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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 (82)

**Optimism about the holding the second phase of local elections and Fatah is more popular than Hamas in West Bank cities; but three quarters of the public demand the resignation of president Abbas while Hamas' standing, as a potential representative and leader of the Palestinian people, witnesses a setback; in Palestinian-Israeli relations, support increases for confidence building measures to improve daily living conditions**

8-11 December 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 8-11 December 2021. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including the preparation for the holding of the first phase of local elections in rural areas and small towns in the West Bank but without a confirmation of the date for holding the second phase of local elections in cities and big towns. Hamas prevented the holding of the local elections in the Gaza Strip. The first phase of local elections was held in the West Bank on 11 December, the last day of the field work, in 154 localities and the participation rate stood at 66% according the Palestinian Central Elections Commission. The number of participants stood at 262,827 voters. This period witnessed also various violent incidents in Palestinian universities and the death of one student. Israel classified 6 Palestinian human rights NGOs as terrorist organizations. The UK labeled Hamas as a terrorist organization. This press release addresses some of 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:

Findings of the last quarter of 2021 show that while the public is pessimistic about the prospects of holding parliamentary or presidential elections in the near future, it is optimistic that the second phase of local elections will take place soon. The second phase of local elections is now set to take place in cities and big towns on 26 March 2022. The findings show that Fatah is more popular than Hamas in West Bank cities that will participate in the second phase of the local elections while Hamas is more popular in the Gazan cities that might participate in the second phase of the local elections. Nonetheless, the findings show that the overall domestic balance of power between Fatah and Hamas has not changed compared to

our findings of September 2021. Hamas is more popular than Fatah, and Ismail Haniyyeh easily wins against president Abba and prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh in one to one competitions. But Marwan Barghouti, also from Fatah, wins against Haniyyeh with two-thirds voting for him. Three quarters of the public demand the resignation of president Abbas.

What is noticeable however is that despite the stability in the domestic balance of power, there is a clear disappointment in Hamas' leadership indirectly expressed by the public compared to the situation six and even three months ago. The findings show that the percentage of those who choose Hamas to represent and lead the Palestinian people has declined significantly and the gap between those who choose Hamas compared to those who choose Fatah, under Abbas' leadership, has now narrowed to 11 percentage points in favor of Hamas; in September, the gap stood at 26 points in favor of Hamas and in June, a month after the Hamas-Israeli May 2021 war, the gap stood at 39% in favor of Hamas. The percentage of those who believe that neither Fatah, under Abbas, nor Hamas deserve to represent and lead the Palestinian people has now increased considerably.

In this poll, we have asked about various political solutions to the conflict with Israel and about the confidence building measures that seek to improve the daily living conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The findings show the following:

- The majority is still opposed to the two-state solution. But support for this solution has increased compared to the September 2021 findings and decreased compared to the October 2021 findings.
- The two-state solution remains the one with the largest percentage of support compared to other solutions, including that of the one-state solution in which the two sides, Palestinians and Israeli Jews, enjoy equal rights; support for the one-state solution is higher than one quarter and less than one third.
- There is a clear majority, higher than 60%, in favor confidence building measures that improves Palestinian daily living conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; the current level of support is higher than that of September 2021 when we first asked about the issue.

Findings also show that despite a two-third opposition to a resumption of unconditional bilateral Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, a large minority approaching about half of the public is in favor of a resumption of such negotiations under the sponsorship of the Quartet. Moreover, despite the opposition of the majority to the resumption of dialogue between the US and PA, a large minority approaching half of the public believes that the US is the most effective in influencing the decisions of the Palestinians and the Israelis on the matter of the renewal of the peace process. Also on the peace process, findings show a decrease in the percentage of those who believe that armed struggle is the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation and an increase in the percentage of those who believe that negotiation is the most effective. Nonetheless, armed struggle is viewed as more effective than negotiations.

Findings also show that the largest percentage of respondents believes the main Israeli motivation behind the labeling of six Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organizations is to weaken the ability of these organizations to document Israeli violations of human rights and to weaken the PA efforts to take Israelis to the International Criminal Court.

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

- 70% say they support the holding of presidential and legislative elections in the Palestinian territories in the near future while 27% say they do not support that. Demand for elections stands at 75% in the Gaza Strip and 67% in the West Bank. But a majority of 52% (62% in the Gaza Strip and 45% in the West Bank) believe no legislative or legislative and presidential elections will take place soon. Nonetheless, a majority of 59% (68% in the

West Bank and 44% in the Gaza Strip) expect the holding of the second stage of local elections in cities and big towns in the near future; 34% do not expect that.

- Fatah is more popular than Hamas (38% to 30%) in West Bank cities which will participate in the second phase of local elections while Hamas is more popular than Fatah (47% to 29%) in the cities in the Gaza Strip that might participate in the second phase of local elections.
- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, only 51% would participate and from among those, Abbas would receive 35% and Haniyeh 58% of the votes (compared to 56% for Haniyeh and 34% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 33% of the votes (compared to 34% three months ago) and Haniyeh receives 64% (compared to 61% three months ago). In the West Bank, Abbas receives 37% (compared to 33% three months ago) and Haniyeh 52% (compared to 52% three months ago). If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, participation would increase to 65% and from among those Barghouti receives 57% and Haniyeh 38%. If the competition is between prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyeh, participation rate would decrease to 52% and from among those the former receives 33% and the latter 59%. Three months ago, Shtayyeh received 31% and Haniyeh 60%.
- If Abbas does not run for elections, the public would vote for the following: 35% say they want Marwan Barghouti, 20% say Ismail Haniyeh, 5% say Dahlan and 4% say Yahia Sinwar, Khalid Mishaal and Mustafa Barghouti 3% each, and Salam Fayyad 2%.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 26% and dissatisfaction at 71%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 27% in the West Bank and 25% in the Gaza Strip. Satisfaction with the performance of Abbas three months ago stood at 24% and dissatisfaction at 73%. Moreover, 74% of the public want president Abbas to resign while only 21% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 78% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 73% in the West Bank and 77% in the Gaza Strip.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions that participated in the 2006 elections, 67% say they would participate. Of those who would participate, 38% say they will vote for Hamas and 35% say they will vote for Fatah, 9% will vote for all other third parties combined, and 18% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 37% and Fatah at 32%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 47% (compared to 47% three months ago) and for Fatah at 29% (compared to 27% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 30% (compared to 28% three months ago) and Fatah at 40% (compared to 38% three months ago).
- In light of the recent confrontations with Israel, 34% think Hamas is most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people while 23% think Fatah under president Abbas is the most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinians; 36% think neither side deserves such a role. Three months ago, 45% selected Hamas, 19% Fatah under Abbas, and 28% said neither side deserves such a role.

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

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 5% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 31%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 79% and in the West Bank at 51%.
- 27% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 31% and in the West Bank at 23%.

Three months ago, 21% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate and 36% 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, 69% indicated that there is corruption in these institutions. Three months ago, 83% said there is corruption in PA institutions and 61% said there is corruption in public institutions controlled by Hamas.
- 39% of West Bankers think people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear while 58% 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 (56%) views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 39% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, 59% viewed the PA as a burden and 34% viewed it as an asset.
- 33% are optimistic and 63% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 32%.
- After more than 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, 71% expect failure; only 23% 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, 29% of the public expect success and 65% expect failure. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 69% expects failure and 27% 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 27%, followed by al Aqsa TV (14%), Palestine TV (11%), Maan (10%), Palestine Today (9%), al Mayadeen (4%), and al Arabiya (3%).

### **(3) The Coronavirus: Mandatory vaccination and PA performance during the pandemic:**

- 58% (68% in the West Bank and 41% in the Gaza Strip) report that they have already received the coronavirus vaccination; 18% (11% in the West Bank and 32% in the Gaza Strip) says that they are willing to take the vaccine when available; and 24% say they and their families are not willing to take the vaccine when it becomes available to them.
- 77% (87% in the Gaza Strip and 71% in the West Bank) are satisfied with the efforts made by the government to obtain the vaccine and 21% are dissatisfied.
- 57% are satisfied with the measures taken by the PA to contain the spread of the coronavirus while 42% are dissatisfied. Three months ago, only 45% expressed satisfaction.
- The majority is satisfied with the performance of the various actors involved in the management of the Coronavirus crisis: 69% express satisfaction with the performance of the security services deployed in their areas and 69% are satisfied with the performance of the ministry of health. But satisfaction with the performance of the prime minister in the management of the coronavirus crisis stands at 46%. Three months ago, satisfaction with the prime minister's performance in the coronavirus crisis stood at 39%.

### **(4) 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 59%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 36%.
- When asked about their *preferences* regarding a political solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from among three specific solutions, one third (33%) preferred the "two state

solution, the state of Palestine next to the state of Israel,” 16% preferred a “one state solution, from the River to the Sea, with equal rights to Jews and Arabs,” and 11% preferred a one state solution in which the status of the Palestinians would be “the same as the status of the inside Palestinians,” and 32% preferred other solutions, such as “historic Palestine,” or “full Palestine,” or “independent Palestine,” and others.

- 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, only 29% say that they are in favor of such one state solution while 65% expressed opposition.
- When asked about support for specific policy choices to break the current deadlock, 60% supported joining more international organizations; 56% supported resort to non-violent resistance; 50% supported return to armed confrontations and intifada; 48% supported dissolving the PA; and 24% supported abandoning the two-state solution and embracing a one state solution for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, 54% supported a return to armed confrontations and intifada; 47% supported dissolving the PA; and 27% supported abandoning the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution.
- We asked the public about its views regarding Palestinian-Israeli confidence building measures that would improve living conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, such as approval of family unification permits or making available to the PA additional financial resources. A majority of 61% said it looks positively, while 33% said it looks negatively, at such measures. Three months ago, 56% of the public said it viewed these measures positively.
- A majority of 59% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 37% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 72% 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 25% believe the chances to be medium or high.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation and building an independent state, the public split into three groups: 42% chose armed struggle, 31% negotiations, and 23% popular resistance. Three months ago, 48% chose armed struggle and 28% chose negotiations.
- A majority of 61% thinks that current international, regional, and local conditions does not make possible a resumption of negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis while 35% think that these conditions make a resumption of negotiations possible.
- Under current conditions, a majority of 66% opposes and 26% support an unconditional resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. But when asked about a resumption of negotiations in a multilateral forum, support for a return to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations under the leadership of the international Quartet increase to 46%; 49% are opposed.
- 56% are opposed, and 39% are supportive, of a return to dialogue with the new US administration under president Joe Biden. Yet, when asked about the country or party that is most influential in convincing the Palestinian and Israeli sides to return to the peace process, 46% said the US, 33% said Arab countries such as Jordan, Egypt, the UAE, or Qatar, 10% said Europe, and 3% said Russia.
- We asked the public to speculate about the reasons for the lack of mass popular participation in non-violent resistance and provided the following list: trust in leadership and parties, burden of living conditions, or loss of will to fight. The largest percentage (44%) replied that it is due to lack of trust in the PA political leadership and; 38% said it has to do with the preoccupation and the burden of daily living conditions; and only 19% selected the loss of the will to fight.

- When asked about the country or party most responsible for derailing the peace process in the region, 65% said it is Israel, 15% said it is the US, 15% said it is Arab countries, and 3% said Palestine.
- We asked the public about its views on the reason Israel labelled six Palestinian human rights NGOs, such as Al Haq and Addameer, as terrorists organizations. The largest percentage (40%) said the Israeli decision aimed at weakening the ability of these NGOs to document Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights; 20% said it aimed at weakening the PA-led campaign to try Israelis at the International Criminal Court; 17% said it aimed at weakening the ability of these NGOs to document PA violations of human rights in the West Bank; 11% said it aimed at weakening the ability of these NGOs to document Hamas' violations of human rights in the Gaza Strip, and another 11% said it aimed at weakening the PFLP.
- In reaction to the UK government decision to label Hamas as a terrorist organization and the idea of boycotting British products, 49% expressed the belief that such a boycott would be effective in forcing the UK government to rescind its decision while 45% think the boycott would not be effective.

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

- 41% 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, 14% 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 11% 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 (26%; 15% in the Gaz Strip and 32% in the West Bank) said it is corruption in the PA; 22% said it is the unemployment and poverty, 20% said it is the continued siege and blockade percentage of the Gaza Strip; 16% said it is the continuation of the occupation and settlement construction; 12% said it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and 5% said it is the weakness of the judiciary and the absence of liberties, accountability and democracy.
- When asked about the most pressing problem confronting the Palestinians today, the largest percentage (33%) said it is the Israeli occupation, while 26% said it is corruption, 16% said it is unemployment, 13% said it is the internal violence, and 10% said it is the split or division.