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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

### Public Opinion Poll No (80)

**A semi-consensus that Hamas has won the May 2021 confrontation with Israel triggers a paradigm shift in public attitudes against the PA and its leadership and in favor of Hamas and armed struggle; moreover, a two-third majority rejects the PA decision to postpone the elections, 70% demand forcing legislative and presidential elections on Israel, and the majority says Hamas, not Fatah under Abbas, deserve to represent and lead the Palestinian people**

9-12 June 2021

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 9-12 June 2021. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including the decision by the PA president to postpone the holding of Palestinian elections that were scheduled to take place on 22 May 2021. It also witnessed the release of various Israeli decisions on an imminent expulsion of several Palestinian families from their homes in al Shaikh Jarrah and the impositions of various restrictions regarding Muslim's access to al Aqsa Mosque during the month of Ramadan. These developments led to popular non-violent confrontations with the Israeli police and settlers in East Jerusalem that escalated to rocket attacks carried out by Hamas against Israeli cities. Hamas claimed that the attacks came in defense of East Jerusalem. The ensuing war between Hamas and Israel lasted for 11 days and led to the death of more than 250 Palestinians, including 66 children, and more than 10 Israelis, including two children. The period also witnessed a PA campaign to vaccinate Palestinian adults in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip against the coronavirus. The campaign led to a significant reduction in the daily rates of deaths and infections, particularly in the West Bank. 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 1200 adults interviewed face to face in 120 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is +/-3%.

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#### Main Findings:

Findings of the second quarter of 2021 show significant changes in public attitudes toward the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its leadership, Hamas, and relations with Israel. Two drivers seem to have triggered the change: the popular confrontations in East Jerusalem, the Israel-Hamas war, and their public perception of their outcomes on the one hand and the postponement of elections by the PA leadership on the other.

The findings show a semi-public consensus that Hamas had won the confrontation with Israel and that Hamas' launching of rockets at Israeli cities has been motivated by its desire to defend al Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian families in al Shaikh Jarrah. Findings also show widespread public discontent with the performance of the PA government and leadership as well as Fatah during the confrontations and the war. They also show a two-third majority rejection of Abbas' decision to postpone the elections. Two thirds of the public believe that Abbas has postponed the elections because he was afraid of their outcome, not because Israel has prevented the holding of elections in East Jerusalem.

As a result, support for Hamas, and willingness to vote for it, increases dramatically while support for Fatah drops significantly. Moreover, Hamas' leader, Ismail Haniyyeh, manages to deliver an unprecedented victory over Abbas in a presidential election, if one is held today. Perhaps most importantly, a majority of the Palestinians think that Hamas is more deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people while a small percentage thinks Fatah under Abbas' leadership is the one who deserves to do that.

Findings also show that more than 70% want to hold legislative and presidential elections soon and a similar percentage wants the PA to impose elections in East Jerusalem despite Israeli objection, rather than wait for an Israeli approval. The poll results do not have good news for most of the newly created electoral lists that registered for the legislative elections as only nine out of 36 managed to cross the threshold of 1.5% required to win seats in the parliament.

The confrontations and the war between Hamas and Israel did not have an impact on the level of support for the two-state solution, which remained unchanged. But they did greatly impact other matters related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For example, support for a return to armed confrontations and intifada rose sharply to 60%, and support for a resumption of negotiations with Israel and the belief that negotiation is the most effective means of ending occupation dropped. Moreover, the confrontations within Israel between the Palestinian citizens of Israel and the Israeli police seem to have contributed to a significant reduction in support for the one-state solution, which declined from a third to a fifth in three months.

It is worth noticing however that the current findings are not fundamentally different from similar findings we obtained in the past immediately after similar Hamas-Israel confrontations. Therefore, they might be reflecting a temporary emotional reaction that might revert back to where things stood before the confrontations. The change from emotional to normal attitudes usually takes three to six months, as can be seen in our previous polls. But it should be pointed out that a return to "normal" attitudes has in the past been associated with a Hamas failure to maintain its gains and a success on the part of the PA to take measures that helped to pacify the public and win back its trust.

For the new Israeli government led by prime minister Naftali Bennett, about a fifth seems to think that it is better for Israeli-Palestinian relations than a government led by Netanyahu. Findings also show that while the largest percentage, but not the majority, is opposed to the participation of the Unified Arab List led by Mansour Abbas in the current coalition government, a similar percentage does support (or does not oppose or support) such participation.

### **(1) Jerusalem confrontations and the war between Hamas and Israel:**

- An overwhelming majority of Palestinians (77%) believes that Hamas has come out a winner in its last war with Israel while only 1% think Israel came out a winner; 18% say no one came out a winner and 2% think both sides came out winners. Moreover, 65% think that Hamas has achieved its declared goal behind firing rockets at Israel: to force Israel to stop the expulsion of the families in al Shaikh Jarrah and to bring to an end Israeli restriction on Muslim access to al Aqsa; 26% think it did not.
- 72% think that Hamas' decision to launch rockets at Israeli cities came in defense of Jerusalem and al Aqsa Mosque while 9% think it came as a protest against the PA

cancellation of elections with the aim of weakening the PA leadership; 17% think Hamas' decision was motivated by these two drivers.

- In an evaluation of the performance of 10 local and regional actors during the Jerusalem confrontations and the ensuing war between Israel and Hamas, the overwhelming majority describes as excellent that of the residents of Jerusalem and its youth (89%) followed by that of Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel (86%), followed by that of Hamas (75%). About one fifth describes as excellent the performance of each of the following governments: Egypt's (22%), Turkey's (21%), Jordan's (21%), and Iran's (18%). Finally, only 13% describe as excellent the performance of Fatah, 11% the PA government, and 8% Abbas'.
- A majority of 64% views the residents of East Jerusalem as the group most willing to defend Jerusalem and its holy places, followed by Hamas at 29%, and the PA at 3%. In light of the recent confrontations with Israel, a majority of 53% think Hamas is most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people while 14% think Fatah under president Abbas is the most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinians.
- A majority of 60% thinks the participation of the Palestinian citizens of Israel in the recent confrontation was driven, first and foremost, by their desire to defend the holy sites, while 28% think it was driven by their desire to express rejection of integration in the Israeli society and their attachment to their national identity, and only 10% think it came as part of their struggle for equality and rejection of discrimination.
- If Israel expels the families of al Shaikh Jarrah or reimposes restrictions on access to al Aqsa Mosque, 68% believe the response in this case should be the launching of rockets at Israeli cities, while 18% think it should be the waging of non-violent resistance, and 9% believe Palestinians should respond by submitting a complaint to the UN and the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- When asked about their expectations from the PA under Abbas leadership in case Israel expelled the Shaikh Jarrah families, the largest percentage (38%) said the PA will do nothing; 24% said it will write a complaint to the UN and the ICC; 20% think it will end security coordination with Israel, and 14% think it will launch popular non-violent resistance.
- Public expectations from Hamas are very different: If Israel expels the Shaikh Jarrah families, 77% think Hamas will respond by launching rockets at Israeli cities; 10% think it will wage a non-violent campaign, 6% think it will issue protest statements, and only 5% think it will do nothing.
- A majority of 55% think Israel will not expel the Shaikh Jarrah families and 40% think it will.
- Two thirds of the public think there is a high or a medium chance that Hamas and Israel will reach a long-term truce that will ease the siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip; 31% think the chances are slim.
- A majority of 52% think that the incident in al Aqsa Mosque in which chants were made against the Jerusalem PA-appointed Mufti during his Friday sermon in the aftermath of the ceasefire between Israel and the "resistance" forces does not reflect its views while 44% think it does reflect them.
- 94% say they are proud of the performance of the Gaza Strip during the May confrontation with Israel while 6% say they are not. When asked about the main reason for being proud, 39% said they are proud because Gaza has delivered a military and rocket strike in defense of Jerusalem that demonstrated the weakness of the Israeli army; another 39% said they were proud because Gaza has brought the Palestinian cause back to forefront of Arab and international politics; and 13% said the reason they are proud is because Gaza has sacrificed and endured all the death and destruction while expressing patience and dignity in defense of Jerusalem.

## **(2) The postponement of the legislative and presidential elections:**

- 65% oppose and 25% support the decision of president Abbas to postpone legislative and presidential elections because Israel refuses to allow the holding of elections in East Jerusalem. Two thirds of the public believe that Abbas postponed the elections because he was worried about the results while 25% think he postponed the elections because Israel refused to allow them in East Jerusalem.
- The largest percentage (43%) believes that there is no point in protesting Abbas' decision to postpone the elections and that we should therefore accept it. On the other hand, 31% think that there should be protests but they should be conducted through non-violent demonstrations; 17% think the protests should be expressed through the courts and the judicial system routes.
- 72% say they support the holding of presidential and legislative elections in the Palestinian territories in the near future while 25% say they do not support that. Demand for elections stands at 80% in the Gaza Strip and 66% in the West Bank.
- 69% say we should not wait for an Israeli approval of elections in East Jerusalem and that we should impose these elections on Israel while 15% say it is better to wait for an Israeli approval. The majority (56%) of those who want the PA to hold elections without an Israeli approval demands holding elections immediately, 24% are in favor of holding the elections within three months, and 13% within a year or more. But about half of the Palestinians (49%) believes there will be no elections in the near future while 44% think elections will take place in the near future.
- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, the former would receive 27% and the latter 59% of the votes (compared to 46% for Haniyeh and 47% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 30% of the votes (compared to 44% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives 60% (compared to 56% three months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 25% (compared to 52% three months ago) and Haniyeh 59% (compared to 38% three months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Barghouti receives 51% and Haniyeh 42%. If the competition is between prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyeh, the former receives 26% and the latter 63%. Three months ago, Shtayyeh received the support of 48% and Haniyeh 44%.
- In an open-ended question on the preferred president, in case Abbas is not nominated, 29% say they want Marwan Barghouti, 28% say Ismail Haniyeh, 6% Dahlan, 3% Yahia Sinwar, and 2% for each of the following: Khalid Mishaal, Mohammad Shtayyeh, Mustafa Barghouti, and Salam Fayyad. In a closed-ended question, about potential Abbas successors, 29% say they prefer to see Marwan Barghouti replacing him, while 28% prefer Ismail Haniyeh. Mohammad Dahlan is preferred by 7% (1% in the West Bank and 16% in the Gaza Strip), Mustafa Barghouti and Salam Fayyad (3% each), and Khalid Mishaal (2%).
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, that participated in the 2006 elections, 73% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 41% say they will vote for Hamas and 30% say they will vote for Fatah, 12% will vote for all other third parties combined, and 17% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 30% and Fatah at 43%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 45% (compared to 36% three months ago) and for Fatah at 28% (compared to 32% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 38% (compared to 25% three months ago) and Fatah at 32% (compared to 53% three months ago).
- We also asked about the vote for the 36 electoral lists that registered to compete in the parliamentary elections that was scheduled for May 2021. Only nine lists managed to pass



the threshold of 1.5%: the largest percentage went to Hamas' list, "Jerusalem is Our Call" (36%) followed by Fatah's list with 19%, "the freedom list" led by Nasser al Qidwah (9%), "the Future List" of Dahlan (3%), the "National Initiative" 2%, and the following lists managed to pass the threshold: the PFLP, "Together" led by Salam Fayyad, the "Democratic Change" led by Ibrahim Abu Hijlah, and "Palestine for All" led by Mufeed al Hasayneh.

### **(3) Domestic conditions and satisfaction with the Shtayyeh government:**

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 8% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 24%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 65% and in the West Bank at 60%.
- 26% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 42% and in the West Bank at 15%. Three months ago, 23% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate and 40% of Gazans expressed the same desire.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 84%. When asked about institutions controlled by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, 57% indicated that there is corruption in these institutions. Three months ago, 84% said there is corruption in PA institutions and 70% said there is corruption in public institutions controlled by Hamas.
- 46% of West Bankers think people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear while 52% think they cannot. When asked to evaluate the status of democracy and human rights in the West Bank, 19% of West Bankers said it was good or very good. In the Gaza Strip, 50% think people in the Strip can criticize Hamas' authorities without fear and 47% think they cannot. When asked to evaluate the status of democracy and human rights in the Gaza Strip, 46% of Gazans said it was good or very good.
- The public is divided over its assessment of the PA: a slight majority of 56% views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 35% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, 51% viewed the PA as a burden and 44% viewed it as an asset.
- 70% oppose and 26% support making payments to the families of martyrs and prisoners based on need assessment and number of family members rather than on the act committed by the martyr or the number of years in jail.
- 41% are optimistic and 56% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 34%.
- Two 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, 65% expect failure; only 29% 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, one third of the public expects success and 60% expects failure. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 62% expects failure and 32% expects success.
- We asked the public about its viewership habits in the last three months. Findings indicate that al Jazeera TV has the highest viewership, standing at 36%, followed by al Aqsa TV (13%), Palestine TV (12%), Palestine Today (10%), Maan (7%), al Mayadeen (4%), al Arabiya (3%), and al Manar (1%).

### **(4) The Coronavirus vaccine and PA performance during the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- 23% (28% in the West Bank and 16% in the Gaza Strip) report that they have already received the coronavirus vaccination; 40% (33% in the Gaza Strip and 51% in the West Bank) says that they are willing to take the vaccine when available; and 35% (37% in the

West Bank and 32% in the Gaza Strip) say they and their families are not willing to take the vaccine when it becomes available to them.

- 66% (81% in the Gaza Strip and 57% in the West Bank) are satisfied with the efforts made by the government to obtain the vaccine and 31% (18% in the Gaza Strip and 40% in the West Bank) are dissatisfied.
- A majority of 57% are satisfied with the measures taken by the PA to contain the spread of the coronavirus while 41% are dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction in the West Bank stands at 48% and in the Gaza Strip at 30%.
- The majority is satisfied with the performance of the various actors involved in the management of the Coronavirus crisis: 63% express satisfaction with the performance of the security services deployed in their areas and 68% are satisfied with the performance of the ministry of health. Satisfaction with the performance of the prime minister in the management of the Coronavirus crisis stands at 49%.

**(5) The Palestinian-Israeli Peace process and the new Israeli government:**

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 39% and opposition stands at 58%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 40%.
- Support for the two-state solution increases to 41% and opposition drops to 56% when the borders of the Palestinian state are described as being based on the 1967 lines and its capital as East Jerusalem. When the public is asked to pick a choice from among three, 46% pick the two-state solution based on the 1967 lines, 10% pick a Palestinian-Israeli confederation, and only 6% pick a one-state for Jews and Arabs.
- We asked the public about its support for the idea of making Jerusalem, both East and West, an open city, whereby the Eastern part would be the capital of the Palestinian state and Western part would be the capital of the state of Israel. Less than a quarter (23%) supported and 73% opposed the idea.
- A majority of 61% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 33% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 67% 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 29% 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 27% of the public while 39% prefer waging “an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.” 11% prefer “waging a non-violent resistance” and 18% prefer to keep the status quo. Three months ago, 36% said that they prefer reaching a peace agreement with Israel and 26% said they prefer waging an armed struggle.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation, the public split into three groups: 49% chose armed struggle, 27% negotiations, and 18% popular resistance. Three months ago, 37% chose armed struggle and 36% chose negotiations.
- Under current conditions, a majority of 70% opposes and 19% support an unconditional resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.
- When asked about support for specific policy choices, 66% supported joining more international organizations; 58% supported resort to non-violent resistance; 60% supported return to armed confrontations and intifada; 47% supported dissolving the PA; and 20% supported abandoning the two-state solution and embracing a one state solution for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, 43% supported a return to confrontations and armed intifada, 42% supported dissolving the PA, and 33% supported the abandonment of the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution.

- 54% are opposed, and 39% are supportive, of a return to dialogue with the new US administration under president Joe Biden. Moreover, 63% are opposed, and 29% are supportive of a return to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations under the US leadership. Support for such negotiations stands at 38% under the leadership of the international Quartet and 55% are opposed. Moreover, 52% do not believe, and 38% believe, that the election of Biden and the resumption of American aid to the PA opens the door for a return to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations within the framework of the two-state solution.
- The largest percentage (45%) are opposed to the participation of Israeli Arab parties in the Israeli governmental coalitions while 26% say they support Mansour Abbas' decision to join the current coalition in Israel, and 21% say they neither support or oppose such participation.
- About one fifth (19%) thinks that an Israeli government led by Naftali Bennett from the extreme right wing Yamina party will be better for Israeli-Palestinian relations than a government led by Netanyahu; a large majority of 69% disagree with that.

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

- 47% 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, 34% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 10% 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 8% believes it should be to establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians.
- In a question about the two main problems confronting the Palestinians today, the largest percentage (24%; 31% in the Gaz Strip and 20% in the West Bank) said it is the continued siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip, 21% (27% in the West Bank and 12% in the Gaza Strip) said it is the spread of corruption, 20% said it is the unemployment and poverty, 17% said it is the continuation of the occupation, 14% (19% in the Gaza Strip and 10% in the West Bank) said it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and 3% said it is the weakness of the judiciary and the absence of liberties, accountability and democracy.