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PRESS RELEASE

**The Palestinian Security Monitor
May 2006**

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**With the kind contribution of the Palestinian Academic Society
for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)**





PRESS RELEASE

The Palestinian Security Monitor, May 2006

- ❖ The percentage of Palestinians who said that since the January PLC elections they feel the same in terms of security that had been steadily increasing in the first two months after the elections, has plunged in the past two months from 57% in March to 42% in April to 37% now. Meanwhile, the percentage of Palestinians feeling less secure since the PLC elections reached a four-month high and stands at 34%. Whereas 64% of Fateh supporters and 33% of those who do not trust any political faction feel less secure since the PLC elections, this is the case for 15% of Hamas supporters. Also, a higher percentage of Gazans (41%) than Westbankers (31%) feel less secure since the January PLC elections.
- ❖ 43% consider the "chaos in internal security" to be the main reason behind their feeling of insecurity, 39% blame the "deterioration in the economic conditions of their household" for feeling insecure, while respectively 7% blame either the "Israeli occupation" (7%) or "lawlessness" for their feeling of insecurity.
- ❖ Excluding the factor of Israeli occupation, 34% of Palestinians believe that "keeping weapons only with the security forces" would improve their feeling of security, while 33% believe that "an improvement of the role and empowerment of the security forces" would have that effect. Furthermore, 20% say that "dismantling the factional military wings" would improve their feeling of security, and 20% said that "an improvement in the economic situation" would do that.
- ❖ A majority of 62% of Palestinians said that they or their families or their property is threatened. This feeling is more pronounced among Fateh supporters (69%) and those who do not trust any faction (74%) than among Hamas supporters (48%).
- ❖ A small majority of 53% of Palestinians believe that the PA cabinet should control the Palestinian security forces, while 47% believe that the President should control these forces. While 81% of Fateh supporters said that the President should control the Palestinian security forces, 50% of those who do not trust any faction and 18% of Hamas supporters said so.
- ❖ A large majority of 81% of the Palestinian public supports the integration of all factional military wings in the security forces. While the support for such integration is stronger among Hamas supporters (82%) and those who do not trust any faction (87%), it is also strong among Fateh



- supporters (74%). Also, the support for the integration of all factional military wings into the security forces is stronger in the West Bank (83%) than in the Gaza Strip (77%).
- ❖ 62% believe that the establishment of the new security back-up force will improve the security situation, while 38% believe that it will worsen the security situation. The belief that the establishment of the new security force will improve the security situation is more widely shared among Hamas supporters (82%) and those who do not trust any faction (50%) than among Fateh supporters (41%).
 - ❖ 63% of the Palestinian public is of the opinion that the Ministry of Interior decided to establish a new security force to help in security, while 37% think this Ministry established the new security force to compete with the existing security forces. While 84% of Hamas supporters believe that the Ministry of Interior established the new security force to help in security, 61% of Fateh supporters believe that this Ministry established this new security force to compete with the already existing security forces.
 - ❖ After explaining to the interviewees that President Abu Mazen decreed that no additional security force should be established, but that Prime Minister Ismael Hanieh said that the new back-up force should stay, 54% believe that Abu Mazen should back down, while 46% believe that Ismael Hanieh should back down. 20% of Fateh supporters believe that Abu Mazen should back down compared to 81% of Hamas supporters and 53% of those who do not trust any faction who share this belief.
 - ❖ In general, 23% of the Palestinian public blames Hamas for the current security crisis in the Gaza Strip, while 30% blame Fateh, and 47% blame both factions equally. According to factional trust 56% of Fateh supporters blame Hamas for the security crisis in the Gaza Strip, while equally 56% of Hamas supporters blame Fateh for this crisis.
 - ❖ 44% of Palestinians believe that the security crisis in the Gaza Strip will spread to the West Bank. This belief is more widely held among Fateh supporters (53%) and those who do not trust any faction (43%) than among Hamas supporters (37%). Also, this belief lives stronger in the West Bank (48%) than in the Gaza Strip (37%).
 - ❖ The view that a civil war is likely to break out is held by 45% of the Palestinian public. Fateh supporters (62%) much more than Hamas supporters (34%) and those who do not trust any faction (45) believe in the likelihood of a civil war. Also, again, a higher percentage of Palestinians in the West Bank (48%) than in the Gaza Strip (43%) believes that a civil war is likely.
 - ❖ In general, 80% support the Prisoner agreement. Support for this agreement is higher among Fateh supporters (87%) and those who do not trust any faction (86%) than among Hamas supporters (68%), and also higher in the West Bank (85%) than in the Gaza Strip (72%).
 - ❖ 63% of Palestinians believe that it is more important to seize weapons to improve internal security than to keep weapons to resist Israel. This view is more widely held among Fateh supporters (68%) and those who do not trust any faction (70%) than among Hamas supporters (56%). In addition, a



- higher percentage of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (70%) than in the West Bank (59%) find it more important to seize weapons to improve internal security than to keep them to resist Israel.
- ❖ In general, 41% of Palestinians say that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel. A higher percentage of Hamas supporters (62%) than Fateh supporters (23%) and those who do not trust any faction (33%) feel that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel. This is also the case for a higher percentage of Westbankers (44%) than Gazans (35%). In comparison with NEC's April survey results on this issue, support for Hamas maintaining its position towards Israel has increased by 6%.
 - ❖ 22% of the Palestinian public believes that Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel. Only last month, a mere 13% were of that opinion. The highest percentage of Palestinians believing that there is a peace partner in Israel can be found among Fateh supporters (29%).
 - ❖ 62% believe that there is a Palestinian partner for peace, while the remaining 38% believe that this is not the case.

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The Palestinian Security Pulse

Given the increasing tensions between Hamas and Fateh, the increasingly worrisome security crisis (especially in the Gaza Strip), and the ongoing disagreement between President Mahmoud Abbas and the Hamas-led PA on the establishment of a new back-up security force, it is high time to take stock of the perceptions of the Palestinian public on those issues.

The analysis in this press release is highlighting the diverging opinions according to factional trust and region of residence (West Bank versus the Gaza Strip), as it seems that – especially on the issue of security – these two variables mainly shape Palestinians' opinions.

The four-month period since the January 2006 PLC elections has been marked by an increasingly clear divide in Palestinian society along factional lines. More particularly, now more than ever, opinions on a wide variety of issues vary depending on whether respondents trust Hamas, trust Fateh or do not trust any faction. In order to exemplify this division, the analysis in this press release is highlighting the diverging opinions according to factional trust.

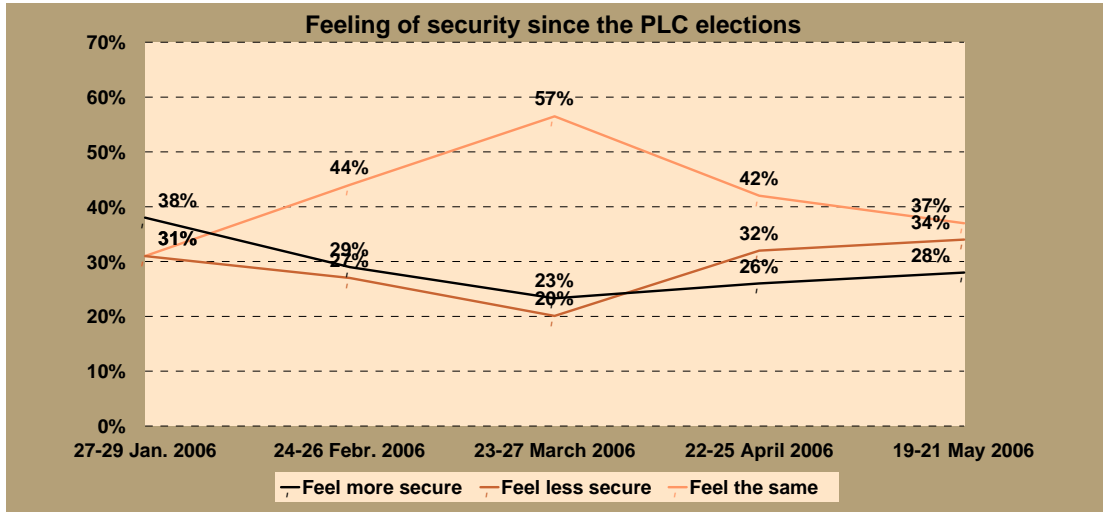
In the period of 19-21 May 2006, Near East Consulting (NEC) conducted a phone survey of over 1,200 randomly selected Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem of which 890 were successfully completed. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.28 with a 95% confidence level.

Finally, the NEC team would like to thank the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) for its contribution to some of the questions in this survey.

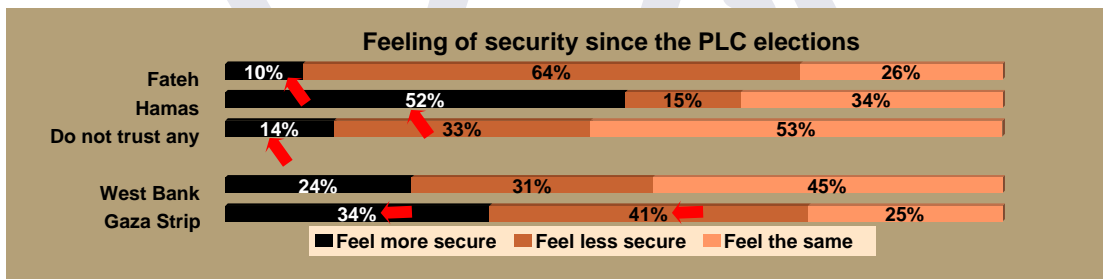
Feeling of security in general

The increasingly open tensions between Fateh and Hamas combined with the financial crisis of the Hamas-led PA and its inability to pay the salaries of the government employees seem to affect people's feeling of security since the January PLC elections.

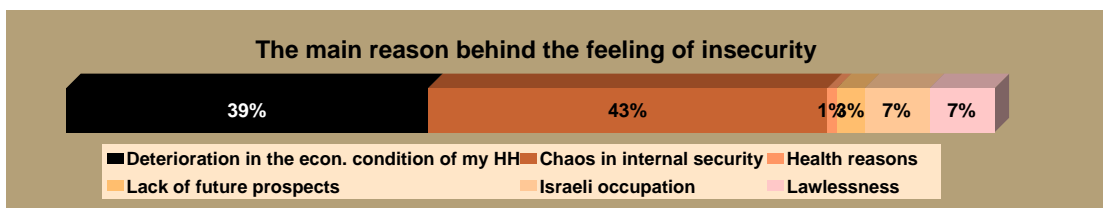
As illustrated in the figure below, the percentage of Palestinians who stated that since the PLC elections they feel the same in terms of security that had been steadily increasing in the first two months after the elections, in the past two month drastically plunged from 57% in March to 42% in April to 37% now. At the same time, the percentage of Palestinians feeling less secure since the PLC elections reached a four-month high and stands at 34%.



Palestinians' feeling of security varies considerably depending on which faction they trust most and the region they reside in. For example, whereas 64% of Fateh supporters and 33% of those who do not trust any political faction feel less secure since the PLC elections, this is the case for 15% of Hamas supporters. Also, a considerably higher percentage of Gazans (41%) than Westbankers (31%) feel less secure since the January PLC elections.



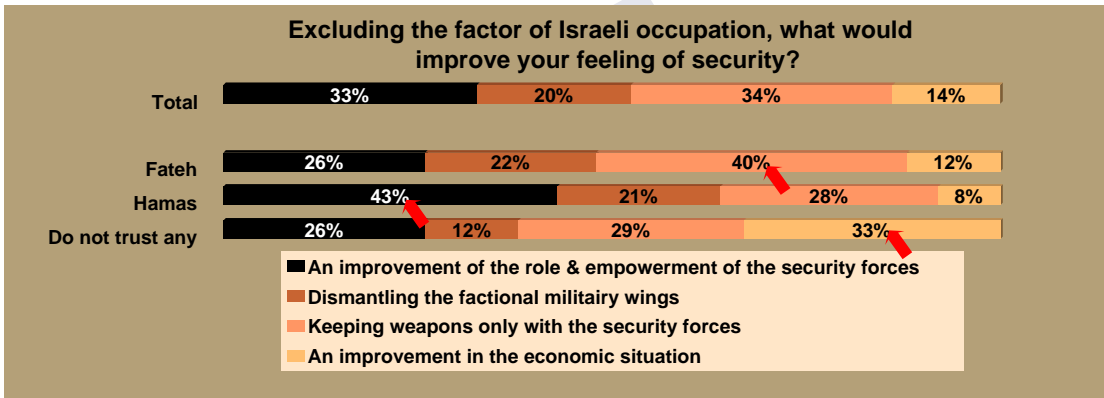
When asked about the main reason behind the feeling of insecurity, 43% referred to the "chaos in security", 39% blame the "deterioration in the economic conditions of their household" for feeling insecure, while respectively 7% blame either the "Israeli occupation" (7%) or "lawlessness" for their feeling of insecurity.



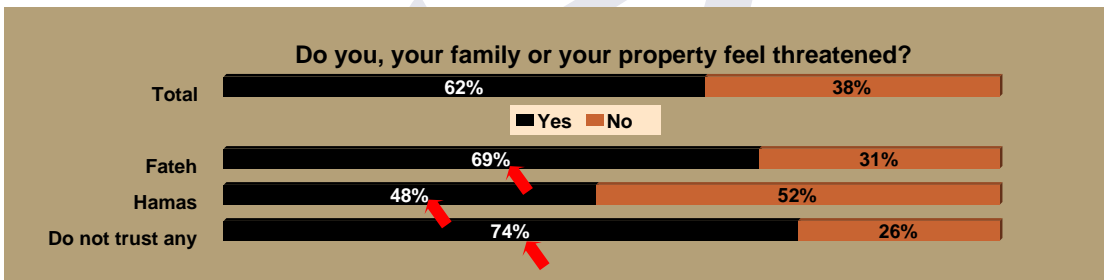
The above results clearly suggested that Palestinians nowadays are far more concerned with domestic affairs, such as internal security and their often stringent economic



conditions than with the Israeli occupation. When concentrating on internal factors that seem to influence Palestinians' feeling of security and asking interviewees what could improve their feeling of security, 34% believe that "keeping weapons only with the security forces" would have a positive impact, while 33% believe that "an improvement of the role and empowerment of the security forces" would improve their feeling of security. Furthermore, 20% say that "dismantling the factional military wings" would improve their feeling of security, and 20% said that "an improvement in the economic situation" would have that effect. As overviewed in the figure below, while Fateh supporters most often tend to think that "keeping weapons only with the security forces" is to key to improving their feeling of security, Hamas supporters most often think that it is "an improvement of the role and empowerment of the security forces", while those who do not trust any Palestinian faction most often think that "an improvement in the economic situation" will improve their feeling of security.



Finally, concerning the feeling of security among Palestinians, a majority of 62% say that they themselves, their family or their property is threatened. As overviewed in the figure below, this feeling is more pronounced among Fateh supporters (69%) and those who do not trust any faction (74%) than among Hamas supporters (48%).



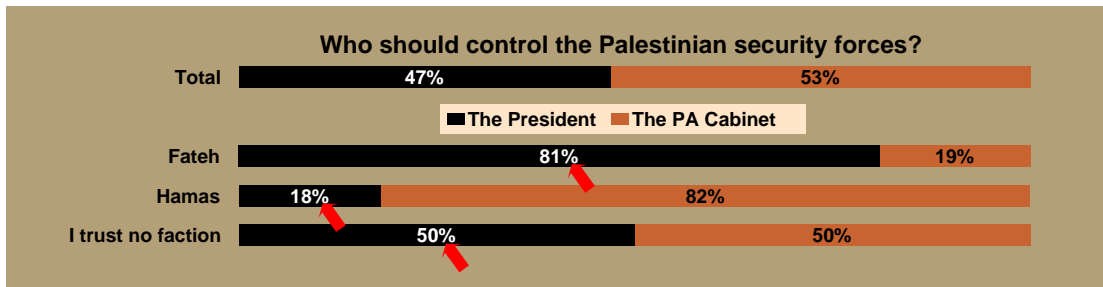
The Palestinian security forces

Given the opposing views and positions of the past five weeks between Hamas and Fateh, and President Mahmoud Abbas and his PA cabinet concerning the establishment

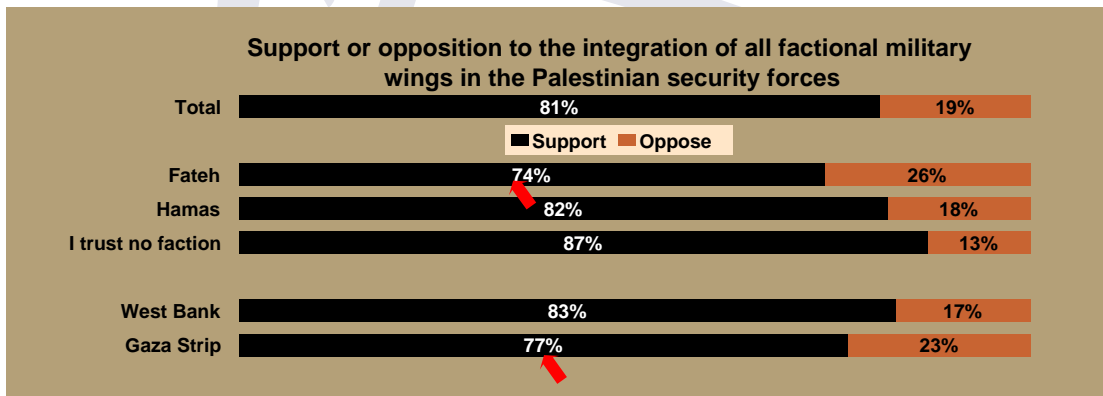


of a new security back-up force in addition to the already existing ones, the survey tried to gauge the public's perceptions on this issue.

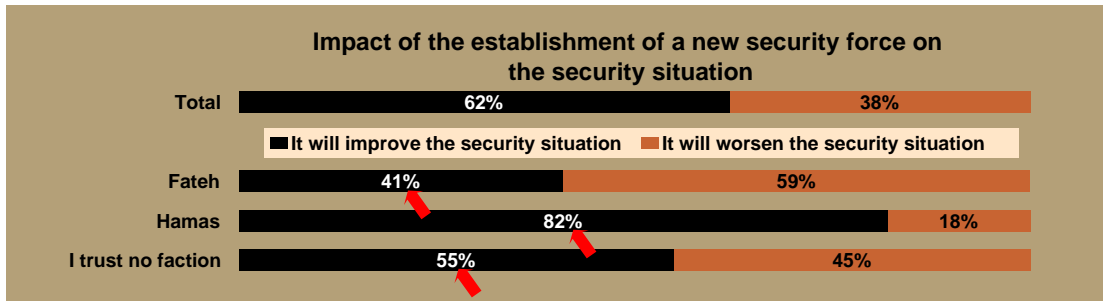
When asked who should control the Palestinian security forces, 53% believe that it should be the PA cabinet, while 47% think it should be the President. Views on this issue vary significantly according to factional trust. More specifically, while 81% of Fateh supporters said that the President should control the Palestinian security forces, 50% of those who do not trust any faction and 18% of Hamas supporters said so. To the opposite, while 19% of Fateh supporters said that the PA cabinet should control the Palestinian security forces, 50% of those who do not trust any faction and 82% of Hamas supporters share this view.



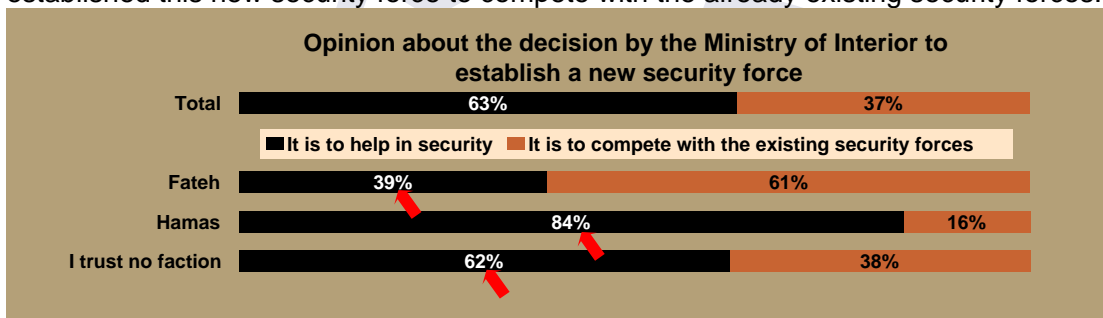
In general, a large majority of 81% of the respondents support the integration of all factional military wings in the Palestinian security forces. While the support for such integration is stronger among Hamas supporters (82%) and those who do not trust any faction (87%), it is also strong among Fateh supporters (74%). Also, the support for the integration of all factional military wings into the security forces is stronger in the West Bank (83%) than in the Gaza Strip (77%).



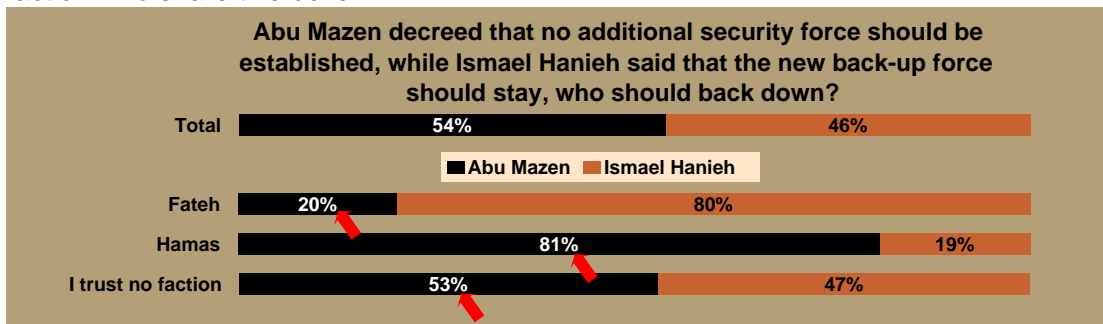
Overall, 62% of the Palestinian public believes that the establishment of the new security back-up force will improve the security situation, while 38% believe that it will worsen the security situation. The belief that the establishment of the new security force will improve the security situation is more widely shared among Hamas supporters (82%) and those who do not trust any faction (50%) than among Fateh supporters (41%).



In general, 63% of the Palestinian public is of the opinion that the Ministry of Interior decided to establish a new security force to help in security, while 37% think this Ministry established the new security force to compete with the existing security forces. Views once more are very opposing depending on the faction people trust most. For example, while 84% of Hamas supporters believe that the Ministry of Interior established the new security force to help in security, 61% of Fateh supporters believe that this Ministry established this new security force to compete with the already existing security forces.



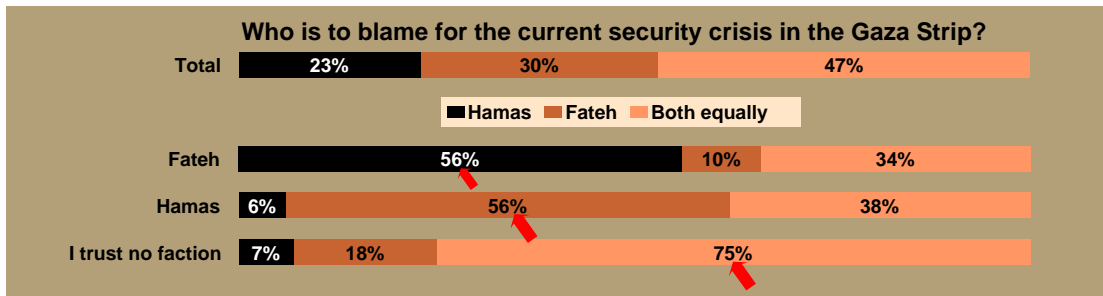
Finally, after explaining to the interviewees that President Abu Mazen decreed that no additional security force should be established, but that Prime Minister Ismael Hanieh said that the new back-up force should stay, 54% believe that Abu Mazen should back down, while 46% believe that Ismael Hanieh should back down. According to factional trust, 20% of Fateh supporters believe that Abu Mazen should back down compared to 81% of Hamas supporters and 53% of those who do not trust any faction who share this belief. To the opposite, 80% of Fateh supporters believe that Ismael Hanieh should back down compared to 19% of Hamas supporters and 47% of those who do not trust any faction who share this belief.



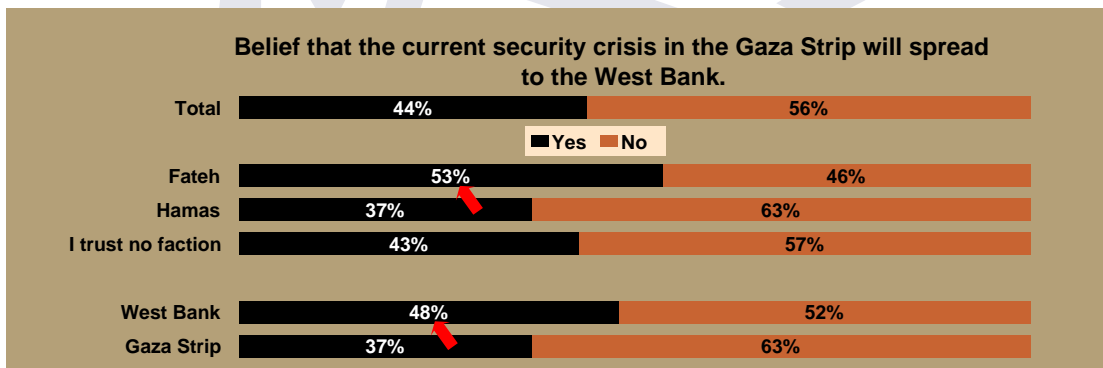


The security crisis and expectations

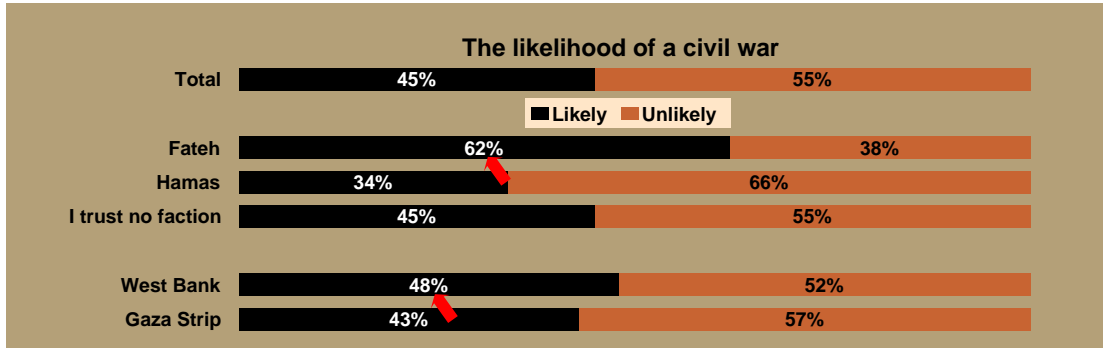
The security crisis in the Gaza Strip continues with reported incidents and clashes on a daily basis. When asked who is to blame for the current security crisis in the Gaza Strip, 23% blame Hamas for the current security crisis in the Gaza Strip, while 30% blame Fateh, and 47% blame both factions equally. According to factional trust, 56% of Fateh supporters blame Hamas for the security crisis in the Gaza Strip, while equally 56% of Hamas supporters blame Fateh for this crisis. Opinions on this issue do not vary significantly depending on whether respondents live in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip.



In general, 44% of Palestinians believe that the security crisis in the Gaza Strip will spread to the West Bank. This belief is more widely held among Fateh supporters (53%) and those who do not trust any faction (43%) than among Hamas supporters (37%). Also, as detailed in the figure below, this belief lives stronger in the West Bank (48%) than in the Gaza Strip (37%).

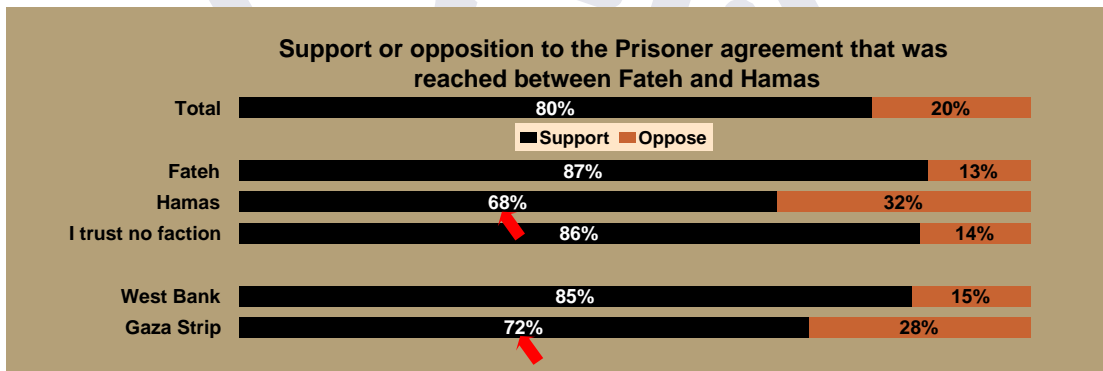


The view that a civil war is likely to break out is held by 45% of the Palestinian public. Fateh supporters (62%) much more than Hamas supporters (34%) and those who do not trust any faction (45) believe in the likelihood of a civil war. Also, again, a higher percentage of Palestinians in the West Bank (48%) than in the Gaza Strip (43%) believes that a civil war is likely.



Interviewees were also asked their opinions about the so-called "Prisoner agreement" that was reached between representatives of all Palestinian factions in Israeli jails about two weeks ago. In the Prisoner agreement the imprisoned signatories agreed on three main points: (1) that the PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian people, (2) to stop attacks in Israel proper, and (3) to establish a Unity government.

In general, 80% of the Palestinians support the Prisoner agreement. However, support for this agreement is considerably higher among Fateh supporters (87%) and those who do not trust any faction (86%) than among Hamas supporters (68%), while it is also higher in the West Bank (85%) than in the Gaza Strip (72%).

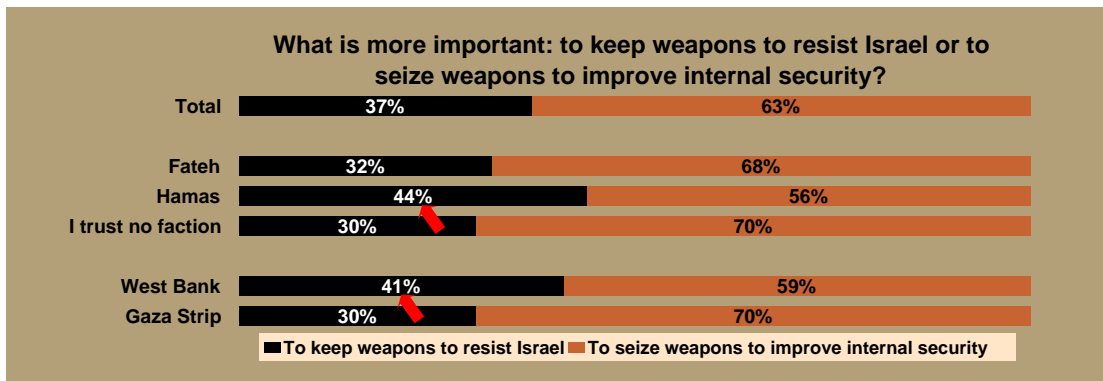


The Israeli factor

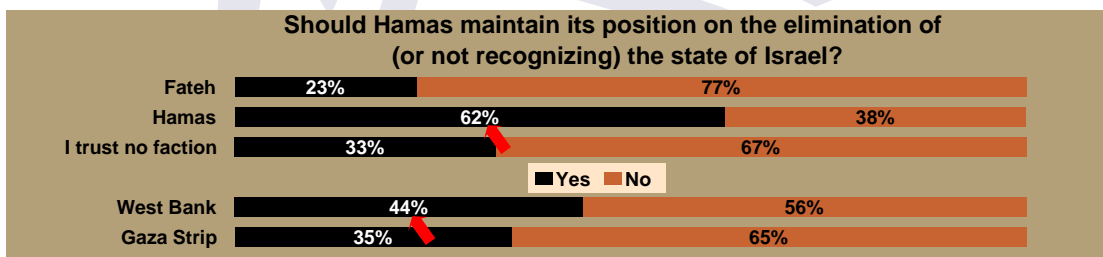
While considerable attention is given to the internal security crisis in the Palestinian territories and the tensions between mainly Fateh and Hamas, it is crucial to place these events into context by not ignoring the Israeli factor. For example, the issue of seizing weapons among Palestinians has always been sensitive as many Palestinians do not want to disarm or hand in their weapons as long as there is no peace with Israel. However, when interviewees in this survey were asked if it was more important to keep weapons to resist Israel or to seize weapons to improve internal security, 63% said that it is more important to seize weapons to improve internal security than to keep them to resist Israel. However, support for this view varies significantly according to the factional



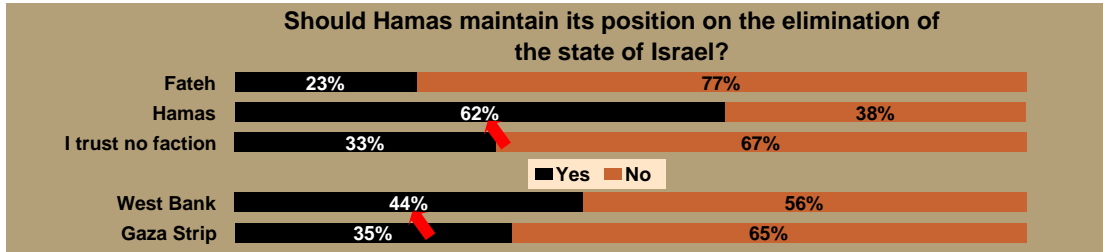
trust and region of residence of the respondents. More specifically, the view that it is more important to seize weapons to improve internal security is more widely held among Fateh supporters (68%) and those who do not trust any faction (70%) than among Hamas supporters (56%). In addition, a higher percentage of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (70%) than in the West Bank (59%) find it more important to seize weapons to improve internal security than to keep them to resist Israel.



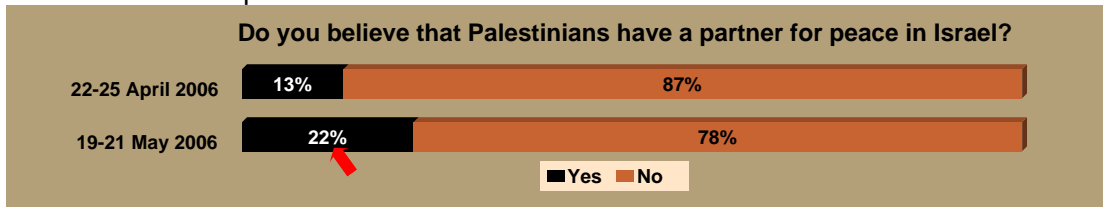
As usual, Palestinians were also asked their position vis-à-vis the Hamas refusal to recognize the state of Israel. In general, a minority of 41% of the respondents believe that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of the state of Israel. However, in comparison to the results on the same question in the NEC April poll, the belief that Hamas should change its position on the elimination of the state of Israel has decreased from 65% to 59%. Since the NEC January 2006 poll, belief that Hamas should maintain its position vis-à-vis Israel has increased from 25% in January to 41% now.



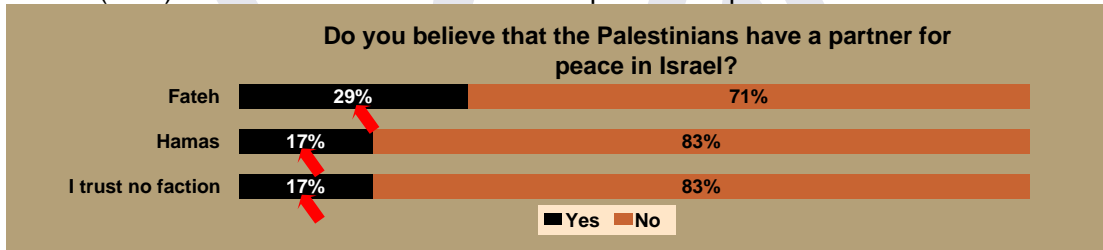
When examining Palestinians' opinions with regard to the Hamas position on the elimination of Israel according to the faction they trust most, the results show that a significantly higher percentage of Palestinians trusting Hamas (62%) than those trusting Fateh (23%) or even those not trusting any faction (33%) are of the belief that Hamas should uphold its position concerning the state of Israel. Also, support for Hamas to maintain its position on the elimination of the state of Israel is higher in the West Bank (44%) than in the Gaza Strip (35%).



For the second month in a row, the Palestinian public was asked if - in their opinion – Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel. In general, 22% of the Palestinian public believes that Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel. Only last month, a mere 13% were of that opinion.



Once more, according to factional trust, a higher percentage of Fateh supporters (29%) than Hamas supporters (17%) and those who do not trust any existing Palestinian faction (17%) believe that Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel.



Given the frequently mentioned argument that since the Hamas victory in the January PLC elections, Israel does no longer have a peace partner on the Palestinian side, the NEC team also asked the public whether or not they believe there is a Palestinian partner for peace. As illustrated in the figure below, 62% believe that there is a Palestinian partner for peace, while the remaining 38% believe that this is not the case. This belief seems widespread as it does not vary significantly according to factional trust or region of residence of the respondents

