most recent rocket confrontation between the Gaza Strip and Israel. The largest percentage (41%) said Hamas did not participate and that Islamic Jihad fought alone, while only 13% said Hamas participated fully in the confrontation alongside Islamic Jihad. 37% (46% in the Gaza Strip and 31% in the West Bank) said Hamas participated in the fighting but not with all its weight.

### **(3) Armed escalation and a third intifada:**

- 71% of the public (79% in the Gaza Strip and 66% in the West Bank) say they are in favor of forming armed groups such as the “Lions’ Den” and the “Jenin Battalion,” which do not take orders from the PA and are not part of the PA security services; 23% are against that.
- Nonetheless, 55% are worried that the formation of such armed groups could lead to armed clashes with the PA security services; 41% are not worried.
- 80% say they are against the surrender of the armed groups’ members and their arms to the PA in order to receive protection against Israeli assassination; 16% say they are for it.
- The vast majority (86%) says the PA does not have the right to arrest member of these armed groups in order to prevent them from carrying out attacks against Israel or to provide them with protection; only 11% say they favor it.
- A majority of 58% expects these armed groups to expand and spread to other areas in the West Bank; 14% expect Israel to succeed in arresting or killing their members; and 16% expect the PA to succeed in containing or coopting these groups.
- A majority of 51% (54% in the West Bank and 47% in the Gaza Strip) expect security conditions in the West Bank to continue to escalate leading to the eruption of a third armed intifada; 36% say they do not expect a third intifada. It is worth noting that three months ago, 61% (69% in the West Bank and 48% in the Gaza Strip) expected the current escalation to lead to a third intifada.

### **(4) Whose interest is served by the continued existence, or the collapse, of the PA?**

- The largest percentage (43%) says Israeli punitive measures against the PA aim at weakening it; 25% think Israel aims at forcing a PA collapse; and 28% think Israel does not want to weaken the PA or bring it to collapse.
- When asked to define Israel’s interest regarding the PA, its continued existence or its collapse, the majority (63%) says the survival of the PA is in Israel’s interest while 34% think Israel’s interest lies in the collapse of the PA. Three months ago, 57% said the continued existence of the PA is an Israeli interest.
- When asked to define the interest of the Palestinian people regarding the PA, its continued existence or its collapse or dissolution, half (50%) says the Palestinian people’s interest lies in the collapse or dissolution of the PA while 46% define the continued existence of the PA as a Palestinian interest. Three months ago, 52% said the interest of the Palestinian people lies in the PA dissolution or collapse.
- In the event that the PA becomes weak or collapses, such a development is seen by 50% of the public as leading to the strengthening of the armed groups in the West Bank while 13% think it will weaken them; 33% think it will neither weaken nor strengthen the armed groups.

### **(5) Legislative and presidential elections:**

- 69% say they support the holding of presidential and legislative elections in the Palestinian territories in the near future while 28% say they do not support that. Demand for elections stands at 77% in the Gaza Strip and 63% in the West Bank. However, a majority of 67% believes 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 46% would participate and from among those, Abbas would receive 33% and Haniyeh 56% of the votes (compared to 52% for Haniyeh and 36% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 30% of the votes and Haniyeh receives 65%. In the West Bank, Abbas receives 37% and Haniyeh 47%. If the

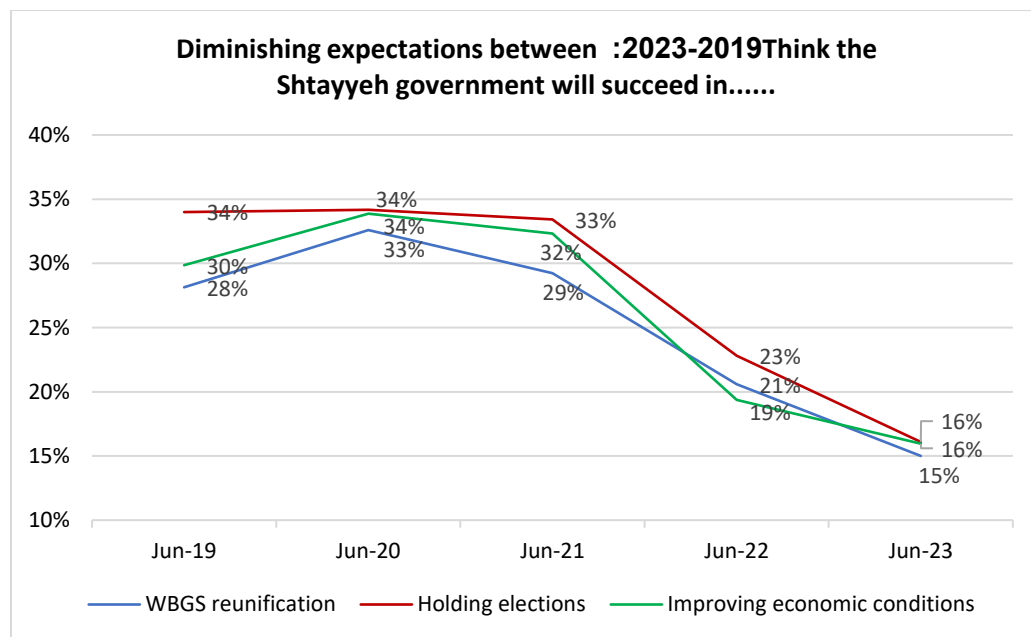


competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, participation would increase to 61% and from among those, Barghouti receives 57% and Haniyeh 38%. If the competition is between Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyyeh, participation rate would decrease to 43% and from among those, the former receives 28% and the latter 61%.

- In an open-ended question, where no names were provided to respondents, we asked the public to select a successor to president Abbas. The largest percentage (27%) selected Marwan Barghouti, 16% went to Haniyyeh, followed by Shtayyeh and Mohammad Dahlan (4% each), Khalid Mishal and Yahya al Sinwar (3% each), Hussein al Shaykh (2%), and 1% selected Mustafa Barghouti. A total of 41% said they do not know or do not support anyone.
- When the same question was asked in a close-ended format, with names provided, the public expressed preference to Marwan Barghouti to succeed Abbas by 35%, followed by Ismail Haniyyeh (17%), Khalid Mish'al, Mohammad Dahlan, and Mohammad Shtayyeh and Yahya al Sinwar (4% each), and Hussein al Sheikh (3%); 28% said they do not know or have not decided.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 17% and dissatisfaction at 80%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 17% in the West Bank and 19% in the Gaza Strip. Satisfaction with the performance of Abbas three months ago stood at 19% and dissatisfaction at 77%. Moreover, a vast majority of 80% of the public wants president Abbas to resign while only 16% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 77% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands today at 78% in the West Bank and 84% in the Gaza Strip.
- 51% say they heard and 47% say they did not hear Abbas' recent speech at the UN in which he demanded international protection for the Palestinian people. But 82% of those who heard the speech say they are dissatisfied with what the president said in his speech while only 17% of those who heard the speech say they are satisfied with it.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions that participated in the 2006 elections, 66% say they would participate. Of those who would participate, 34% say they will vote for Hamas and 31% say they will vote for Fatah, 11% will vote for all third parties combined, and 23% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 33% and Fatah at 35%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 44% (compared to 45% three months ago) and for Fatah at 28% (compared to 32% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 25% (compared to 23% three months ago) and Fatah at 34% (compared to 38% three months ago).
- 31% say Hamas is most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people while 21% think Fatah under president Abbas is the most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinians; 43% think neither side deserves such a role. Three months ago, 26% selected Hamas, 24% Fatah under Abbas, and 44% said neither side deserves such a role.
- A majority of 51% thinks that the recent student election results of Birzeit and al Najah universities, in which the student bloc affiliated with Hamas won over the student bloc affiliated with Fatah, does not reflect the balance of power in the Palestinian society in the West Bank or among the students in general; 46% think these results do reflect the positions of the total public in the West Bank.

## (6) Domestic conditions:

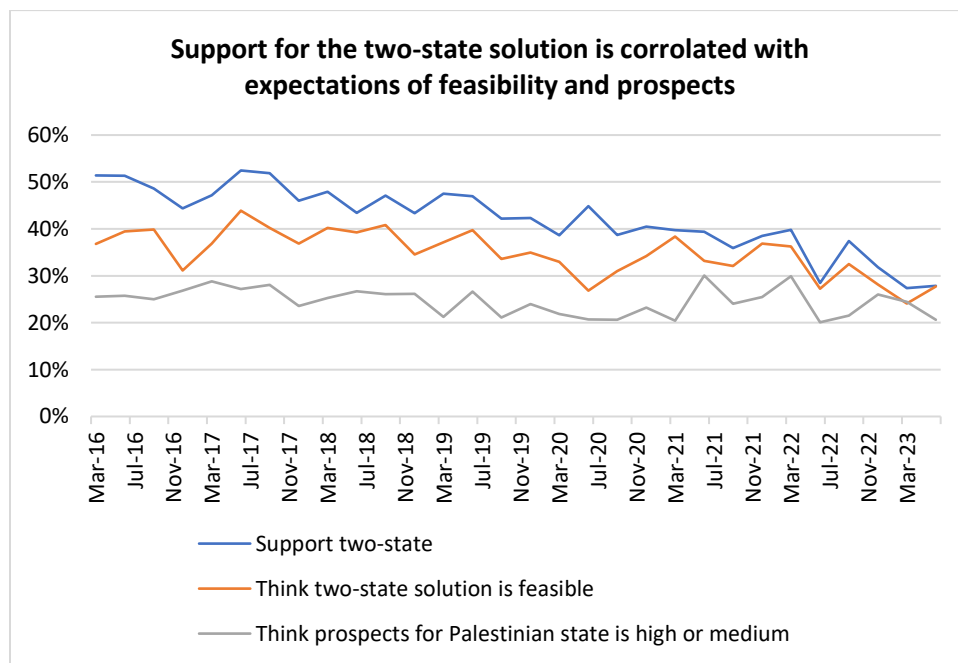
- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 8% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 22%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 71% and in the West Bank at 46%. Three months ago, the perception of safety and security in the West Bank stood at 46% and at 73% in the Gaza Strip.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 84%. When asked about institutions controlled by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, 73% indicated that there is corruption in these institutions. Three months ago, 82% said there is corruption in PA institutions and 71% said there is corruption in public institutions controlled by Hamas.
- 40% of West Bankers think people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear while 55% think they cannot. In the Gaza Strip, 40% think people in the Strip can criticize Hamas' authorities without fear and 59% think they cannot.
- In its assessment of the PA, a majority of the Palestinians (63%) views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 33% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, the findings were exactly the same: 63% viewed the PA as a burden and 33% viewed it as an asset.
- 23% are optimistic and 74% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 22%.
- After more than four 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, 81% expect failure; only 15% 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, 16% of the public expect success and 79% expect failure. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 81% expects failure and 16% expects success. The following figure shows that the trend, which started four years ago with a little optimistic expectation to begin with, have declined significantly over the last two years.



- 25% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 29% and in the West Bank at 22%. Three months ago, 19% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate and 32% of Gazans expressed the same desire.
- We asked the public about its TV viewership habits in the last three months. Findings indicate that al Jazeera TV has the highest viewership, standing at 33%, followed by al Aqsa TV (12%), Palestine TV and Palestine Today TV (9% each), Maan TV (5%), al Arabiya and al Mayadeen (at 3% each), and al Manar at 1%.

### (7) Palestinian-Israeli Relations and the Peace process:

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 28% and opposition stands at 70%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 27%. Support for the two-state solution is correlated with perception of feasibility and the prospects for the creation of a Palestinian state. A vast majority of 71% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 28% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 78% 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 19% believe the chances to be medium or high. Three months ago, only 74% said the two-state solution was no longer feasible or practical due to settlement expansion. The following figure shows the significance of the correlation between support for the two-state solution and the perception of feasibility.



- Reflecting on the latest UN speech of president Abbas in which he described the situation on the ground in the West Bank as “apartheid” and that the Palestinian people will demand equal rights in one state for two peoples, 21% say that they are in favor of such one state solution while 76% expressed opposition. Three months ago, support for Abbas’ position on the one-state solution stood at 22%.
- When asked about support for specific policy choices to break the current deadlock, 56% supported joining more international organizations; 47% supported resort to non-violent



resistance; 53% supported return to armed confrontations and intifada; 49% supported dissolving the PA; and 26% supported abandoning the two-state solution and embracing a one state solution for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, 58% supported a return to armed confrontations and intifada; 52% supported dissolving the PA; and 27% supported abandoning the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution.

- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation and building an independent state, the public split into three groups: 52% chose armed struggle (55% in the Gaza Strip and 49% in the West Bank), 21% negotiations, and 22% popular resistance. Three months ago, 54% chose armed struggle and 18% chose negotiations.
- In light of the anti-government demonstrations in Israel, 46% think they could lead to the fall of the Netanyahu government while 49% think they do not expect that to happen. Three months ago, 50% expected the fall of the Netanyahu government.
- When asked whether the public views the Israeli demonstrations against the Netanyahu government with admiration, a quarter (33% in the West Bank and 12% in the Gaza Strip) said these mass protests do indeed deserve admiration. But a larger percentage, standing at 35% (56% in the Gaza Strip and 21% in the West Bank) said they do not see in these demonstrations anything worth admiration and 38% (43% in the West Bank and 31% in the Gaza Strip) said the protest are of no concern for the Palestinian people.
- When comparing the Israeli and Palestinian judiciaries, the largest percentage of the Palestinians, standing at 36% (40% in the West Bank and 30% in the Gaza Strip), said that the Israeli judiciary is independent but the Palestinian judiciary is subordinate to the president or the government; 31% believe that the two judicial systems are not independent; 13% believe the Palestinian judiciary is independent and the Israeli judiciary is not; and 9% believe that the two judiciaries are independent.

#### **(8) Iranian-Saudi rapprochement:**

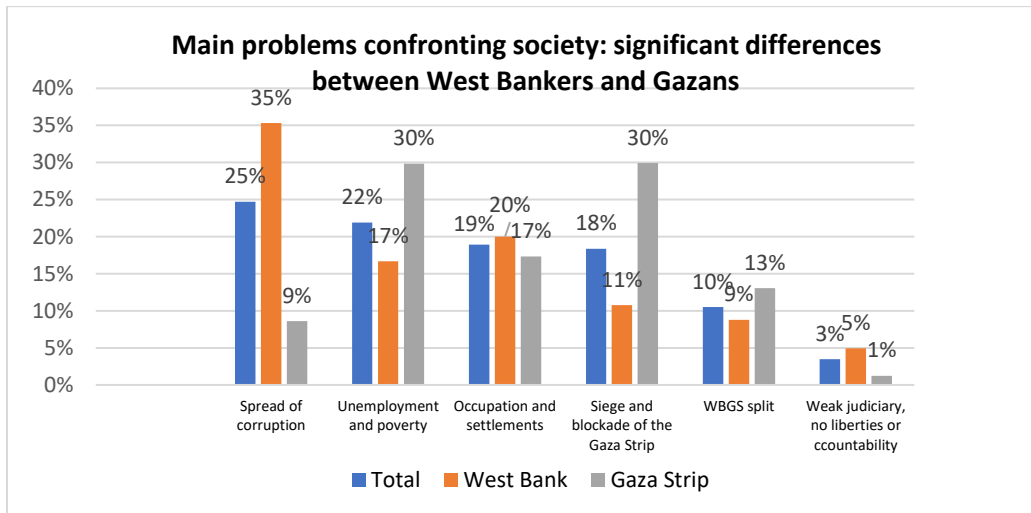
- 60% believe that reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia will not leave a positive impact on the Palestinian issue while 30% believe it will reflect positively on it.
- 36% believe that the impact of such reconciliation on Palestinian-Saudi relations will not be negative or positive, while 28% believe it will have a positive impact and 26% believe it will have a negative impact.
- 38% believe that the impact of the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement on reconciliation between Fateh and Hamas will be neither negative nor positive; 27% believe it will have a negative impact, and 25% believe it will be positive.
- Moreover, 37% believe that reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran will have neither negative nor positive impact on chances of stopping Arab normalization with Israel. But 35% believe that the effect will be negative and lead to further normalization and 19% believe it will be positive and stop or decrease normalization.
- Moreover, the largest percentage (39%) believes that the impact of the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement will be neither negative nor positive on stopping or reducing the intensity of the war in Yemen while 27% believe that it will have a positive impact and stop or reduce the war intensity, and 18% believe the impact will be negative and increase the intensity of that war.

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

- 38% 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, 15% 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 14% believes it should be to establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians.

- In a question about the main problem confronting Palestinian society today, the largest percentage, 25% (9% in the Gaz Strip and 35% in the West Bank), say it is corruption; 22% (30% in the Gaza Strip and 17% in the West Bank) say it is unemployment and poverty; 19% say it is the continuation of the occupation and settlement construction; 18% (30% in the Gaza Strip and 11% in the West Bank) say it is continued siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip; 10% say it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and 3% say it is the weakness of the judiciary and the absence of liberties, accountability and democracy. Not surprisingly, the following figure shows significant differences in the assessments of the West Bankers of the main problems compared to that of Gazans.



- When asked about the most pressing problem confronting the Palestinians today, the largest percentage (38%) said it is the Israeli occupation, while 22% said it is corruption, 18% said it is unemployment; 13% said it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 5% said it is the internal violence, and 1% said it is the inadequate infrastructure. The following figure shows that West Bankers and Gazans agree that the Israeli occupation is the most pressing problem, but differ in their assessment of the rest of the problems.

