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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 (84)

**Significant drop in support for Fatah and its leadership and a similar drop in support for the two-state solution and the one democratic state accompanied by a rise in support for a return to armed intifada and a majority support for the recent armed attacks inside Israel; but about two-thirds view positively “confidence building” measures and the largest percentage of West Bankers is opposed to armed attacks**

22-25 June 2022

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 22 and 25 June 2022. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including several armed attacks by Palestinians against Israelis inside Israel, the Israeli army incursions into Jenin’s refugee camp, and the killing of al Jazeera journalists Shireen Abu Akleh by Israeli gunfire in one of the Jenin incursions. Other developments included the organization of the Flag March by the Israeli right wing inside the Old City of East Jerusalem without ending up in an armed confrontation between Hamas and Israel as many had expected. Internally, a student body associated with Hamas was able to win the majority of seats in the Birzeit University student council elections, President Abbas transferred control of the secretariate of the Palestinian Legislative Council to the Speaker of the PLO National Council, and assigned to the PLO Executive Committee member from Fatah, Hussien al Sheikh, the responsibilities of the Committee’s secretariate. 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:

The results of the second quarter of 2022 show a significant change in the domestic balance of power in favor of Hamas and its leadership only three months after Fatah had managed to restore some of the popularity it had lost in the aftermath of the April 2021 cancellation of the legislative and presidential elections, the May 2021 war between Hamas and Israel, and the killing of the opposition figure Nizar Banat at the hands of the Palestinian security services.

Today, Hamas and Fatah enjoy almost the same level of public support, with the gap narrowing to one percentage point in favor of Hamas after it was six points in favor of Fatah in March 2022. It is noticeable that the drop in Fatah's popularity has occurred in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, though the drop has been greater in the latter. Fatah's declining popularity is evident in two other ways. For one, the gap in popularity between the head of Fatah, President Abbas, and the head of Hamas, Ismail Haniyyeh, has now reached 22 points in favor of Haniyyeh after it was only 16 points three months ago. Moreover, the demand for Abbas' resignation, from the presidency of the Palestinian Authority (PA), has risen to over three quarters while those still in favor of Abbas have dwindled in size to less than one fifth of the public. Another indicator of Fatah's decline can be seen when looking at the widening gap between those who think Hamas is the more deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people compared to those who think "Fatah under Abbas" is more deserving than Hamas. Today, the gap stands at 10 percentage points in favor of Hamas compared to just two points in favor of Hamas three months ago.

Perhaps one of the main reasons behind the shift in the internal balance of power has been the rise of Hamas' role over the past few months in defending Jerusalem. Other reasons might have been the release by the PA of those Preventive Security men accused of killing Nizar Banat on bail, or because the vast majority of the public believes that the Palestinian government does not make an effort to mitigate the consequences of the rise in prices, or the objection of the majority of the public to President Abbas's internal decisions, such as the transfer of powers over the Secretariat of the Palestinian Legislative Council to the Speaker of the PLO National Council or the appointment of PLO Executive Committee member Hussein al-Sheikh to serve as the head of the Secretariat of that Committee,.

In Palestinian-Israeli relations, the results for the second quarter indicate a significant decline in support for the two-state solution. The results show one of the likely reasons for the decline: a significant increase in the belief that a two-state solution is no longer feasible or practical due to settlement expansion, rising to 70%. But the findings also indicate a similar decline in support for a one-state solution with equal rights for Jews and Palestinians, indicating a hardening of public attitudes similar to what we saw in mid-2021 in the aftermath of the Hamas-Israel war. Support for a return to an armed uprising is also rising to form a clear majority, reinforced by a broad support for the recent shootings inside Israel by individual Palestinians who did not belong to known forces and movements. However, there are significant differences in the attitudes of Gazans compared to West Bankers, where the largest percentage of the latter remains opposed to armed attacks.

Increased Palestinian-Israeli clashes over the past three months may have contributed to this attitudinal shift regarding Palestinian-Israeli relations, starting with the Israeli Flag March, the repeated incursions into the Jenin camp, the killing of the very well-known and liked Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, the crackdown by the Israeli police on the raising of the Palestinian flag, and the frequent confrontations between the Israeli police and the Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque; all might have led to a hardening of the Palestinian public attitudes.

However, it is worth noting that the percentage of those viewing positively the recent "confidence-building" measures between the PA and Israel has risen to about two-thirds. Moreover, despite the rising tension over al Aqsa Mosque, the majority continues to view the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a national conflict, over land and sovereignty, rather than a religious conflict.

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

- 71% 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 65% in the West Bank. However, a majority of 54% 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 49% would participate and from among those, Abbas would receive 33% and Haniyeh 55% of the votes (compared to 54% for Haniyeh and 38% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 35% of the votes and Haniyeh receives 62%. In the West Bank, Abbas receives 31% and Haniyeh 50%. If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, participation would increase to 66% and from among those, Barghouti receives 61% and Haniyeh 34%. If the competition is between Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyyeh, participation rate would decrease to 47% and from among those, the former receives 26% and the latter 61%.
- If Abbas does not run for elections, the public prefers Marwan Barghouti to succeed him as the largest percentage (30%) selected him in an open-ended question, followed by Ismail Haniyyeh (16%), Mohammad Dahlan (6%), Yahya al Sinwar (4%), and Hussein al Sheikh (3%), and 34% said they do not know or have not decided. It is worth noting that this is the first time that al Sheikh's name has been mentioned by the respondents in an open-ended question. This means that we will continue to ask about his standing as a successor in the next four quarterly poll. In an closed ended questions about succession, Marwan Barghouti is preferred by 39%, Haniyyeh by 19%, Dahlan by 6%, Sinwar by 5%, Khalid Mishal by 2%, and Mustafa Barghouti and Salam Fayyad by 1% each. Al Sheikh's name was not among those listed in the closed ended question.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 23% and dissatisfaction at 73%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 23% in the West Bank and 22% in the Gaza Strip. Satisfaction with the performance of Abbas three months ago stood at 27% and dissatisfaction at 70%. Moreover, a vast majority of 77% of the public want president Abbas to resign while only 18% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 73% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 72% in the West Bank and 84% in the Gaza Strip.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions that participated in the 2006 elections, 69% say they would participate. Of those who would participate, 36% say they will vote for Hamas and 35% say they will vote for Fatah, 7% will vote for all other third parties combined, and 20% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 36% and Fatah at 42%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 43% (compared to 47% three months ago) and for Fatah at 32% (compared to 37% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 30% (compared to 27% three months ago) and Fatah at 37% (compared to 47% three months ago).
- The largest percentage (33%) says 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; 38% think neither side deserves such a role. Three months ago, 31% selected Hamas, 29% Fatah under Abbas, and 33% said neither side deserves such a role.

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

- A majority of 57% is opposed to President Abbas' decision to transfer the responsibility over the Secretariate of the Palestinian Legislative Council to the Speaker of the PLO National Council; only 27% support Abbas' decision.
- Similarly, a majority of 61% are opposed to Abbas' decision to ask the PLO's Executive Committee member from Fatah, Husein al Sheikh, to assume the responsibility over the secretariate of that Committee; only 23% support Abbas' decision.
- In explaining the reasons for the electoral victory of the Hamas-affiliated student body at Birzeit University, the majority (59%) attributed it to students' dissatisfaction with the

performance of the PA while about one third (32%) said the victory came as a result in a shift in public opinion in favor of Hamas.

- The majority (57%) of the public says it was supportive of the teachers' strike who were demanding better representational and associational rights from the government and led to a partial halt to the educational process in public schools; 31% say they were opposed. Support for the strike is higher in the West Bank compared to the Gaza Strip, 63% and 48% respectively.
- The vast majority (79%) says the Palestinian government is not doing enough to reduce prices, while 18% say it is doing so.
- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 8% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 26%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 74% and in the West Bank at 48%.
- 26% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 27% and in the West Bank at 26%. Three months ago, 20% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate and 37% of Gazans expressed the same desire.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 86%. When asked about institutions controlled by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, 71% indicated that there is corruption in these institutions. Three months ago, 84% said there is corruption in PA institutions and 69% said there is corruption in public institutions controlled by Hamas.
- 42% of West Bankers think people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear while 54% think they cannot. In the Gaza Strip, 38% think people in the Strip can criticize Hamas' authorities without fear and 62% think they cannot.
- In its assessment of the PA, a majority of the Palestinians (59%) views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 36% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, 55% viewed the PA as a burden and 39% viewed it as an asset.
- 26% are optimistic and 70% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 28%.
- After more than three 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, 73% expect failure; only 21% 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, 23% of the public expect success and 69% expect failure. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 75% expects failure and 19% expects success.
- 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 63% are satisfied with the performance of the ministry of health. However, satisfaction with the performance of the prime minister in the management of the coronavirus crisis stands at 41%. Three months ago, satisfaction with the prime minister's performance in the coronavirus crisis stood at 46%.
- 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 and Palestine TV (11% each), Palestine TV (10%), Maan (6%), al Arabiya (3%), al Mayadeen (2%), and al Manar (1%).



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

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 28% and opposition stands at 69%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 40%.
- 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 22% say that they are in favor of such one state solution while 75% expressed opposition. Three months ago, support for Abbas’ position on the one-state solution stood at 32%.
- When asked about support for specific policy choices to break the current deadlock, 56% supported joining more international organizations; 48% supported resort to non-violent resistance; 55% supported return to armed confrontations and intifada; 47% supported dissolving the PA; and 23% supported abandoning the two-state solution and embracing a one state solution for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, 51% supported a return to armed confrontations and intifada; 49% supported dissolving the PA; and 32% supported abandoning the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution.
- A majority of 59% says that the armed attack inside Israel carried out by Palestinians unaffiliated with known armed groups contributes to the national interest of ending the occupation; 37% believe the armed attacks do not contribute to the national interest. Gazans are more likely to view such attacks positively compared to the West Bankers, 77% and 46% respectively. Worth noting also that 47% of West Bankers believe the armed attacks do not contribute to the national interest.
- Similarly, a majority of 56% (73% in the Gaza Strip and 44% in the West Bank) supports armed attacks similar to those carried out lately by unaffiliated Palestinians against Israelis inside Israel; 39% (26% in the Gaza Strip and 48% in the West Bank) say they are opposed to such armed attacks.
- A majority of 56% expects the acts of armed resistance in the Jenin refugee camp to spread to other parts of the West Bank. However, a large minority of 41% expects the acts of armed resistance to remain restricted to the Jenin camp.
- 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 65% said it looks positively, while 30% said it looks negatively, at such measures. Three months ago, 63% of the public said it viewed these measures positively.
- A majority of 70% 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 19% believe the chances to be medium or high. Three months ago, only 60% said the two-state solution was no longer feasible or practical due to settlement expansion.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation and building an independent state, the public split into three groups: 50% chose armed struggle (62% in the Gaza Strip and 43% in the West Bank), 22% negotiations, and 21% popular resistance. Three months ago, 44% chose armed struggle and 25% chose negotiations.
- Under current conditions, a majority of 69% opposes and 22% support an unconditional resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.
- 65% are opposed, and 29% are supportive, of a return to dialogue with the new US administration under president Joe Biden.

- The vast majority (78%) believes the Qur'an contains a prophecy on the demise of the State of Israel, while 17% say it does not. However, the majority (63%) does not believe the assessment, stated by few Qur'anic scholars, that verses in the Qur'an predict the exact year of the demise of Israel and that it is the year 2022; 25% say they believe it.
- When asked why they think Hamas did not launch rockets against Israel on the day of the Flag March throughout East Jerusalem, the largest percentage (35%) said that the movement did not want to be dragged into a battle it was not prepared for; one third said that Hamas was willing to comply with the advice and mediation of Arab and international actors. Only 13% said it was afraid of the Israeli reaction against it and the Gaza Strip. One tenth (11%) said that Hamas did not threaten to launch rockets against Israel if the Flag March took place in the Old City of East Jerusalem.
- The largest percentage (40%) believes that Hamas' unwillingness to launch rockets against Israel during the Flag March will encourage Israeli to take more measures against Jerusalem and al Aqsa Mosque. By contrast, 26% said that Hamas' decision will deter Israel in the future, and 28% said it will neither encourage nor deter Israel.
- A consensus is emerging regarding the killing of the al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh: 92% believe Israel has deliberately sought to kill her while only 5% think the killing by the Israeli army was accidental.
- A majority of 61% believes that the reasons the Israeli police attacked the funeral procession of Abu Akleh in Jerusalem had to do with the fact that the funeral demonstrated the unity of the Palestinians, Muslims and Christians alike. On the other hand, one third thinks that the police attack was prompted by the raising of the Palestinian flag during the funeral.
- When asked why Israel insists on preventing the raising of the Palestinian flag in Jerusalem and other occupied territories and in areas inside Israel, the public was split evenly, 49% said the reason has to do with Israeli rejection of the Palestinian national identity while an identical percentage said it has to do with Israeli fear of the Palestinian national identity.
- A majority of 53% (56% in the West Bank and 48% in the Gaza Strip) says that despite the repeated incidents of attacks by the Israeli police against Palestinian worshippers at al Aqsa Mosque, the conflict remains first and foremost over land and sovereignty while 45% say the conflict has now become first and foremost a religious one.
- We asked the public about the expectations that the US aid to the PA will soon resume and asked if they welcome or do not welcome aid resumption. The public is evenly split on US aid: 48% welcome it and 49% do not. It is worth noting that Gazans are more likely to welcome US aid, by 59%, while the percentage drops to 40% in the West Bank.

#### **(4) The war between Russia and Ukraine:**

- The largest percentage of the public (42%) blames Russia for starting the war with Ukraine while 35% blame Ukraine.
- An overwhelming majority (75%) wants the PA to stay neutral in the conflict in the Ukraine while 14% believe the PA should stand with Russia and 6% think it should stand with Ukraine.
- A majority of 43% says it is worried that the Russian-Ukraine war might expand to include other countries; 53% are not worried. Three months ago, the percentage of those expressing worry that the war would expand stood at 54%.

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

- 45% 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, 12% 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 9% 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 the Palestinians today, the largest percentage, 26% (29% in the Gaz Strip and 23% in the West Bank), said it is unemployment and poverty; 25% (13% in the Gaza Strip and 32% in the West Bank) said it is corruption in the PA; 17% (24% in the Gaza Strip and 12% in the West Bank) said it is the continued siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip; 16% said it is the continuation of the occupation and settlement construction; 13% (17% in the Gaza Strip and 11% in the West Bank) said it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and 4% 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 (32%) said it is the Israeli occupation, while 23% said it is corruption, 17% said it is unemployment, 16% said it is the split or division, and 8% said it is the internal violence.