

A
W
R
A
D



مركز العالم العربي للبحوث والتنمية
Arab World For Research & Development

Results of an Opinion Poll

**Negotiations and Final Settlement Issues
United States President Bush's Visit to the Region
Internal Issues
Palestinian Elections**

Publication Date: Wednesday, 23 January 2008

Field work: 16-18 January 2008

**Sample Size: 3200 Palestinians in the West Bank & Gaza
Margin of error: ± 2**

AWRAD - Arab World for Research & Development

Ramallah – Gaza, Palestine

Tele-fax: 00970-2-2950957/8

E-mail: awrad@awrad.org

Website: www.awrad.org

- **For more information, please contact Team Leader - Dr. Nader Said**
- **With support from the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)**

Introduction

More than anything, this poll measures the impact of the latest attacks on Gaza on Palestinians' views. Field work began the day after the Al Zaytoun attack in Gaza City that led to the killing of 15 Palestinians. The field work took place between 16 -18th of January, as the attacks on Gaza continued. During the period of 15-18th January, 35 Palestinians were killed and 125 injured. In fact, on two occasions the lives of our field researchers were threatened, as missiles were fired in close proximity to their work stations. These attacks came immediately after United States President Bush, visited the region and met with Palestinian and Israeli officials.

The situation on the ground led to major shifts in public opinion, confirming the hypothesis that military approaches and violence reinforce hard-line positions, and negatively influence the lot of all parties involved, especially the credibility of the president of the PNA and his government.

The following examples are illustrative:

- Support for the outcome of Annapolis to start negotiations and reach an agreement by the end of 2008 declined from 49% to 27%.
- Support for firing rockets from Gaza into Israeli territories increased from 27% (December 6-8, 2007) to 48% now; in Gaza, the support went from 28% to 53% in the same time period.
- Support for Fateh in Gaza declined by 12 points, from 43% last November to 32% now
- Overall support for Hamas increased slightly.
- The negative evaluation of the ministerial cabinet, headed by Ismael Hanneyeh, went down by 11 points
- Support for Abbas declined by 5 points, while support for Hanneyeh increased by 6 points; in Gaza support for Hanneyeh increased by 10 points compared with a November 2007 AWRAD poll.

One: Highlights

- 64% do not think that the current negotiations will lead to a Palestinian state.
- 49% support a two-state solution based on UN Resolution 242 (a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza side-by-side to an Israeli state)
- 95% say that the issue of control over Jerusalem is very important, and 94% say that the issue of prisoner release is very important.
- 42% believe that negotiation until an agreement is reached between the two parties is the best means to end the occupation and establish a Palestinian state.
- Less than 4% support attacks against Israeli civilians as the best means to end occupation. However, 28% support attacks against soldiers and settlers.
- 70% of respondents followed (fully or partially) the news on the Bush visit to the region.
- 62% believe that Bush's positions conform to previous American policy.
- 74% believe that Bush's visit will not give any hope to the establishment of a Palestinian state. 82% believe that it will not put a stop to Israeli settlement activities.
- 65% believe that Bush's visit will reinforce the Israeli occupation and 78% believe that it will tighten the closure on Gaza.
- 48% support the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israeli territories.
- 46% support the steps taken by Mahmoud Abbas towards ending the occupation.
- 31% evaluate the ministerial cabinet headed by Fayyad and Hanneyeh as good.
- 62% say that Hamas has no real alternative to end the Israeli occupation, and 56% say that Fateh has no real alternative to end the Israeli occupation.
- 64% of respondents think that Palestinian society is heading in the wrong direction.
- If PLC elections took place today, Fateh would receive 32% of the votes and Hamas would receive 18%.
- In a two-way race, anyone of the following personalities (Marwan Bargouthi, Abbas, Mustafa Bargouthi, and Fayyad) could win over Ismael Hanneyeh.
- In a two-way race between Marwan Bargouthi and Abbas, Marwan receives 43% of the vote, while Abbas receives 21%.
- In a two-way race between Marwan Bargouthi and Hanneyeh, Marwan receives 45%, while Hanneyeh receives 24%.

Two: Analysis of Results

Negotiations and Final-Settlement Issues

1. Hopes and expectations of the Negotiations

- The events in Gaza have dramatically changed Palestinians' attitudes towards the launching of a negotiations process as an outcome of the Annapolis meeting. The majority of Palestinians (50%) do not support this outcome, whereas, in a previous poll conducted by AWRAD in December 2007, after the convening of Annapolis, 49% showed their support for this outcome.
- Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza are pessimistic. The majority (64%) do not believe the current round of negotiations will lead to a Palestinian state with full sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- Discontent with the current negotiations process does not lead to lack of support for negotiations in principle. About 42% of the respondents still believe that negotiations are the best means in terms of their capability to end the occupation and establish a Palestinian state. This is compared with 27% who support operations against the Israeli military and settlers in the occupied territories.

2. Scenarios for Final-Status Issues

When the respondents were asked about the final settlement for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they provided the following answers that show a decrease in Palestinian support for a two-state solution, land exchange and the division of Jerusalem.

- **A Two-State Solution**

63% support (or support to an extent) a two-state solution based on UN Resolution 242 (a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza side by side with Israel). This is compared to 73% in our previous poll (November 25, 2007).

- **Refugees**

The majority (64%) of respondents support (or support to an extent) a solution of the refugee problem that is based on allowing the return of the majority of refugees to the West Bank and Gaza, and some refugees to 1948 proper (Israel).

- **Jerusalem**

About 32% of respondents support (or support to an extent) a solution based on dividing the holy city of Jerusalem with Palestinian control of the east side and Israeli control of the west side, with the possibility of exchanging areas

from each side. It was noticeable that the opposition (and opposition to an extent) to this scenario is much higher than the support (67%). These feelings might be related to the degree of importance of this issue to the Palestinians.

- **Settlements**

About 58% of the respondents oppose the scenario that stipulates dismantling the majority of settlements, but allows for a land swap that would provide for Israel's annexation of some settlements in exchange for land from 1948 proper to be given to the Palestinians. In contrast, 29% support such a scenario.

3. Relevance of Issues

- Consistent with the previous poll conducted by AWRAD in November, the vast majority of respondents expressed that all final-status issues (refugees, settlements, Jerusalem and prisoners) are very important in the negotiations process.
- Jerusalem came at the top of the list, with 95% saying it is very important for negotiators to give it a priority.
- This was followed by the issue of prisoners, where 94% said it is very important.
- Eighty-eight percent said that the issue of refugees is very important (8% said it was important) and 80% felt the same way about the issue of settlements (with an additional 12% saying that this issue was important to them).

United States President Bush's Visit to the Region

On January 10th U.S. President Bush, visited the Middle East, including Palestine and Israel. During his visit to the region, Bush acknowledged widespread skepticism over whether he could break through decades of distrust to achieve his goal of a peace agreement by the end of his presidency in January 2009. His visit was followed by violent attacks on Gaza leading to scores of deaths and injuries, and rocket firing at Israeli communities near Gaza. It is widely believed that the violence had led to the dampening of any hopes that resulted from his visit. Reports have also confirmed continued settlement activities after the visit.

- Palestinians expressed interest in the visit of Mr. Bush to the Middle East, where 49% followed the news on his visit.
- The majority of respondents (58%) heard or read the speech that he delivered after his meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and other Palestinian leaders.
- However, Palestinians are pessimistic about President Bush's visit. The majority (62%) do not think that his visit will energize the negotiations process between the Palestinians and the Israelis, nor will it give any hope for the establishment of a Palestinian state (74%).
- A higher percentage of Palestinians (82%) also do not think that President Bush's visit will put a stop to Israeli settlement activities.

- On the contrary, the majority of respondents believe that his visit will reinforce the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and tighten the closure on Gaza (65% and 78% respectively).
- Moreover, and according to 62% of Palestinians, President Bush's visit will increase the internal conflict between Palestinian factions, especially between Fateh and Hamas.
- In general, the majority (76%) does not believe that Palestinians made any political gains from President Bush's visit. Nor that his visit will help Palestinians achieve their national goals (81%).

Internal issues

1. Ending the occupation:

- The majority of Palestinians believe that neither Hamas nor Fateh has a real alternative to end the Israeli occupation, (62% and 56% respectively).
- About 46% of Palestinians support Mahmoud Abbas' steps towards ending the occupation, compared to 64% who supported his steps in a poll conducted by AWRAD last December. Another 30% oppose his plan.
- Support for firing rockets from Gaza into Israel increased from 27% (December 6-8, 2007) to 48% now. In Gaza, the support went from 28% to 53%.

2. Fayyad's and Hanneyeh's Cabinets

- The two governments headed by Fayyad and Hanneyeh were evaluated. Fayyad's and Hanneyeh's cabinets received the same positive evaluation, where 31% evaluated the performance of their cabinets as good. In comparison, a previous poll conducted by AWRAD in December showed that Hanneyeh's positive evaluation was eleven percentage points less than Fayyad's
- In contrast, 39% evaluated the performance of Hanneyeh's cabinet as weak, while 31% felt the same way about Fayyad's.
- The negative evaluation of Fayyad's cabinet is higher in Gaza than in the West Bank, where 39% of respondents evaluated Fayyad's cabinet as weak, compared with 27% in the West Bank. 37% of Gaza respondents evaluated Hanneyeh's government as weak, compared with 40% in the West Bank.

Palestinian Elections

1. Voting for Lists

- Compared with the December Poll, support for Fateh is declining, where 32% said that they would vote for Fateh in a possible Legislative Council election (compared with 36% during December). Much of the decline took place in Gaza.
- On the contrary Hamas' popularity slightly increased (4 points) since November 2007. The present poll shows that 18% will vote for the Change and Reform list (affiliated with Hamas with 24% in Gaza and 13% in West Bank). However, it is important to note that this increase is affiliated with the events in Gaza and the on-going violence.

- One must also take into consideration that 42% declare that they are either undecided or say that they will not vote. At this time, these groups need to be further analyzed to understand their potential impact on future elections.
- Finally, the poll shows very weak support for all the lists presented in the 2006 elections, where they receive between less than 1% and 3% of support.

2. Evaluation of Political Personalities

- Marwan Bargouthi is on the top list of the most favorable political personalities for the Palestinians, 60% of respondents view him favorably.
- He is followed by Ismael Hanneyeh and Ahmad Sa'dat; they both receive a 38% favorable rating. Sa'dat is more favorable by Palestinians in Gaza (45%) than in the West Bank (34%). The same is true for Hanneyeh.
- They are closely followed by Mustafa Bargouthi and Mahmoud Abbas (36%).
- As for Salam Fayyad, 33% of Palestinians give him a favorable rating.
- Al Zahar is the least favorable personality among Palestinians (29%). His unfavorable rating in Gaza (46%) is higher than in the West Bank (33%).

3. Voting for President

Nine-Way Race

- In a nine-way race that includes 3 Fateh personalities, 3 Hamas personalities, 2 independents, and 1 leftist (PFLP), the total voting for Fateh candidates is 36%. Voting for the three Hamas candidates is at about 20%. Ismael Hanneyeh receives the strongest support with 17%. He is closely followed by Mahmoud Abbas and Marwan Bargouthi (16% each).
- Fayyad and Mustafa Barghouti would receive about 4% of respondents' support each.
- Dahalan also received 4% of respondents' support, higher than the other two Hamas candidates (Zahhar and Aziz Duweek). In fact, Dahalan received about 9% of the Gaza vote, compared with 1% for Zahhar. Aziz Duweek received 1.2% of the total vote.
- The leftist candidate Ahmad Sa'dat received 2% of the vote.
- As in the previous poll, about 44% of the respondents said they are either undecided or will not vote.

Two-Way Races

A more realistic scenario is one that includes only two competing candidates: one representing the PLO and another representing the Islamist movement. The present poll shows an increase in support for the most favorable Islamist candidate and a decrease in support for PLO representatives.

- Still, the results show that Marwan Bargouthi, Abbas, Fayyad and Mustafa Bargouthi could all win in a race against Ismael Hanneyeh, the most favorable Islamist candidate.
- Marwan Bargouthi is the most popular candidate, while Zahhar is the least popular.

Marwan Bargouthi vs. Hanneyeh

According to the results, Marwan Bargouthi has the highest potential to win over Hanneyeh. He received 45% of respondents' support, compared to 24% for Hanneyeh.

Abbas vs. Hanneyeh

Abbas received 39% of respondents' support, winning over Hanneyeh who received 27%. The gap between Abbas and Hanneyeh was 24 points in our November poll; it declined to 12 points this poll.

Fayyad vs. Hanneyeh

Fayyad received 33% of respondents' support, and would win over Hanneyeh, who received 30%. The gap between Fayyad and Hanneyeh was 17 points in our November poll; it declined to 3 points this poll.

Mustafa Bargouthi vs. Hanneyeh

Mustafa Bargouthi received 34% of respondents' support and would win over Hanneyeh, who received 28%.

Marwan Bargouthi vs. Salam Fayyad

Marwan received 51% of respondents' vote and would win over Salam Fayyad who received only 12%.

Marwan Bargouthi vs. Mahmoud Abbas

Marwan received 43% of the vote and would win over Abbas who received 21%. Marwan received more support in Gaza (50%) than in the West Bank (38%).