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Palestinians Reject “Deal of the Century,” Decision to Cease Payment of Gaza Salaries

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Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) recently conducted a national public opinion poll, assessing Palestinian attitudes and perceptions regarding contemporary issues, including the decision by the Palestinian Authority (PA) to cease payment of salaries to Gaza and the US peace deal, as well as political topics and circumstances of daily life. The survey targeted 1,200 adult Palestinians (18+) across the West Bank and Gaza and is representative of all regions and demographics. Fieldwork was conducted from July 7-10, 2018. The survey has a margin of error of ± 3 percent. Inquiries can be directed to awrad@awrad.org or 0599204527.

Strong Opposition to Cessation of Gaza Salaries: The vast majority (89 percent) of Palestinians oppose the decision of the PA to cease payment of salaries to Gaza-based employees, with large majorities observed in both the West Bank (86 percent) and Gaza (93 percent). Further, respondents believe that the PA reaction to demonstrations, organized in protest of the cessation of salaries, was inappropriate, with the majority (54 percent) considering them “very inappropriate.” Finally, respondents believe these demonstrations contributed to Palestinian welfare and were non-partisan; 60 percent of respondents believe that the demonstrations served Palestinian interests, while a separate 53 percent believe the protests were independent of party influence.

Rejection of “Deal of the Century:” The greatest plurality (46 percent) of Palestinians assess themselves to have average awareness of the current American peace deal, colloquially referred to as the Deal of the Century, while 18 percent have high awareness and 33 percent low awareness. Regardless, impressions of the Deal and its consequences are distinctly negative. Seven-in-ten (70 percent) believe the Deal will end the dream of achieving the Palestinian state, while 27 percent are uncertain and only 4 percent believe it will provide a just resolution.

Further, a large majority (80 percent) of Palestinians believe that the decisions of donor countries, namely America and Australia, to terminate aid to the PA are punitive measures, designed to force Palestinian leaders to accept the peace deal. Palestinians believe the most likely outcome to result from the cessation of aid is the collapse of the PA (48 percent), followed by an armed intifada (24 percent).

Divided Opinion on Armed Resistance and the Peace Process: Palestinians are divided when considering a resumption of armed conflict. While 45 percent express support for a renewal of armed conflict at this time, another 45 percent express opposition. Gazans are more likely to express support, while those in the West Bank are more likely to express opposition. A separate 34 percent believe renewal of armed conflict would benefit Palestinians interests, while 29 percent believe it would not and 28 percent believe it would benefit interests “to some extent.” Once again, those in Gaza are more likely to believe that a renewal of conflict will benefit Palestinians.



Respondents are similarly divided on the topic of peace talks. Specifically, 45 percent express support for a resumption of peace talks under international auspices, while 47 percent express opposition. However, when assessing the respective political approaches of Palestinian leaders to the liberation struggle, the approach of Mahmoud Abbas (33 percent) is preferred to that of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh (18 percent). However, 27 percent of respondents indicate that they prefer another approach, including 36 percent of those in Gaza. A final 22 percent, including 31 percent of those in the West Bank, are uncertain.

Abbas and Marwan Tied in Presidential Race: In a hypothetical election for the post of PA President, Abbas (17 percent) and Marwan Barghouti (17 percent), Fatah leader currently in Israeli prison, would receive an equal share of the vote. Abbas' share of the vote has slipped, since AWRAD's February poll, when he received 21 percent of the vote. Other leaders, namely Haniyeh (9 percent) and former Fatah figure Mohammad Dahlan (6 percent), are less popular. Significantly, 24 percent of respondents say they would not vote such an election and a further 11 percent say they would vote for an alternative leader, not included in the list. The rate of abstention or preference for alternative leaders is greatest in the West Bank, where it constitutes 43 percent of the electorate.

If Abbas were not to run, Marwan (26 percent) would receive the highest share of votes. Alarming, however, the rates of abstention (25 percent) and preference for alternative leaders (12 percent) do not fluctuate, likely indicating that these Palestinians harbor an antipathy and rejection of the current system that goes beyond individual candidates or political leaders.

In a hypothetical legislative election, the Fatah list (32 percent) is the most popular, receiving more than double the support of the Hamas list (12 percent). However, the combined rate (45 percent) of uncertainty (22 percent) and abstention (23 percent) remains the greatest plurality, underscoring the apathy many Palestinians express for their political options

Palestinians Optimistic, in Face of Deteriorating Conditions: Palestinian families continue to struggle in the course of daily life. Currently, 54 percent of respondents believe their family's economic situation has gotten worse in the past year. This figure is driven by the vast majority of Gazans (88 percent) who believe their family's welfare has worsened. Further, a majority (60 percent) of Palestinians, including 83 percent of those in Gaza, believe that Palestine is heading in the wrong direction. Yet, for these bleak conditions, 48 percent of Palestinians are optimistic for the future, compared to 49 percent who express pessimism.

DETAILED RESULTS

Sample Size: 1,200 Palestinians (West Bank & Gaza)

Margin of Error: ± 3 Percent

Section (1): General Directions

- 1. In general, would you say that things in Palestine are heading in the right direction or the wrong direction?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Right direction	42.8%	15.0%	31.9%
Wrong direction	45.9%	82.5%	60.2%
Don't know	11.3%	2.6%	7.9%

- 2. In general, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Optimistic	55.9%	35.9%	48.1%
Pessimistic	40.3%	62.4%	48.9%
Don't know	3.8%	1.7%	3.0%

- 3. Is your family's economic situation better or worse than it was a year ago?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Better	17.3%	.9%	10.9%
Stayed the same	49.2%	11.5%	34.5%
Worse	32.4%	87.6%	53.9%
Don't know	1.1%		.7%

- 4. Do you believe the decision of the Palestinian Authority to cease payment of salaries to employees in Gaza is appropriate?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Appropriate	5.7%	5.1%	5.5%
Inappropriate	86.9%	93.2%	89.3%
Don't know	7.4%	1.7%	5.2%

- 5. Do you believe the decision of the Palestinian Authority to cease payment of salaries to employees in Gaza is justified?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Justified	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
Unjustified	82.7%	90.4%	85.7%
Don't know	9.0%	1.3%	6.0%

- 6. Do you support or oppose the decision of the Palestinian Authority to cease payment of salaries to employees in Gaza?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Support	5.5%	5.3%	5.4%
Oppose	86.1%	92.5%	88.6%
Don't know	8.5%	2.1%	6.0%

7. **Palestinians in Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron organized demonstrations against the cessation of salary payments. Do you believe the response of the Palestinian Authority to these demonstrators was appropriate?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Very appropriate	4.8%	6.6%	5.5%
Appropriate to some extent	6.7%	14.5%	9.8%
Inappropriate to some extent	22.8%	22.6%	22.8%
Very inappropriate	55.7%	51.9%	54.3%
Don't know	10.0%	4.3%	7.8%

8. **In your opinion, do these demonstrations serve Palestinian interests or external interests?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Palestinian interests	56.1%	66.5%	60.2%
External interests	19.9%	27.1%	22.8%
Don't know	23.9%	6.4%	17.1%

9. **Do you believe these demonstrations are independent or organized by parties?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Organized	22.7%	39.1%	29.1%
Independent	52.3%	54.1%	53.0%
Don't know	25.0%	6.8%	17.9%

10. **Are you aware of the “Deal of the Century,” developed by the American administration?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
High awareness	17.2%	19.0%	17.9%
Average awareness	44.3%	48.3%	45.8%
Low awareness	34.6%	29.7%	32.7%
No answer	4.0%	3.0%	3.6%

11. **Do you believe that the “Deal of the Century” will lead to a just resolution of the Palestinian issue or will end the dream of achieving the independent Palestinian state?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Just resolution	3.0%	4.3%	3.5%
End the dream of achieving a Palestinian state	64.8%	78.2%	70.0%
Don't know	32.2%	17.5%	26.5%

12. **Do you believe the decision by donor countries (e.g. US, Australia) to cease aid to the Palestinian Authority is intended to force leaders to accept the Deal of the Century?**

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Yes	80.1%	79.5%	79.8%
No	7.5%	8.8%	8.0%
Don't know	12.4%	11.8%	12.2%

13. In your opinion, if international donors cease their aid to the PA, what do you believe will be the result?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
End of the Palestinian Authority and return to chaos	46.9%	49.8%	48.0%
Outbreak of a peaceful Intifada	11.6%	11.1%	11.4%
Outbreak of an armed Intifada	18.9%	31.6%	23.8%
Don't know	22.7%	7.5%	16.8%

14. Do you believe Palestinians are closer or further away from their dream of establishing an independent state?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Closer	30.4%	25.0%	28.3%
Further	60.5%	72.0%	65.0%
Don't know	9.2%	3.0%	6.8%

15. Do you support a renewal of armed conflict at this time?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Yes	36.9%	58.1%	45.2%
No	49.4%	38.7%	45.2%
Don't know	13.7%	3.2%	9.6%

16. In your opinion, would a renewal of armed conflict benefit Palestinians interest?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Yes	27.0%	45.3%	34.2%
To some extent	25.8%	31.4%	28.0%
No	35.4%	19.9%	29.3%
Don't know	11.7%	3.4%	8.5%

17. Do you support the resumption of peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Support	44.7%	45.9%	45.2%
Oppose	44.9%	50.4%	47.1%
Don't know	10.4%	3.6%	7.8%

18. If one of the following approaches leads to the resolution of the national struggle, which do you support more?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
The approach of Mahmoud Abbas	31.8%	33.8%	32.6%
The approach of Hamas and Ismael Haniyeh	16.1%	21.4%	18.2%
Other	21.4%	35.7%	27.0%
Don't know	30.6%	9.2%	22.3%

Section (2): Elections

19. In a hypothetical presidential election, which of the following leaders would you vote for?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Mahmoud Abbas	18.2%	14.5%	16.8%
Marwan Bargouthi	16.8%	16.5%	16.7%
Ismael Haniyeh	8.2%	10.5%	9.1%
Mohamad Dahlan	.4%	16.2%	6.6%
Khaled Mashaal	2.3%	6.0%	3.8%
Mustafa Bargouthi	1.9%	2.4%	2.1%
Salam Fayyad	1.6%	2.4%	1.9%
Rami Hamdallah	1.6%	1.5%	1.6%
Ramadan Shallah	.8%	2.8%	1.6%
Ahmad Saadat	1.5%	1.3%	1.4%
Other	4.0%	3.0%	3.6%
None of the above	14.6%	4.3%	10.6%
I will not vote	28.0%	18.8%	24.4%

20. If President Abbas decided not to run, in an upcoming presidential election, which of the following leaders would you vote for?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Marwan Bargouthi	27.6%	24.4%	26.3%
Ismael Haniyeh	8.6%	12.6%	10.2%
Mohamad Dahlan	1.1%	17.3%	7.4%
Rami Hamdallah	4.0%	2.8%	3.5%
Khaled Mashaal	2.3%	4.7%	3.3%
Salam Fayyad	3.1%	3.2%	3.2%
Mustafa Bargouthi	2.3%	2.6%	2.4%
Ahmad Saadat	1.4%	3.0%	2.0%
Ramadan Shallah	.8%	3.0%	1.7%
Other	4.1%	2.6%	3.5%
None of the above	16.0%	5.3%	11.8%
I will not vote	28.7%	18.6%	24.8%

21. If PLC elections were held today, for which of the following parties would you vote?

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Fatah	30.5%	34.2%	32.0%
Hamas	9.9%	15.6%	12.1%
PFLP	3.4%	3.0%	3.3%
Islamic Jihad	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%
Independent party, led by Fayyad	1.2%	1.5%	1.3%
Al Mubadara	1.1%	1.7%	1.3%
Hizb al Tahreer	1.2%	.2%	.8%
DFLP	.4%	.9%	.6%
PPP	.1%	.4%	.3%
Feda	.3%		.2%
Popular Struggle	.1%	.2%	.2%
Another list	.8%	2.1%	1.3%
None of the above	28.1%	13.2%	22.3%
I will not vote	21.2%	25.2%	22.8%

Sample Distribution

Region	%	Gender	%
West Bank	61.0	Male	49.7
Gaza	39.0	Female	50.3
District	%	Age	%
Jenin	6.8	18-30	40.1
Tulkarm	3.3	31-40	21.3
Qalqilya	1.7	41+	38.7
Nablus	8.3	Marital Status	%
Salfit	1.7	Single	26.0
Tubas	1.7	Married	70.2
Ramallah & Al Bireh	6.8	Other	3.8
Jerusalem	8.7	Educational level	%
Jericho	1.7	Secondary (12 years or less)	64.6
Bethlehem	5.1	More than 12 years	35.4
Hebron	15.3		
Jabalya	6.6	Occupation	%
Gaza	14.7	Laborer	11.1
Deir Al Balah	4.9	Employee	15.1
KhanYunis	8.0	Farmer	1.3
Rafah	4.8	Merchant	5.8
Residence	%	Professional	.6
City	72.3	Craftsman	5.2
Village	16.6	Student	10.1
Refugee Camp	11.2	Housewife	35.2
Work Sector	%	Does not work	14.2
Government	23.2	Retired	1.5
Private	69.0	Reported Relative Income	%
NGOs	3.0	Above average	4.7
Other	4.8	Average	66.6
Refugee status	%	Below average	28.7
Refugee	38.5		
Non-refugee	61.5		