



Results of a Specialized Opinion Poll among Palestinian Youth

Youth Activism -- Political Efficacy -- Political Orientation Elections -- Negotiations Arab Spring -- Needs and Priorities

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**Sample Size: 1200 Palestinian Youth (18-30 years old)
West Bank & Gaza
Margin of error: $\pm 3\%$**

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Introduction

These are the results and analyses of the latest Arab World for Research & Development (AWRAD) specialized public opinion poll with Palestinian youth (18-30 years old) in the West Bank and Gaza. The poll focused on youth activism, political engagement and political orientation. The poll also gauged the opinions of youth on Palestinian internal politics, elections and priorities. In addition, the poll studies the positions of youth on negotiations and peace with Israel.

The questionnaire was fielded 17-19 January, 2012. For this survey, 1200 Palestinian youth were interviewed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. 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 three percent. The survey was carried out by AWRAD researchers under the supervision of Dr. Nader Said-Foqahaa, President of AWRAD.

Analysis of Results

❖ Overall Outlook: Optimism amidst Skepticism

- The majority of youth are skeptical about the direction Palestinians society is heading. 54 percent believe that it is heading in the wrong direction. In contrast, 40 percent believe that society is heading in the right direction.
- Still, the majority of youth express hope for the future. 56 percent say that they are optimistic, while 41 percent say that they are pessimistic.
- While Gaza youth are more skeptical about the direction of society (61 percent) than their West Bank colleagues (50 percent), Gaza youth tend to be more optimistic about the future than West Bank youth (61 percent to 53 percent).

❖ High Rates of Activism

While the majority of youth believe that their needs and priorities are not integrated in public policies and decisions, they show great interest in social and political participation.

❖ Freedom to express views but no integration in public policies

- While the majority of youth (54 percent) believe that they have the opportunity to express their views in public affairs, a larger majority (62 percent) of youth believe that their needs and priorities are not integrated in public policies and decisions.

❖ Active political participation with further potential

- As much as 48 percent of youth respondents describe themselves as either politically very active (15 percent) or somewhat active (33 percent). Another 27 percent describe themselves as rarely active. In contrast, a quarter of the youth describe themselves as politically inactive.
- 23 percent of the youth say that they are active as members of political parties (6 percent very active and 17 percent as somewhat active).
- A significant number of youth (47 percent) say that they have participated in a public protest activity such as demonstrations and sit-ins. 53 percent say that they have never participated.

- Among the youth who have participated in protest activities, as much as 66 percent of them say that they participated during 2011. This implies that 31 percent of all youth respondents participated in protest activities during 2011.
- One fifth of youth say that they were active in the youth movement to end the Palestinian division during 2011. In contrast, 80 percent say that they were not active.
- Thirty two percent of young Palestinians say that they - at least once - participated in an internet social group to lobby for improvement of a public issue. Two thirds did not participate.

❖ **Willingness to demonstrate against the occupation is widespread**

- 72 of youth say that they would participate in demonstrations against the occupation, while 24 percent say that they would not. 4 percent say that they did not know.
- Furthermore, 57 percent say that they would be active in any new Intifada (uprising) against the occupation (27 percent very active and 30 percent somewhat active).
- Willingness to demonstrate against Palestinian institutions is less widespread. For example, 18 percent say that they would be willing to demonstrate against the government in the West Bank.
- A slightly higher percentage of youth (21 percent) would demonstrate against the government in Gaza.
- If called upon to demonstrate by the Palestinian Authority, 43 percent say that their participation would depend on the case at hand. 28 percent say that they would accept the call to demonstrate and 29 percent would refuse it.

❖ **Gaza youth express more political activism tendencies**

Gaza youth show higher rates of activism and more willingness to participate in political life:

- While 30 percent of Gaza youth say that they are politically active, 20 percent of West Bank youth say the same. The same trend applies to party membership.
- 37 percent of Gaza youth say that they at least once participated in an internet social group to lobby for improvement of a public issue. This compares to 29 percent among West Bank youth.
- The majority of Gaza youth (57 percent) say that they have participated in protest activities, compared to 41 percent of West Bank youth.
- The participation of Gaza youth in protest activities during 2011 was 34 percent, compared to 26 percent in the West Bank.
- 27 percent of Gaza youth say that they participated in the 2011 youth protest against the Palestinian division, compared to 16 percent of West Bank youth.
- It also interesting to find that while 86 percent of Gaza youth are willing to participate in Intifada activities, only 64 percent of West Bank express the same willingness - a 22 point gap.
- More West Bank youth, compared to Gaza youth, show readiness to demonstrate against the West Bank government (20 percent to 15 percent). In contrast, more Gaza youth, compared to West Bank youth, are ready to demonstrate against the Gaza Government (29 percent to 16 percent).

❖ **Social/community participation and volunteerism**

- 49 percent describe themselves as active in social/community work (15 percent very active and 34 percent somewhat active). In addition, 46 percent describe themselves as active in voluntary work (12 percent very active and 34 somewhat active).
- As much as 48 percent have never volunteered. In addition, 15 percent say they have not volunteered in over a year ago. As much as 10 percent volunteered 6 to 12 month ago, and another 10 percent volunteered during the last 6 months (but not last month). Only 15 percent say that they volunteered during last month.

❖ **High confidence in youth, less in oneself**

Participation in public affairs and willingness to do so are influenced by self-perception and view of one's own power to make a difference:

- A majority of youth (87 percent) have confidence in the ability of their generation to lead the country in the future (43 percent very confident and 44 somewhat confident).
- When it comes to their own personal feeling of empowerment, only 38 percent of young Palestinians feel that they personally can have an impact on public life.

❖ **Priorities of Young People**

Issues of importance to Palestinian youth range from the economic to the social and political. Unemployment, corruption, education and personal freedoms are among the top concerns:

- Corruption in public institutions are deemed as very important by 78 percent of the youth. In addition, 18 percent believe that it is important.
- Personal freedoms are also considered of high importance. 76 percent say that they are very important and 20 percent say that they are important.
- Unemployment is also considered a serious issue, with 72 percent stating that it is very important and 13 percent important.
- 63 percent consider "covering the expenses of their education" as very important and 15 percent consider that as important.
- 60 percent consider "the unstable social and psychological situation" as very important and 25 percent consider it as important.
- 55 percent consider "boredom" as a very important issue. In addition, 23 percent consider that as important.
- To 48 percent the issue of marriage expenses including housing is very important. Another 21 percent consider that as important.

When asked to choose the most urgent issue of all of above-listed issues, the following results emerged:

- Employment is the number one priority to the largest group of youth (35 percent).
- The second most important issue is covering educational expenses with 21 percent listing this as their top priority.
- In third place is corruption in Palestinian institutions, chosen by 13 percent of the youth as their first priority.
- Personal freedoms came in number four, selected by 11 percent as their top priority.

- The expenses of marriage including housing is the number one priority for 7 percent of the youth.
- The priorities of young people are correlated with region. While unemployment was the number one priority for youth in both West Bank and Gaza regions, more Gaza youth (43 percent) chose it as their first priority compared to West Bank youth (30 percent).
- The same trend applies to educational expenses, where 26 percent of Gaza youth and 21 percent of West Bank youth describe that as their first priority.
- A higher percentage of youth in the West Bank choose fighting corruption as their first priority (15 percent) compared to Gaza youth (10 percent).
- The same applies to the issue of personal freedoms where 13 percent of West Bank youth and 8 percent of Gaza youth consider that as their first priority.

❖ Arab Spring

Palestinian youth were questioned about their views of the Arab Spring and its possible impact on the Palestinian situation:

- 43 percent of the youth respondents believe that the changes taking place elsewhere in the Arab world will positively affect the Palestinian situation. In contrast, 28 percent believe that they will negatively affect the Palestinian situation and 27 percent believe that they will have no impact.
- The views among Gaza youth are more positive (55 percent) than West Bank youth (36 percent). As much as 62 percent of West Bank youth believe that the changes in the Arab world will either have no impact or will have a negative impact on the Palestinian situation compared to 44 percent of Gaza youth.
- 31 percent of youth predict that a revolution similar to that in Egypt and Tunisia might take place against the government in the West Bank. In addition, 33 percent predict the same in relation to the government in Gaza.
- While 29 percent of the youth support a similar change concerning the governments in both the West Bank and Gaza, 68 percent oppose.
- Gaza youth are more supportive, than their West Bank counterparts, for change in both regions, where 31 percent support a similar change in the West Bank and 37 percent of them support change in Gaza. This is compared to 27 percent and 23 percent among West Bank youth.

❖ The Peace process and the UN Initiative

The majority of Palestinian youth support a two-state solution and non-violence. While a majority is supportive of the UN initiative to gain recognition of an independent Palestinian state, most are doubtful about the results:

- A majority of youth (52 percent) express their support for a two-state solution (Israel and Palestine within the 1967 borders).
- One fifth of the respondents support an unconditional return to negotiations, while 37 percent support a conditional return. Most cite freezing of settlement activity, guaranteeing the rights of refugees, and releasing political prisoners as conditions. As much as 39 percent oppose the return to negotiations.

- Half of the youth choose non-violent means to end the occupation and establish an independent state. One fifth select negotiations as the best means; 16 percent select an international conference that imposes a settlement of the conflict; and 14 percent select a non-violent popular uprising. In contrast, 19 percent select armed/militant confrontations as the best means to end the occupation. 31 percent believe that all means (non-violent and militant) should be available.
- 27 percent of the youth are more hopeful about the peace process now than one year ago. In contrast, 42 percent are less hopeful and 31 percent see no change.
- While 59 percent of youth respondents support the UN initiative, only 28 percent believe that the Palestinian cause has been advanced as a result. In comparison, 22 percent believe that it has been set back and 48 percent see no change.
- Again regional differences are persistent. For example, 69 percent of Gaza youth and 53 percent of West Bank youth support the UN initiative. While a majority of West Bank youth (57 percent) supports a two-state solution, 43 percent of Gaza youth feel the same way. One quarter of Gaza youth support armed confrontations and 15 percent of West Bank youth do the same.

❖ **Palestinian Division and Reconciliation**

Youth express cautious optimism about the prospects for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas:

- A majority of youth (59 percent) blame Fatah and Hamas equally for the division. 14 percent place all the blame on Fatah and 20 percent place the blame on Hamas.
- While 46 percent believe that Fatah is serious about ending the division, 44 percent believe that it is not serious.
- Doubts about the intentions of Hamas are even more widespread, where 36 percent of the youth believe that it is serious and 53 percent believe that it is not serious about ending the division.
- Still, 52 percent express optimism that the parties will reach a genuine reconciliation agreement to be implemented on the ground.
- Elections are considered by 51 percent as a means to resolve the issue of division.

❖ **Palestinian Leadership**

Palestinian youth are divided in their evaluation of the main political leaders:

- 39 percent evaluate the performance of M. Abbas as positive, 30 percent as fair/moderate. 35 percent evaluate the performance of S. Fayyad as positive, 30 percent as fair/moderate.
- Haniyeh receives a positive rating of 34 percent, with 29 percent viewing his performance as fair/moderate.
- When asked to choose a prime minister from a list of 8 candidates, 32 percent chose S. Fayyad. Haniyeh was in second place with 22 percent, followed by Mustafa Barghouthi with 16 percent, Munib Masri (3 percent) and Hanan Ashrawi (2 percent). Nabil Shaath, Jamal Khudari and Mohammed Mustafa receive one percent or less each.

❖ **Elections**

A large number of youth is not registered to vote. This is especially true in Gaza. The results also show that the youth vote is divided between Fatah, Hamas and independents:

- 37 percent of the youth say that they are not registered to vote; the rate is higher in Gaza (42 percent) than in the West Bank (35 percent).
- Among the unregistered youth, 76 percent plan to register if given the opportunity. One fifth of the unregistered do not plan to register.
- Of the overall sample of youth (those who plan to vote as well as those who don't plan to vote), Fatah receives 40 percent support in PLC elections. Hamas receives 20 percent support. Mubadara receives 6 percent and the PFLP 4 percent, followed by the Third Way at 3 percent. All other groups receive 2 percent or less support each. 13 percent will not vote for any of the parties listed, and 10 percent say that they will not vote
- Among the likely youth voters and under a full proportional system, AWRAD estimates that Fatah would receive 45 percent and Hamas 30 percent of the vote at this time. Independents (Mubadara and Third way combined) would receive 13 percent and the PFLP 6 percent. The rest (6 percent) would go to other lists. This could change as 82 percent of youth say that they are not fully committed to their present choice.
- In a presidential contest involving 15 candidates, M. Abbas receives the highest vote among youth (24 percent), followed by I. Haniyeh (16 percent). S. Fayyad, Marwan Barghouthi and Mustafa Barghouthi receive 10 percent each. K. Mashaal, A. Saadat and M. Dahlan receive 3 percent each. All other candidates (R. Shallah, H. Ashrwai, Z. Kamal, N. Al Shaer, M. Aloul, A. Qurie and M. Zahhar) receive 1 percent or less each.
- From the overall sample, 43 percent of the youth classify their political orientation as close to Fatah, 21 percent as close to Hamas, 10 percent as politically independent, 7 percent as close to leftist groups and 3 percent as close to other Islamic groups such as Islamic Jihad and Hizb Tahrir. 13 percent say that they are not interested in any political affiliation and 3 percent don't know.
- The largest group of youth (37 percent) believes that there is a need for a new political party that is neither Fatah nor Hamas. In addition, 26 percent believe that to some extent. One third believes that there is no such need.

❖ **Youth: Lifestyles and Trends**

The data reveal some regional differences in the lifestyles of young people in the West Bank and Gaza:

- More Gaza youth use the internet than West Bank youth. While 29 percent of West Bank youth say that they do not use the internet, only 19 percent of Gaza youth say the same.
- 49 percent of Gaza youth use the internet on a daily basis, compared to only 35 percent of West Bank youth who do the same.

- 45 percent of the youth say that they watch Al Jazeera the most, followed by Palestine TV (22 percent), Al Arabiyah (14 percent), Al Aqsa (10 percent), Al Manar (4 percent), Abu Dhabi (2 percent) and Israel TV (1 percent).
- While Al Arabiyah and Al Aqsa are more popular among Gaza youth, Palestine TV and Al Manar are more popular in the West Bank. The viewership of Al Jazeera is slightly higher in the West Bank (47 percent) than Gaza (42 percent).
- Only 10 percent of female youth dress in modern clothing. The regional gap is significant, where 13 percent of West Bank young female use a modern dress and only 3 percent in Gaza do the same.
- Another 36 percent of young females use a head dress but not a full Hijab - full long cover (43 percent in the West Bank and 25 percent in Gaza).
- A full Hijab (with a full long dress) is used by 50 percent of the female youth sample (44 percent in the West Bank and 62 percent in Gaza).
- The full Niqab (covering the face) is used by less than 4 percent of the female youth sample, but much more prevalent in Gaza (10 percent) than in the West Bank (less than 1 percent).
- 19 percent of male youth grow a beard out of religious motives. The rate among Gaza male youth (29 percent) is higher than West Bank male youth (13 percent).