



Results of an Opinion Poll The West Bank & Gaza Strip

The Peace Process & Internal Politics

Publication Date: 9 November 2010

Fieldwork: 21-24 October 2010

Sample size: 1000 Palestinians

One thousand Palestinians were interviewed in the West Bank and Gaza during the period of 21-24 October 2010. All socioeconomic groups were represented in the poll (for more details on the sample, please refer to our website). The margin of error in this poll is approximately 3 percent (plus or minus). The poll was carried out by the Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) by competent expert researchers under the supervision of Dr. Nader Said-Foqahaa, President of AWRAD.

For details or for inquiries, please refer to our website: www.awrad.org.

Email us at awrad@awrad.org or call 02-2950957 or 0599204527.

Executive Summary

Commitment to peace. The results confirm the in-principle commitment of Palestinians to peace negotiations. Hesitance to support the current process is a reflection of the inability of the process to deliver rather than an ideological opposition to peace, negotiations and coexistence.

Two–state solution is preferred. A two-state solution based on international legality was identified as the most desirable and most realistic solution to a peace settlement.

Approval for Abbas and Fayyad has improved. The results of current poll continued an upward trend in approval of the performance of both Abbas and Fayyad and the downward spiral of Haniyeh’s popularity. The increase in popularity of Abbas and Fayyad are a likely reflection of the decision to from withdraw from negotiations in the face of continued settlement activities. Increasing popularity is probably also due to the technocratic performance of the Fayyad government in the fields of institution building, security, economy and service delivery in the West Bank.

Hamas’s approval continues to decline. The decline in the evaluation of the Haniyeh government and Hamas’s inability to meet the political expectations—particularly in ending the occupation and in fighting corruption—it was exempt from before the Gaza takeover. On both counts, evaluation of the Hamas performance is decaying.

Abbas and Fayyad have complimentary roles. The current poll confirms the viability of the Fayyad mandate as shaping the future of the Palestinian people. It seems the performance of both leaders is affected by the performance of the other; hence their popularity is derived from their complimentary roles. The majority of Fatah supporters approve of the performance of Fayyad, which provide the PM a shield to deflect the criticism of a small but vocal Fatah minority. At the same time, the improvement in living conditions, security and institution building achieved by the Fayyad government has increased the credibility of Abbas and has enabled him to take more effective (and popular) stands at the political level, especially in relation to the peace process.

Palestinians support immediate elections. The Palestinian public is insistent that the best means to go beyond the current stalemate must include immediate elections at all levels.

One third of voters are undecided. The size of the undecided demographic is a significant source of potential support for a coalition of Independents. Should the Independents join their political efforts, most likely drawing in non-partisan voters in the process, they would soundly defeat the Islamist bloc and become almost competitive with Fatah.

Section One: The Peace Process

The results show an overall commitment to peace and negotiations, coupled with doubts about the current process. The vast majority of Palestinians support a conditional return to negotiations.

- The majority of respondents (67 percent) support peace negotiations, while about 31 percent do not support them.
- Among those who support negotiations in principle, the majority (74 percent) support direct negotiations, while 16 percent support indirect negotiations.
- While support for negotiations as a strategic choice is high among Palestinians, the poll shows doubt about the current process; less than 50 percent support negotiations under current conditions and 34 percent are oppose negotiations. Fourteen percent are neutral.
- If President Mahmoud Abbas decided to engage in direct negotiations with Israel, he would enjoy majority support (67 percent). Twenty-eight percent would oppose such a decision.
- Support for negotiations with Israel is conditional among 81 percent of the respondents; thirty seven percent support negotiations only if Israel committed to a freeze on settlement activities and if the international community provided assurances for the Palestinians. For 24 percent, a freeze in settlement activities was the only precondition given. Twenty percent said international assurance was their only precondition.

In making a choice between the various means to end the occupation and establish a Palestinian state, respondents select non-violent means.

- Seventy percent of respondents indicated that a peaceful strategy was the best option for achieving statehood.
- About 28 percent choose negotiations as the best means to end the occupation.
- About 19 percent choose a non-violent popular uprising.
- About 23 percent choose an international conference to impose a settlement on both parties.
- Only 24 percent support violent means to end the occupation.
- Among only those who support a violent strategy, 75 percent believe violence should target the Israeli military, settlers and civilians. Nine percent believe violence should target the military only.

Though Palestinians demonstrate a firm commitment to a peaceful settlement, these attitudes are accompanied by doubts about the utility of current negotiations.

- Only 27 believe that the current negotiations sponsored by the United States will ever lead to a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.
- Another 38 percent believe that the current negotiations might lead to a state.
- In contrast, 33 percent do not agree that the current negotiations will lead to a state.

The Israeli leadership was identified by poll respondents as the single greatest obstacle to the peace process, followed by the Palestinian political process.

- Nearly half of respondents (48 percent) said the Israeli leadership was the main obstacle to the peace process.
- About 17 percent believe the Palestinian political process is most to blame.
- Another 10 percent blame the United States.
- About 7 percent blame the Palestinian leadership and Israeli political process.
- In total, about 27 percent believe that Palestinian factors are preventing a peace agreement. Nineteen percent believe Israeli factors are to blame.

The poll shows majority support for a two-state solution as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- Sixty-nine percent identified a two-state solution as essential (22 percent), desirable (20 percent), acceptable (16 percent) or tolerable (11 percent).
- Less than 30 percent find a two-state solution unacceptable.
- About 54 percent would support a one bi-national state “with Israelis and Palestinians as equal citizens.” The remaining 45 percent found this option unacceptable.
- A confederation with Jordan and Egypt was rejected by 60 percent, with only 37 percent indicating support.

Similarly, most respondents believe that a two-state solution is the most realistic.

- Nearly half of respondents (45 percent) said the two-state solution was the most realistic outcome of a peace settlement.
- Thirty-one percent believe that historic Palestine is the most realistic solution.
- Fourteen percent believe a one-state solution is the most realistic.
- Only 11 percent believe a confederation is a realistic solution.

Views of the peace process vary according to region and other socio-economic variables.

Regional Variance

- The in-principle support for negotiations is higher in Gaza (72 percent) than in the West Bank (63 percent).
- More Gaza respondents (81 percent) support negotiations compared with West Bank respondents (69 percent). This likely stems from the higher visibility of the occupation to West Bank residents, who experience daily reminders of the continued occupation. At the same time, many Gaza residents might view a renewal in the peace process as a means to end their isolation and frustration with the current political circumstances.
- More Gaza respondents support negotiations without conditions (21 percent), compared with West Bank respondents (13 percent).
- More Gaza respondents believe that the Palestinian internal political process (24 percent) is the greatest obstacle to peace, compared to West Bank respondents (13 percent).
- While support for negotiations is higher in Gaza, support for violence is also higher there, illustrating the polarization in that region. About 29 percent of Gaza respondents believe that violence is the best means to end the occupation, compared with 21 percent among West Bank respondents.
- Conversely, support for a non-violent uprising in the West Bank (24 percent) is double that in Gaza (12 percent). This might be due to the current efforts by some groups to illustrate the utility of non-violent means and the calls by Mr. Fayyad to use non-violence as a means to protest the policies of the occupation.
- West Bank respondents are less optimistic about the outcome of a peace process than those in Gaza; 37 percent of West Bank residents do not believe the negotiations will ever lead to an independent state, compared with 27 percent in Gaza.
- There is no difference between the West Bank and Gaza on preference for the two-state solution.
- About 38 percent of Gaza respondents believe that historic Palestine is still the most realistic solution, while 26 percent of West Bank respondents feel the same way.
- Support for a one-state solution is higher in the West Bank (17 percent) than in Gaza (10 percent).

Other variables are correlated with views of the peace process

- While men and women equally support the negotiations, women are less accepting of a two-state solution than men. Ten percent more women (34 percent) find a two-state solution unacceptable, than men (26 percent).

- Refugees are more inclined to choose violence (28 percent) as the best means to end the occupation than non-refugees (20 percent).
- Government employees are the most supportive of the peace process while the employees of NGOs are the least supportive. (Note: NGOs include various political leanings, with a majority of independents and leftists.) For example, 72 percent of government employees say that they support negotiations, compared with 43 percent among NGO employees.
- A majority of government employees support Fatah and receive their salaries from international donor money.
- NGO employees favor a non-violent popular uprising (42 percent) as the best method to establish a state, compared to 20 percent of the employees of public and private sector employees.
- The pessimism about the ability of negotiations to ever achieve a Palestinian state is shared by NGOs employees (52 percent), employees of private sector (42 percent), and government employees (30 percent).
- Despite an overall critical view of the present negotiations, NGO employees are the most supportive of a two-state solution
- Despite an overall critical views of the present negotiations held by employees of NGOs, they are the most supportive of a two-state solution (84 percent), more so than even government employees (70 percent).

Section Two: Internal Issues

There is a noticeable improvement in the evaluation of the performance of President Abbas and the Fayyad-led government. The evaluation of the Haniyeh government continues to be low.

- President Abbas received 43 percent approval
- Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has 44 percent approval
- Ismael Haniyeh received only 18 percent approval

The following results illustrate the changing perception of the performance of Abbas/Fayyad in the fields of economy, security, institution – building and corruption. The opposite applies in the case of the Haniyeh government.

- Approval for Abbas has increased nearly 10 percent since December 2009 (34 percent approval).
- Fayyad's approval has increased by 9 percent since December 2009 (35 percent approval).
- Haniyeh's approval has declined by 4 percent since December 2009 (22 percent approval).

The gap in perception of the Haniyeh and the Fayyad governments is region-specific. Fayyad beats Haniyeh in all fields of evaluation, including fighting corruption.

- **Security:** In the West Bank, 43 percent of the respondents evaluate the performance of the Fayyad government in improving security as *strong*, while 21 percent evaluate it as *weak*. Only 34 percent in Gaza gave Haniyeh's government a favorable evaluation of its performance in improving security, while 36 percent view these efforts as *weak*.
- **Corruption:** In the West Bank, 37 percent of the respondents evaluate the performance of the Fayyad government in fighting corruption as *strong*, while 26 percent evaluate it as *weak*. The Haniyeh government received 27 percent approval in Gaza for its performance in improving security, while 39 percent view these efforts as *weak*.
- **Public services:** In the West Bank, 44 percent of the respondents evaluate the performance of the Fayyad government in providing public services as *strong*, while 17 percent evaluate it as *weak*. Haniyeh's government received only 18 percent approval in Gaza for its performance in providing public services, while 54 percent view these efforts as *weak*.

A majority of respondents said Salam Fayyad's has been an effective prime minister and deserves reappointment.

- The positive view of Fayyad is much higher among men (50 percent) than women (38 percent).
- Positive evaluation of Fayyad increases in correlation with family income
- Fayyad received higher approval (53 percent) among government employees than private sector and NGO employees (47 percent).
- While his positive evaluation is the same in the West Bank and Gaza, Fayyad's negative evaluation is higher in Gaza (28 percent) than in the West Bank (19 percent).
- Of the 23 percent who evaluate Fayyad's performance negatively, 41 percent of this group is comprised of supporters of Hamas and other Islamic groups. Nineteen percent of Fatah supporters and 27 percent of those with no factional affiliation gave a negative evaluation.
- Sixty-three percent of Fatah supporters are satisfied with Fayyad's performance, in sharp contrast with Hamas supporters (13 percent approval).

The vast majority of Palestinians indicated presidential, legislative and municipal elections should be held immediately.

- Support for elections is higher in Gaza (84 percent) compared with the West Bank (77 percent).
- Refugees are more supportive (83 percent) than non-refugees (76 percent).
- About 73 percent support changes in the Central Election Commission to arrive at reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas.
- About 76 percent of the respondents say that they would vote in any upcoming election, with a much higher rate in Gaza (87 percent) than in the West Bank (69 percent).
- Intention to vote in an upcoming election increases with education: 70 percent among the least educated and 77 percent among the most educated.
- Fatah receives 42 percent support, while Hamas support declined to an all-time low; from 50 percent immediately after the 2006 election to 11 percent now.
- PFLP, Al Mubadara and an Independent party led by Fayyad receive between 3-4 percent support each.
- Support for both Fatah and Hamas is higher in Gaza than in the West Bank. Fatah receives 48 percent support in Gaza, and 38 percent in the West Bank. Hamas receives 13 percent in Gaza and 10 percent in the West Bank.
- Fatah receives higher support among refugees (46 percent) than non-refugees (37 percent).
- Fatah receives 44 percent among men and about 40 percent among women, while Hamas receives 10 percent among men and 13 percent among women.

- About one third of the respondents are undecided.
- Among likely voters and within a national proportional election system, Fatah might receive 56 percent of the vote, while Hamas might receive 20 percent. The rest of the groups would receive 24 percent combined.
- In an election race among eight likely leaders, Abbas appears to be the most popular with 27 percent support. He receives notably more support in Gaza (38 percent) than the West Bank (20 percent). Haniyeh receives 9 percent, Fayyad 8 percent and Mustafa Bargouthi 7 percent.