



## **Current Protests and Implications: What Palestinian Opinion Leaders Are Saying**

**9 January 2016**

**Introduction:** From 23-30 December 2015, AWRAD conducted a specialized survey targeting Palestinian opinion leaders. The goal of this survey was to assess current perceptions regarding the wave of protests that has occurred in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBG) since September 2015, as well as a variety of other themes related to the Palestinian situation. 423 Palestinian opinion leaders participated. They include political party leaders, civil society leaders, high-ranking government and private sector officials, journalists, youth activists, and professionals such as academics, researchers, consultants, doctors, engineers and lawyers. Among the sample distribution, 80 percent of respondents are West Bank residents, while 20 percent reside in Gaza. Of the respondents, 70 percent are male and 30 percent female.

### **Summary of Results:**

- Similar to the youth surveyed in AWRAD's November poll, Palestinian opinion leaders view the current round of protests as spontaneous, individual actions, and express a dim view of the response of the leadership and political parties. In the opinion of this group, the protests have been sparked by youth perceptions of the failure of the peace process, the threats to holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as youth frustration with the leadership in both the West Bank and Gaza.
- While opinion leaders are largely mixed in their views of the likely impact of the current protests on Palestinian aspirations for independence, there is overwhelming consensus that they will lead to an escalation of Israeli actions, including increased settlement construction. Nevertheless, a majority supports a two-state solution, even if they believe that the Oslo Accords are no longer binding and approve of ending security cooperation with Israel.
- With respect to the resumption of armed resistance, an issue which has received increased support in recent polls, opinion leaders interpret these developments as an emotional response to the recent deaths of protesters and the failure of Oslo Accords to deliver on the promise of statehood - as opposed to a reflection of Palestinian attitudes towards Israel or Jews.
- Internally, opinion leaders believe personal freedoms and democratic practices have eroded in recent years and see the leadership in a negative light. For this group, the economy and political division are viewed as the top priorities facing Palestinian society, and, against the regional and local backdrop, see some potential acceptance for groups such as ISIS, even if to a very limited extent.

## **Main Findings**

### **The Protests**

- 40% believe protests will continue for years; 38% believe that they will continue for months
- 97% think that threats to the status of holy places, settlements and closures are driving the protests
- 56% think the collapse of the PA is unlikely as a result of the confrontations; 42.1% disagree
- 92% believe the confrontations will lead to an expansion of settlements
- 47% think it is likely that the protests will produce a new uprising; 51% disagree
- 37% say it is likely that the protests will lead to progress towards an independent state; 62% disagree
- 50% feel some change is likely as a result of the protests; 45% think nothing will change

### **Role of Parties & Leaders in Protests**

- 90% believe that the current protests are non-partisan and spontaneous
- 56% believe it is likely that the protests will lead to the emergence of new leaders or political forces
- 58% say that no political parties have an influence on the current protests
- 70% express frustration with the Palestinian leadership's role in directing protests
- 70% view the response of Palestinian leadership to the current situation negatively

### **The Peace Process**

- 75% consider the Oslo Accords to be over and non-binding
- 61% continue to support a two-state solution
- 80% believe that support for armed resistance is a response to the failure of Oslo and the recent deaths
- 53% believe ending security cooperation with Israel will be beneficial to Palestinians

### **Internal Issues & Priorities**

- The economy and political division are the top internal priorities (39% each)
- 81% believe that democratic practices and personal freedoms have diminished in Palestine
- 68% believe that ISIS has no or very limited potential among Palestinians; 26% feel the group has some potential; and 6% that it has substantial potential

## Specialized Survey with Palestinian Opinion Leaders: Tables of Results

### 1. What is the most relevant Occupation-related factor driving young Palestinians to protest?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Threats to the status of holy places in the Old City of Jerusalem	57.8%	53.8%	57.2%
Settlement expansion	21.6%	18.5%	20.8%
Closures and checkpoints	17.1%	27.7%	19.1%
DK/NA	3.5%	0.0%	2.9%

### 2. What is the most relevant internal factor driving young Palestinians to protest?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Desire for greater voice/participation in decision-making	11.4%	10.8%	11.2%
Lack of economic opportunity	16.2%	20.0%	16.1%
Frustration with Palestinian leadership in both the West Bank and Gaza	69.5%	69.2%	70.4%
DK/NA	2.9%	0.0%	2.2%

### 3. How long do you expect current protests to last?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Weeks	5.4%	3.1%	4.9%
Months (less than a year)	39.7%	33.8%	38.1%
Years	37.1%	50.8%	40.3%
DK/NA	17.8%	12.3%	16.6%

### 4. From your perspective, are the current protests organized by political parties or are they spontaneous actions by individual Palestinians?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Organized by political parties	9.5%	6.2%	9.0%
Spontaneous/individual actions	89.2%	90.8%	89.5%
Don't know	1.3%	3.1%	1.5%

### 5. Do you believe that the current protests represent a popular Intifada or are being carried out by a small number of participants?

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Popular	14.6%	18.5%	15.4%
Small number of participants	85.4%	81.5%	84.6%
Don't know	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

**6. What is the likelihood that the current wave of protests will produce the following outcomes?**

		<b>West Bank</b>	<b>Gaza</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>New Intifada, including armed resistance</b>	Likely	14.0%	23.1%	14.9%
	Somewhat likely	31.7%	35.4%	32.5%
	Somewhat unlikely	26.0%	21.5%	26.4%
	Unlikely	27.0%	18.5%	24.9%
	DN/NA	1.3%	1.5%	1.2%
<b>Progress towards an independent state</b>	Likely	10.2%	13.8%	10.8%
	Somewhat likely	23.5%	41.5%	25.7%
	Somewhat unlikely	26.3%	26.2%	26.9%
	Unlikely	37.8%	18.5%	35.0%
	DN/NA	2.2%	0.0%	1.7%
<b>Escalation of force by Israel against Palestinians</b>	Likely	45.4%	55.4%	47.7%
	Somewhat likely	39.0%	26.2%	36.7%
	Somewhat unlikely	10.8%	13.8%	11.2%
	Unlikely	3.8%	4.6%	3.7%
	DN/NA	1.0%	0.0%	.7%
<b>Expansion of settlements</b>	Likely	66.7%	50.8%	64.8%
	Somewhat likely	26.3%	35.4%	27.4%
	Somewhat unlikely	4.4%	12.3%	5.6%
	Unlikely	1.9%	1.5%	1.7%
	DN/NA	.6%	0.0%	.5%
<b>Collapse of the PA</b>	Likely	12.4%	15.4%	12.7%
	Somewhat likely	28.9%	27.7%	29.6%
	Somewhat unlikely	31.1%	32.3%	31.1%
	Unlikely	26.0%	24.6%	25.2%
	DN/NA	1.6%	0.0%	1.5%
<b>Emergence of new leaders or political forces in Palestinian society</b>	Likely	16.8%	24.6%	18.1%
	Somewhat likely	37.1%	38.5%	37.9%
	Somewhat unlikely	27.9%	21.5%	26.7%
	Unlikely	16.2%	15.4%	15.9%
	DN/NA	1.9%	0.0%	1.5%
<b>Nothing will change</b>	Likely	21.6%	23.1%	22.0%
	Somewhat likely	22.5%	20.0%	22.5%
	Somewhat unlikely	20.0%	27.7%	21.8%
	Unlikely	30.5%	23.1%	28.1%
	DN/NA	5.4%	6.2%	5.6%

**7. Do you believe the current round of protests will ...?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Advance statehood	34.6%	44.6%	35.5%
Have no impact	50.8%	49.2%	51.3%
Impede statehood	3.2%	3.1%	2.9%
Don't know	11.4%	3.1%	10.3%

**8. Besides unresolved national issues, what do you believe are the top issues facing Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza today?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
The economy/unemployment	41.6%	20.0%	38.9%
Obstacles to movement	2.9%	1.5%	2.7%
The political division	33.7%	66.2%	38.9%
Absence of elections	10.2%	7.7%	9.3%
Threats to personal freedoms (speech, association, press, etc.)	9.8%	4.6%	8.8%
Social problems/crime	1.0%	0.0%	0.7%
Don't know	1.0%	0.0%	0.7%

**9. Some polls show a marked increase in popular support for a resumption of armed resistance to Israel. In your opinion is this primarily ...?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
An emotional response to recent deaths of Palestinian protesters	35.6%	35.4%	35.0%
An emotional response to the ongoing Occupation	12.4%	9.2%	11.0%
A sign of frustration with the failure of the Oslo process to deliver a state	32.1%	35.4%	33.7%
A proper assessment of the balance of power between Palestinians and Israelis	5.1%	0.0%	4.2%
A reflection of true Palestinian attitudes towards Israel and Israelis	9.8%	16.9%	11.7%
A reflection of true Palestinian attitudes towards Jews	2.9%	0.0%	2.2%
Don't know	2.2%	3.1%	2.2%

**10. Some are declaring that the Oslo Accords are over and that its provisions are no longer binding. Do you support or oppose such a notion?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Support	75.9%	69.2%	74.6%
Oppose	19.4%	24.6%	20.0%
Don't know	4.8%	6.2%	5.4%

**11. Others say that the priority should be the PA's ending security cooperation with Israel. Do you believe that such an action would serve Palestinian interests in the West Bank and Gaza?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Yes	54.0%	44.6%	52.8%
Neutral/will make no difference	24.8%	23.1%	24.0%
No	16.5%	32.3%	19.6%
Don't know	4.8%	0.0%	3.7%

**12. Regardless of your opinion about the Oslo Accords and its provisions, do you support the concept of a two state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Support	58.4%	73.8%	60.9%
Oppose	36.8%	21.5%	34.2%
Don't know	4.8%	4.6%	4.9%

**13. If you OPPOSE ONLY, what is the alternative?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
One state (both nationalities)	63.2%	78.5%	65.8%
One Palestinian state in all of historical Palestine Lands	10.2%	4.6%	9.8%
Federal Union (The West Bank with Jordan, and the Gaza Strip with Egypt)	25.4%	16.9%	23.5%
Don't know	1.3%	0.0%	1.0%

**14. How would you evaluate the role of Palestinian leadership in response to the present situation?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Positive	7.0%	7.7%	6.8%
Positive, to some extent	20.0%	33.8%	21.0%
Negative, to some extent	24.1%	30.8%	26.4%
Negative	46.3%	26.2%	43.5%
Don't know	2.5%	1.5%	2.2%

**15. Which political party, in your opinion, is having the most influence or impact on current events?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Fatah	16.5%	32.3%	18.8%
Hamas	11.1%	6.2%	9.8%
PFLP	1.6%	3.1%	1.7%
Islamic Jihad	6.0%	6.2%	5.9%
Other	1.9%	0.0%	1.5%
None	59.7%	47.7%	58.4%
Don't know	3.2%	4.6%	3.9%

**16. Do you think the internal situation, with respect to democratic practices and personal freedoms, has generally improved or declined over the past few years?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
<b>Improved</b>	19.0%	10.8%	16.6%
<b>Declined</b>	78.1%	87.7%	80.9%
<b>Don't know</b>	2.9%	1.5%	2.4%

**17. In your opinion, what is the potential for such groups like ISIS to find acceptance in Palestinian society?**

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
<b>There is no possibility of acceptance</b>	37.8%	36.9%	36.9%
<b>It might be accepted to a very limited degree</b>	27.9%	40.0%	30.6%
<b>It could find some acceptance</b>	27.3%	18.5%	25.9%
<b>It could receive substantial acceptance</b>	6.0%	4.6%	5.9%
<b>Don't know</b>	1.0%	0.0%	.7%

**18. Profession of respondents**

<b>Government employee</b>	<b>15.6%</b>
<b>Academic</b>	15.6%
<b>Leading role in a civil society institution</b>	13.9%
<b>Media /journalist</b>	23.5%
<b>Private sector</b>	9.5%
<b>Independent/consultant /expert</b>	7.6%
<b>Political party leader/Legislative Council Members</b>	5.3%
<b>Other</b>	8.8%

**19. Gender of respondents**

<b>Male</b>	70.7%
<b>Female</b>	29.3%

**20. Region**

<b>West Bank</b>	80.0%
<b>Gaza strip</b>	20.0%