



المركز الفلسطيني للبحوث السياسية والمسحية

Palestinian Center for POLICY and SURVEY RESEARCH

POLL

Survey Research Unit

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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



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

Public Opinion Poll No (76)

Two-thirds of the public expect Israel to annex the Jordan Valley and the settlement areas in the West Bank and the majority expresses support for the PA policy of ceasing to implement the Oslo agreement and to sever relations with Israel. But large majorities express worry about the likely consequences of the PA policy on them and on their daily lives. Findings also show that despite a decrease in the popularity of president Abbas and Fatah movement in this poll, large majorities of the public are satisfied with the performance of the government in managing the Corona crisis.

17-20 June 2020

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 17-20 June 2020. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including the spread of the Corona virus throughout the world and in the Palestinian territories leading the Palestinian Authority to impose a lockdown throughout the Palestinian territories which brought to a standstill many economic activities. It also witnessed the formation of a new Israeli government lead by prime minister Netanyahu and the announcement of the government intentions to annex the Jordan Valley and the settlement areas in the occupied West Bank. In response, the PA announced ending its commitment to the Oslo agreement and severed relations with Israel in security and civil realms. This was followed by ending Palestinian-Israeli security coordination and Israel stopped the transfer of Palestinian clearance funds thereby negatively affecting the PA's ability to pay salaries for the month of May 2020. This press release addresses these issues and covers other matters such as Palestinian parliamentary and presidential elections, general conditions in the Palestinian territories, the peace process and the future possible directions for Palestinians in the absence of a viable peace process. Total size of the sample is 1200 adults interviewed face to face in 120 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:

This quarterly poll was conducted during a period in which the spread of the Corona virus was believed to have been brought under control thereby allowing us to conduct face-to-face interviews throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The poll covered various

Issues, most importantly the intention of the Israeli government to annex Palestinian territories and the Palestinian response to the Israeli plans which amounted to a decision to stop implementation of the Oslo agreement and to sever relations with the Israeli government. We also focused on public perception of the PA government and its performance during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Findings show that two-thirds of the public believe that the new Israeli government led by prime minister Netanyahu will indeed annex Palestinian territories. This realization created a great deal of public concern and worry about the future. Public worry focused on the salary payment to the public sector, access to medical treatment, shortages in water and electricity supplies, eruption of armed clashes, return of security chaos and anarchy, PA collapse, and inability to travel to Jordan.

A large majority supports a Palestinian response to annexation that involves stopping the implementation of the agreements with Israel and severing all relations with it. But the public has doubts about the sincerity of the PA in stopping security coordination with Israel. Despite the fact that a slim majority supports responding to the plan by returning to armed struggle, the findings of this poll in fact show a decrease in supporting armed struggle compared to the findings of our last poll which was conducted four months ago. Moreover, despite the fact that two-thirds are worried about the likely collapse of the PA, only one third thinks that Israel will bring back its military rule and civil administration to the Palestinian territories; three quarters express rejection of such return, if it were to happen.

With regard to the government performance in managing the Coronavirus pandemic, a large majority expresses satisfaction with the performance of the PA and with the various measures taken by the PA government. More than three quarters indicate that they trust that the government has been working to protect the interests of public. But two-thirds say that their income or salary has been reduced and a majority indicates that it has stopped working or has become unemployed during that period. Moreover, more than three quarters express the view that the PA government did not do its best to compensate those who suffered the most due to the closure and lockdown. It is interesting that despite the tense relations between the PA and Israel, two-thirds of the public express agreement with Palestinian-Israeli cooperation and coordination in the health sector that took place during the period of the pandemic.

Findings show a rise in favor of the two-state solution but half of the public remains opposed to this solution. Findings also show a consensus against the Trump plan, or the deal of the century, with a prevailing perception that the plan does not end the Israeli occupation and does not lead to the creation of a Palestinian state. Indeed, most of the public believe now that the plan has returned the conflict to its original existential roots. For all of this, a large majority is opposed to a resumption of dialogue with the US.

Finally, despite a decline in the demand for the resignation of president Abbas, findings indicate that he would lose a presidential election in which he competes against Ismail Haniyyeh. Findings also show that the gap between Fatah and Hamas, which stood at 6 points four months ago in Fatah's favor, has now narrowed to 2 points in its favor.

(1) Israeli annexation of Palestinian territories and its potential consequences:

- Two-thirds (66%) believe that the new Israeli government will indeed annex the Jordan Valley and the settlement areas in the occupied West Bank while 28% think it will not do so.
- However, the majority (59%) does not expect the new Israeli government to reach a prisoners' exchange deal with Hamas; in fact, 56% expect Israel to wage war against the Gaza Strip while 36% do not expect it to do so.
- Similarly, the majority (57%) does not expect the new Israeli government to reach peace arrangements with the PA in the West Bank while the largest percentage (48%) expects, and 43% do not expect, Israel to wage war against the PA to force it to collapse.
- However, a large majority of 73% expects the new Israeli government to deepen the normalization steps with some of the Arab Gulf countries but 53% do not expect, and only 30% expect, Israel to wage war against Iran.
- When asked what the PA should do in response to an Israeli annexation of Palestinian territories: (1) the largest majority (71%) said it should, and 21% said it should not, stop implementing the Oslo agreement and should sever all relations with Israel; (2) 61% said

Palestinians should resort to peaceful resistance and 35% disagreed with that; (3) 52% said they support and 42% oppose a return to armed struggle; (4) 37% said they support the abandonment of the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution; and (5) 36% said they support, and 53% said they oppose, a return to the negotiation with Israel and the US based on a detailed Palestinian peace plan that can serve as a counter proposal to the Trump plan.

- When forced to choose only one of these five possible responses, the largest percentage (31%) says that it prefers a return to armed struggle, 23% prefer resumption of negotiations based on a detailed Palestinian counter proposal, 18% prefer non-violent resistance, 15% prefer abandoning the Oslo agreement and the severing of relations with Israel, and 6% prefer to abandon the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution.
- We asked the public about its expectations regarding the likely responses of external actors to an Israeli annexation, if one is to actually take place. A majority expresses pessimism with 63% indicating that they do not expect Jordan to abandon its peace agreement with Israel; 70% do not expect Jordan or Egypt to recall their ambassadors from Israel; 78% do not expect European countries to impose sanctions on Israel; and another 78% do not expect Arab countries in the Gulf, or some of them, to end normalization measures with Israel.
- Twice we asked the public about its support for the PA leadership's declared policy of stopping the implementation of the Oslo agreement, stopping security coordination, and severing relations with Israel, once before detailing possible consequences of such a policy and once again after going over these details. The initial response showed that a majority of 59% support and 31% oppose the leadership's decision.
- When the questions turns to the details and possible consequences, the public indicates great worries about the future. For example, 81% say they are worried that Israel will stop transfer of clearance revenues, which would mean that the PA would not be able to pay the public sector. 73% say they are worried that patients would not be able to travel from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank or Israel for medical treatment. 70% are worried that they would soon witness shortages or complete cut-off in supplies of water and electricity from Israel. 65% are worried that armed clashes would erupt with Israel. Another 65% are worried that the PA would collapse or fail to deliver services. 63% are worried that security chaos and anarchy would return to Palestinian life. Finally, 62% say they are worried that they would not be able to travel abroad via Jordan.
- Despite all these concerns, in answer to the second question about support/opposition to the PA leadership decision to sever relations with Israel, a larger majority of 63% says it supports the decision and only 29% say they oppose it. Yet, the level of support for the PA decision in response to both questions is lower than the support the public is willing to grant to the policy itself, which, as we indicated above, stood at 71%.
- It is interesting to note that despite the great worry, a majority of the public (57%) does not believe that the PA has in fact ended security coordination with Israel and only 32% believe it indeed did.
- A majority of 55% does not expect Israel to resume its military rule and that of its civil administration now after Abbas' decision to sever relations with Israel and his invitation to Israel to assume full responsibility for the occupied territories. One third (33%) expects Israel to do so.
- A large majority of 74% says it does not prefer the return of Israeli military rule or civil administration while only 18% say they do prefer that.
- 50% of the public believe that the PA will back down and resume relations with Israel if the latter declares its intention to resume its direct military rule over the Palestinian territories while 37% believe the PA will not back down.

(2) PA performance during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Large majorities are satisfied with the measures taken by the PA to contain the Coronavirus pandemic. But the level of satisfaction differs from one measure to the other. For example, 88% are satisfied with the closure of areas that witnessed the spread of the virus; 80% are satisfied with the closure of schools and universities; 77% are satisfied with the cessation of transportation between the various governorates; 73% are satisfied with the ban on laborers working in Israeli settlements; 60% are satisfied with the closure of mosques and churches; and 57% are satisfied with the ban on Friday prayers and Sunday mass.
- Similarly, the findings show that the majority is satisfied with the performance of the various entities and individuals involved in the management of the Coronavirus crisis. For example, 82% express satisfaction with the ministry of health; 75% are satisfied with the performance of the security services deployed in their areas; 67% are satisfied with the performance of the “emergency committee” in their area; 65% are satisfied with the performance of the government spokesperson, Mr. Ibrahim Milhem; 64% are satisfied with the performance of the local municipalities or councils; 62% are satisfied with the performance of the prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh; and 61% are satisfied with the performance of the governor in their area.
- Similarly, 76% say they have trust, and 22% say they have no trust, that the government, in taking the measures it took, has been working for the interest of the people.
- We asked about the amount of donations made to the “dignity fund:” 48% are satisfied and 44% are dissatisfied. But an overwhelming majority of 77% says that it is not certain that the donation would reach those who truly need it.
- Public trust in the government is also evident in the fact that 56% believe the announcements regarding the number of infections and deaths while 36% believe that the government has not been transparent. Similarly, 57% express the belief that the measures taken by the PA have been adequate, while 23% believe them to be inadequate, and 18% believe they were exaggerated.
- The majority indicates that it has been harmed economically as a result of the pandemic: 67% say their income or salary has been reduced; 61% say their income or salary has been stopped; and 55% say they stopped working or became unemployed.
- When asked about its impression about of people’s implementation of social distancing, the largest percentage (45%) say it believes the implementation was medium, 18% say it was high, and 36% say it was low.
- A majority of 69% indicates that the closure and lockdown did not cause domestic problems within their own families while 29% indicates that they did have such problems.
- 57% think that remote education has not been useful while 37% think it has been.
- 65% believe that it was not appropriate to allow laborers to continue to work in Israel during the closure and lockdown while 31% think it was appropriate.
- A small majority of 54% believes the pandemic is a divine punishment for people and states for their corruption and injustice while 37% believe it is not. However, the largest percentage (45%) think the virus is manmade and not natural while a similar percentage of 43% thinks it is a product of nature.
- A two-third majority (67%) agrees with the cooperation and coordination in the health sector which took place between the PA and Israel during the period in which the Coronavirus was spreading while 25% say they disagreed with that.
- 44% say popular social solidarity, such as debt forgiveness, increased during the pandemic while 31% say the level of solidarity did not change and 23% think it decreased.

- More than three quarters of the public (77%) believe that the government has not done all it could to compensate those who suffered the most from the closure and lockdown, such as laborers, farmers, cattle breeders, and others, and only 16% believe it did all it could.

(3) The Peace process and the US “Deal of the Century”:

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution rises to 45% and opposition stands at 50%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Four months ago, support for the concept stood at 39%. 38% of the public believe that a majority of the Palestinians supports this solution and 51% believe that the majority opposes it.
- A majority of 63% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 27% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 77% 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 21% 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 38% prefer waging “an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.” Only 15% prefer “waging a non-violent resistance” and 13% prefer to keep the status quo. Four months ago, 22% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel and 45% said they prefer waging an armed struggle.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation, 45% chose armed struggle, 24% negotiations, and 22% popular resistance. Four months ago, 50% chose armed struggle and 21% chose negotiations.
- We asked the public about the Trump plan, known as the “deal of the century:” 88% say they oppose it and 5% say they support it. Four months ago, 94% expressed opposition to the plan when presented to them in its full details.
- Similarly, 87% believe that a majority of Palestinians is opposed to the plan and 8% believe a majority supports it. By contrast, 66% believe that a majority of Israeli Jews supports the American plan while 23% think a Jewish majority is opposed to it.
- In light of the terms of the US plan, a majority of 70% believes the plan brings the conflict with Israel to where it originally was, as an existential conflict, while 5% think the plan makes peace more attainable.
- If the Palestinians accept the Deal of the Century, what are the chances that such acceptance would lead to the end of the Israeli occupation and to the building of a Palestinian state? 57% think the chances are zero; 22% think the chances are less than 50%; and only 16% think that the chances are 50% or more.
- A majority of 69% is opposed and 16% are not opposed to a resumption of dialogue between the Palestinian leadership and the Trump Administration. Official contacts between the PA and the US government were suspended by the PA after the US, in December 2017, recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Four months ago 76% said they were opposed to the resumption of dialogue with the US.
- A majority of 68% expects president Trump to lose the next US presidential election and 24% expect him to win it.

(4) Legislative and presidential election

- 58% of the public want president Abbas to resign while 34% want him to remain in office. Four months ago, 62% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas’ resignation stands at 48% in the West Bank and 74% in the Gaza Strip.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 36% and dissatisfaction at 60%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 44% in the West Bank

and 24% in the Gaza Strip. Four months ago, satisfaction with Abbas stood at 37% (47% in the West Bank and 22% in the Gaza Strip).

- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the former would receive 42% and the latter 49% of the vote (compared to 44% for Abbas and 49% for Haniyeh four months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 32% of the vote (compared to 32% four months ago) and Haniyeh receives 61% (compared to 63% four months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 51% (compared to 54% four months ago) and Haniyeh 38% (compared to 38% four months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti receives 57% and Haniyeh 36%. If the competition is between prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyeh, the former receives 48% and the latter 45%.
- We asked about potential Abbas successors: If president Abbas does not nominate himself in a new election, 35% prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 22% prefer Ismail Haniyeh. Mohammad Dahlan is preferred by 6% (1% in the West Bank and 13% in the Gaza Strip), Khalid Mishal by 4%, and Mustafa Barghouti and Salam Fayyad by 2% each.
- We also asked the public about its willingness to participate in the upcoming elections and if so, to whom it will vote. If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 66% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 34% say they will vote for Hamas and 36% say they will vote for Fatah, 8% will vote for all other third parties combined, and 23% are undecided. Four months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 32% and Fatah at 38%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 47% (compared to 43% four months ago) and for Fatah at 28% (compared to 30% four months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 23% (compared to 22% four months ago) and Fatah at 42% (compared to 45% four months ago).

(5) Domestic conditions:

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 5% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 20%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 74% and in the West Bank at 65%.
- 24% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage rises in the Gaza Strip to 34% and declines in the West Bank to 18%.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 81%. Four months ago, 85% expressed a similar view.
- The public is divided over its assessment of the PA: a majority of 52% view it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 44% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people.
- With more than a year passing 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, 56% expect failure; only 33% expect success. In a similar question about the ability of the new government to organize legislative or legislative and presidential elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a majority of 52% expects failure and 34% expect success. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 57% expects failure and 34% expects success.
- We asked the public about its reaction to the PA decision not to accept medical supplies sent by the UAE via two planes that landed at Ben Gurion airport. About half (49%) of the public indicated approval of the decision but 41% expressed disapproval.
- We asked the public about its viewership habits in the last four months. Findings indicate that Al Jazeera TV viewership remains the highest, standing at 19%, followed by Palestine

TV (15%), Al Aqsa TV (14%), Maan TV at 13%, Palestine Today TV at 10%, Al Arabiya at 4%, and finally al Mayadeen at 3%.

(6) Reconciliation:

- Only 29% are optimistic and 64% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Four months ago, optimism stood at 40%.
- Similarly, 41% believe that unity will not be resumed and that two separate entities will evolve in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip while 40% believe unity will eventually return but only after a long time and only 12% believe unity will return soon.
- While waiting for reunification, we asked the public if it would meanwhile support some form of confederation between the two areas. A majority of 60% expressed opposition while 31% supported this type of relationship.

(7) 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, 31% 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 establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians, and 11% believe that it should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings.
- The most serious problem confronting Palestinian society today in the eyes of 33% of the public is the continuation of occupation and settlement activities followed by poverty and unemployment in the eyes of 27%, and the spread of corruption in public institutions (27%); 6% say see lack of national unity as the most serious problem and 5% say it is the siege of the Gaza Strip and the closure of its crossings.