



AFTER EGYPT: DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS & NEGOTIATIONS

RESULTS OF A NATIONAL OVERSAMPLE OPINION POLL IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

Publication Date: 16 March 2011

Field work: 5-7 March 2011

Sample Size: 3,000 Palestinians in the West Bank & Gaza

Margin of error: $\pm 2\%$

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Introduction:

These are the results and analyses of the latest Arab World for Research & Development (AWRAD) public opinion poll on the aftermath of events in Egypt, Tunisia and throughout the Middle East. The poll gauged Palestinian opinions on the scheduled elections, political affiliation and voting patterns, freedoms and democratic practices, performance of government, the peace process and the Egyptian/Tunisian revolutions. The questionnaire was fielded March 5-7, 2011.

For this survey, 3,000 Palestinians were interviewed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. An oversample was utilized to allow for detailed disaggregation. All socioeconomic groups were represented in the poll (for more details on the sample, please refer to www.awrad.org). The margin of error in this poll is plus or minus 2 percent. The survey was carried out by AWRAD researchers under the supervision of Dr. Nader Said-Foqahaa, President of AWRAD (awrad@awrad.org).

Analysis of the Results**1. View of the Future**

Consistent with recent AWRAD polling in October 2010 and January 2011, approximately one third of respondents believe Palestinian society is generally heading in the right direction, while a majority of 61 percent feel that it is heading in the wrong direction. A higher percentage of Gazans continue to believe that Palestinians society is heading in the wrong direction (72 percent) compared with the West Bank (54 percent), an 18-point gap.

While Gazans view the direction of Palestinian society more negatively than West Bank respondents, they continue to exhibit more optimism that the situation will change for the better. Forty-six percent of Gazans say that they are optimistic about the future, compared with 39 percent in the West Bank. Overall, 41 percent of Palestinians are optimistic about the future and 31 are optimistic to some extent.

2. Traditionalism

When asked if Palestinian society is more or less committed to traditional values and practices compared to fifteen years ago, 64 percent of the respondents said that it is less committed. In contrast, 28 percent said that Palestinian society is more committed to traditional practices. About 6 percent said that there has been no change.

3. Democracy and Participation

Approximately 45 percent of the respondents believe that the Palestinian political system is less or much less democratic now than it was fifteen years ago. In contrast, about 40 percent believe that it is more or much more democratic. About 9 percent do not detect any change.

The belief that democracy is on the decline is much higher among Gaza respondents than West Bank respondents. In Gaza, 65 percent believe that Palestinian society is less or much less democratic now than fifteen years ago when Fateh was in charge of the government, compared with 37 percent in the West Bank.

As to the degree of openness in the Palestinian political system with respect to the participation of citizens, respondents were equally divided. The results for the West Bank and Gaza continue to reveal a gap in perceptions, where 60 percent view the system as less or much less open, compared with 36 percent in the West Bank.

4. Personal Freedoms

Comparison of the perceptions of freedoms among Gaza and West Bank respondents also reveals a wide gap. The majority of Gazans say that personal freedoms are not protected. In Gaza, seventy-one percent say the freedom to protest is not protected. In addition, 61 percent say that freedom of expression is not protected and 59 percent say that freedom of the media is not protected. In comparison, 41 percent of West Bank respondents believe that the freedom to protest is not protected with a 30-percent gap. Additionally, 30 percent of West Bank respondents believe that freedom of the media is not protected.

Table (1): Percentage saying that the following freedoms are NOT protected

	West Bank	Gaza	Gap
Freedom of expression	28%	61%	33%
Freedom of association	23%	54%	31%
Freedom to protest	41%	71%	30%
Freedom of the media	30%	59%	29%

5. Views of the Political System: West Bank and Gaza

When describing the two Palestinian political systems, respondents see democratic trends and pluralism present in the West Bank to a much greater degree than in Gaza although a significant percentage describes each as having authoritarian, one party or police state attributes.

- Sixty-three percent of respondents view the system in the West Bank as democratic or to an extent democratic, compared to 37 percent who say the same about the system in Gaza (a 26 percent gap).
- Fifty-six percent of respondents view the system in the West Bank as pluralistic or to an extent pluralistic, compared to 31 percent who say the same about the system in Gaza (a 25percent gap).
- Forty-eight percent of respondents view the system in the West Bank as a one-party system or to an extent a one-party system, compared to 58 percent who say the same about the system in Gaza (a 10 percent gap).
- Forty percent of respondents view the system in the West Bank as a police-state or to an extent a police-state, compared with 44 percent who say the same about the system in Gaza (a 4 percent gap).
- Thirty-four percent of respondents view the system in the West Bank as corrupt or to an extent corrupt, compared with 37 percent who say the same about the system in Gaza (a 3percent gap).

More Gazans (46 percent) view the system in the West Bank as a police-state compared to 36 percent of respondents in the West Bank. The same applies to the system in Gaza, where 46 percent of Gazans view the system in Gaza as a police-state compared to 36 percent of respondents in the West Bank.

The same trend also applies to views of corruption. More Gazans (42 percent) view the system in the West Bank as corrupt compared to 39 percent of respondents in the West Bank. At the same time, 47 percent of Gazans view the system in Gaza as corrupt compared to 42 percent of respondents in the West Bank.

6. Municipal Elections: Views and Priorities

The majority of Palestinians (82 percent) support the conduct of municipal election as planned in July 2011, with the highest support in Gaza (86 percent) compared to the West Bank (79 percent). Three quarters of respondents plan to participate in these elections (77 percent in Gaza and 73 percent in the West Bank).

In both regions, infrastructure is the most important priority, followed closely by improvements in the local economy. In Gaza, improving the electricity services is also a priority. In the West Bank, there is a higher interest in health and education services, followed by water.

In both regions, professional competence and reputation for honesty are important personal attributes in selecting local council members. They are followed by religiosity, political affiliation and access to decision makers.

Most Palestinians (42 percent) would like to change their present mayors, while 30 percent believe that they should be re-elected. In Gaza, a majority (54 percent) would like to change the present mayors, compared to 35 percent in the West Bank.

If all potential lists participate, a Fateh list endorsed by Mahmoud Abbas would receive 38 percent of the vote, followed by a Hamas list endorsed by Ismael Haniyeh at 12 percent. Other lists endorsed by Salam Fayyad, Mustafa Barghouthi and PFLP would receive between 3 to 4 percent. It is important to note that 37 percent say that they would not vote or are undecided.

7. Legislative and Presidential Elections

Approximately 84 percent of respondents support the conduct of legislative and presidential elections. The same voting patterns that apply to municipal elections apply to legislative elections.

In a presidential contest, a plurality of respondents (42 percent) plan to vote for a Fateh candidate with Mahmoud Abbas gaining the highest percentage (25 percent) followed by Marwan Barghouthi (14 percent), Mohammad Dahlan (3 percent) and Saeb Erekat with less than one percent. Ismael Haniyeh was selected by 12 percent of the respondents. Under this scenario, Mustafa Barghouthi and Salam Fayyad receive 4 and 6 percent, respectively. Thirty-six percent of respondents are undecided or will not vote.

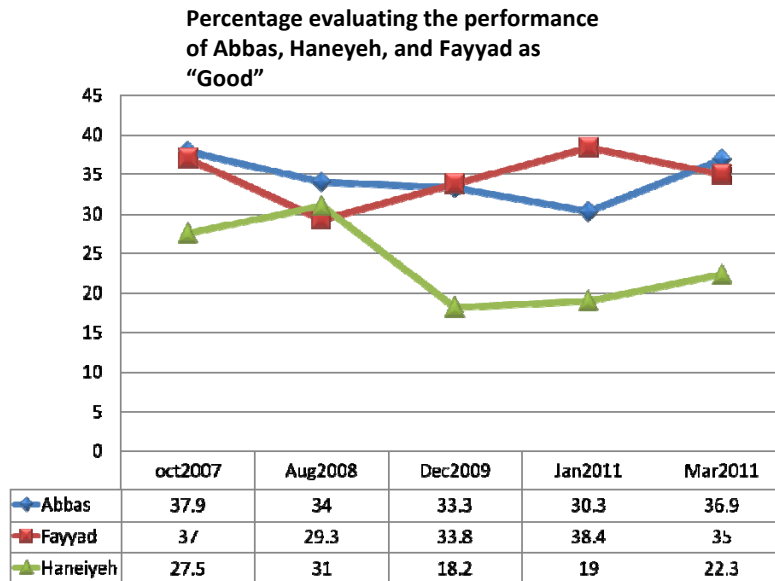
8. Evaluation of Performance: Abbas, Fayyad and Haniyeh

Palestinians are divided in their evaluation of the performance of their leaders. Approximately 37 percent describe the performance of President Abbas as good. Twenty-seven percent describe it as neutral, while 32 percent describe it as poor. As to the performance of Prime Minister Fayyad, 35 percent describe it as good. Twenty-eight percent describe his performance as neutral, while 30 percent describe it as poor. In this context, when asked to describe the recent Fayyad government, 48 percent

describe it as a Fateh government. Fourteen percent describe it as a government of independents and another 14 percent as a government of professional experts. An additional 10 percent view it as a national unity government.

In comparison, about 22 percent describe the performance of Prime Minister Haniyeh as good. Twenty-two percent describe it as neutral and 44 percent describe it as poor. With respect to the Haniyah government, 73 describe it as a Hamas government.

The following chart shows the evaluation of the performance of the three leaders since October 2007.



9. The Aftermath of Egypt/Tunisia Revolutions

Palestinians are closely observing the events unfolding in the Arab world. Approximately, 64 percent view the departure of Hosni Mubarak, the recently deposed President of Egypt, as positive, while 15 percent view it as negative. Sixteen percent were neutral.

As to the impact of the changes on prospects for establishing an independent Palestinian state, 46 percent view the events as positive, while 18 percent see them as negative. About one third believe the events will have no impact on the prospects for establishing an independent state.

Palestinians are divided on the potential for similar actions against the governing Palestinian authority. Approximately one-third say the Palestinian political situation is amenable to similar change, and 25 percent say that it is to some extent. Thirty-eight percent disagree. There is some difference between the West Bank and Gaza, where 37 percent in Gaza feel that the political system there is amenable to similar actions against the government, compared with 29 percent in the West Bank.

10. Peace Negotiations

One-third of respondents believe that negotiations are the best means for ending the occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state. Approximately 21 percent believe that non-violent resistance is the best means. As to other mechanisms, 19 percent believe that an international conference is the best means and 5 percent believe that resorting to the UN is the best means. In contrast, 17 percent believe that a violent confrontation is the best means.

There is a three-way division among respondents with respect to their confidence in the ability of the Palestinian leadership to negotiate a satisfactory settlement for Palestinian statehood. Thirty-one percent say that they have confidence in the leadership, and another 31 percent say that they have confidence to some extent. In contrast, 34 percent say they have no confidence.

11. Preferred News Station

Al Jazeera continues to be the preferred source of television news for (48 percent) of the respondents, followed by Al Arabiyah (23 percent), and Palestine TV (11 percent). Al Aqsa and MBC receive about 5 percent each, while Al Manar and Abu Dhabi receive 2 percent or less. Al Jazeera is much more popular in the West Bank (53 percent) compared to Gaza (40 percent). The following table shows the percentage change in the popularity of these TV stations compared to May 2008. The data show that Al Arabiyah has gained the most viewership since May 2008 at the expense of MBC, Al Aqsa and Palestine TV.

Table (2): Popularity of TV News Stations

Station	May 2008	March 2011
Al Jazeera	43.0%	48.4%
Al Arabiyah	7.9%	22.7%
Palestine	13.8%	10.6%
Al-Aqsa	12.0	5.6%
MBC	14.5%	5.3%
Al Manar	4.3%	2.0%
Abu Dhabi	0.6%	1.3%
CNN	0.8%	1.0%