



**DECEMBER
2012**

Results of an Opinion Poll

The Public Mood

UN Vote

Gaza Confrontation

Elections

PA and Government

Evaluation of Leadership

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Fieldwork: 1-2 December 2012

Sample Size: 1,200 Palestinians in the 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) public opinion poll, focusing on the aftermath of the UN vote on November 29, 2012 and the Gaza confrontations in the last two weeks of November. The poll examines the impact of these two primary events on the popularity of Palestinian leaders and other relevant parties, the peace process, reconciliation, and future prospects. The poll also explores views of elections, evaluations of the performance of the Fayyad and Haniyeh governments, and support for existing political parties and prospective future candidates.

The questionnaire was fielded December 1-2, 2012, only 2 days after the UN vote recognizing Palestine as a non-member state. The initiative was led by Palestinian President M. Abbas. The poll was also fielded a week after the cease-fire agreement went into effect in Gaza between Israel and Palestinian groups led by Hamas. The agreement was brokered by Egypt and Turkey.

For this survey, 1,200 Palestinians 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 3 percent. The survey was carried out by AWRAD researchers under the supervision of Dr. Nader Said-Foqahaa, President of AWRAD.

Analysis of Results

The results of this poll lay down a baseline for future comparisons. Forthcoming polls will reveal if the present results represent a moment in time or a sustained future trend. In general, however, the results indicate a renewed sense of hope among Palestinians for the Palestinian cause as well as the current Gaza-West Bank division.

First: Optimism high:

The poll results show a significant increase in optimism among Palestinians.

1. The UN Vote:

The majority of Palestinians positively view the UN vote recognizing Palestine as a non-member state. For example:

- 85 percent strongly believe that the UN vote was a victory for the Palestinian cause. In contrast, only 14 percent disagree.
- 79 percent are hopeful that the UN vote will be followed by tangible progress towards Palestinian independence.

Palestinian respondents recognize the potential positive impacts as well as the negative implications of the vote. For example:

- 85 percent believe that the vote will strengthen the Palestinian Authority (PA);
- 79 percent believe that the UN vote is a victory for President Abbas's peace-oriented approach to Palestinian independence.

In contrast:

- 78 percent believe that the UN vote will lead to punitive actions such as expanded settlement activity in the West Bank;
- In addition, 57 percent believe that the UN vote will negatively affect the economy of the West Bank.

When asked about the impact that the UN vote might have on daily realities, 43 percent believe that it will have no impact. In contrast, 53 percent disagree.

Overall, 68 percent believe that the UN vote will advance the Palestinian cause. In contrast, 17 percent believe that nothing will change and 13 percent believe that the cause will be set back by the vote.

2. The Gaza Confrontation:

The feelings of achievement as they relate to the UN vote are matched by the cease-fire agreement in Gaza between Palestinian groups led by Hamas and the Government of Israel:

- 90 percent of respondents believe that the confrontations and the resulting truce represent a victory for the Palestinians. Only 10 percent disagree.
- 84 percent are hopeful that the Gaza confrontation will be followed by tangible progress towards Palestinian independence.

The majority of respondents positively view the outcomes of the confrontation:

- 88 percent believe that the results of the confrontation in Gaza prove that armed struggle is the best means of achieving Palestinian independence.
- 73 percent believe that the Palestinian cause has been advanced by the recent events. In contrast, 17 percent believe that the events had no influence on the status quo and 8 percent believe that the cause has been set back.
- In addition, 87 percent are optimistic that the conflict will lead to reconciliation and unity.

While optimism is widespread, the majority of respondents do not believe that the results of the conflict will lead to real change on the ground:

- 50 percent believe that the confrontations in Gaza will not lead to real change in the affairs of Palestinians. 46 percent believe otherwise.

Second: Post UN/Gaza: Perception of Impact

1. Winners and losers:

- The majority of respondents (51 percent) believe that party that gained the most from the Gaza conflict are the Palestinians in general.
- 26 percent believe that Hamas gained the most from the conflict.
- Approximately 11 percent believe that the Palestinian residents of Gaza gained the most.
- 6 percent say that no one has benefited from the war.
- Less than 2 percent believe that the PA, the Government of Egypt or Israel gained the most from the war.

As to the party that lost the most, the majority of respondents believe that it was the Israeli Government:

- 76 percent believe that Israel lost the most in this war.
- 12 percent believe that Gaza residents - and 4 percent believe that Palestinians in general - lost the most.
- 2 percent believe that the PA and Fatah lost the most.

2. Impact on Perceptions of Leaders and Other Actors

Perceptions of all Palestinian leaders and actors improved in the wake of the UN vote and the Gaza confrontation and cease-fire:

- **Hamas gains**
 - 89 percent say that their views of Hamas improved or improved to some extent, while only 8 percent say that their views diminished.
 - 86 percent say that their views of Haniyeh improved or improved to some extent, while only 9 percent say that their views diminished.
 - 83 percent say that their views of Khaled Meshaal improved or improved to some extent, while only 10 percent say that their views diminished.
 - In addition, 85 percent say that their views of Islamic Jihad improved or improved to some extent, while only 9 percent say that their views diminished.
- **Views of the PA and Fatah also improve:**
 - 83 percent say that their views of Abbas improved or improved to some extent, while 14 percent say that their views diminished.
 - 82 percent say that their views of the PA improved or improved to some extent, while 13 percent say that their views diminished.
 - 81 percent say that their views of Fatah improved or improved to some extent, while 15 percent say that their views diminished.

- The Egyptian Government was also viewed positively, with 86 percent saying that their views improved or improved to some extent, while only 10 percent say that their views diminished.

3. Impact on Views of Political Approaches

- For the first time since 2006, more Palestinians (40 percent) believe that the approach supported by Hamas and other militant groups is preferable to that supported by Fatah and President Abbas (33 percent). In addition, 27 percent say that neither of the two approaches is preferable.
- The overall results hide a noticeable regional variance, where more respondents in the West Bank say that they prefer the Hamas approach (42 percent) over the Fatah/Abbas approach (28 percent). In contrast, Gazans prefer, albeit slightly, the Fatah/Abbas approach (40 percent) over the Hamas approach (37 percent).

4. Negotiations and Coexistence: Hardening views in the West Bank

- The UN vote and the Gaza conflict had no significant influence on Palestinians' belief in the need for negotiations. While 50 percent of the respondents supported an immediate return to negotiations in July 2012, 45 percent continue to do so at the present time.
- Opposition to negotiations at 49 percent.
- While support for the return to negotiations continues at a consistent rate in Gaza (about 50 percent), the poll shows a continuing decline in support for negotiations in the West Bank, from 59 percent in May 2011 to 52 percent in May 2012 to a present rate of 43 percent.
- Furthermore, the results of the present poll show that respondents are divided on the issue of a two-state solution, with 47 percent supporting and 50 percent opposing. Support for a two-state solution is higher in Gaza (51 percent) than in the West Bank (44 percent).
- Egypt is considered as the most credible broker in mediating a solution to the Palestinian – Israeli conflict by 59 percent of the respondents. 22 percent chose Turkey. Only 2 percent chose the US or Qatar as the most credible mediator.

Third: Elections

Support for elections continues among the majority of Palestinians:

- 78 percent support the immediate holding of legislative council elections; support for the holding of legislative elections is higher in Gaza (85 percent) than the West Bank (74 percent).
- Support for presidential elections is also high, with 76 percent supporting the holding of such elections. Support for the holding of presidential elections is higher in Gaza (85 percent) than the West Bank (70 percent).
- 74 percent would like to see local elections take place in Gaza as they did in the West Bank. The rate of support for this is equal in both regions.

Fourth: Political Support

Support for Hamas has increased slightly while support for Fatah has declined slightly since July 2012:

- Support for Fatah continues to be the highest among Palestinians (37 percent), declining from 41 percent in July 2012.
- Support for Fatah in Gaza increased by 6 percent from 38 percent in July to 44 percent. However, support for Fatah declined by 10 points in the West Bank from 43 percent to 33 percent between July and the present time.
- Support for Hamas increased by 7 points from July (15 percent) to the present (22 percent).
- Support for Hamas increased by 7 point in Gaza and 8 points in the West Bank.
- 32 percent of the respondents are not supportive of any political group, 36 percent in the West Bank and 26 percent in Gaza.
- All other groups receive less than 3 percent support.

Fifth: Political Leaders

The evaluation of Palestinian leadership of both Fatah and Hamas has improved with the UN vote and the confrontations in Gaza:

1. Approval Ratings

- The approval rate for President Abbas increased by 12 points from 52 percent in July to 64 percent. In contrast, his disapproval rate declined from 43 percent to 32 percent. The approval rate for Abbas is slightly higher in Gaza (66 percent) than in the West Bank (62 percent).
- Ismael Haniyeh gains the most from recent events. His approval rate increased by 27 points from 33 percent in July to 60 percent. His disapproval rate went down from 57 percent in July to 33 percent. Haniyeh's disapproval rate is much higher among Gaza respondents (41 percent) than West Bank respondents (29 percent).
- Salam Fayyad's approval rate is consistent with his rating in July 2012. His present approval rate is 44 percent (2 point decline from July), while his disapproval rate is at 50 percent compared to 48 percent in July.
- Khaled Meshaal's approval rate is 58 percent and his disapproval rate is 34 percent. His disapproval rate in Gaza reaches 41 percent compared to 30 percent in the West Bank.

2. Electability of Leaders

In a presidential ballot test involving twelve Palestinian leaders from Fatah (4), Hamas (4), independents and leftists (3), and Islamic Jihad (1), Abbas continues to receive the highest support, but with an increase in Haniyeh's popularity:

- Abbas is supported by 25 percent, followed by Haniyeh at 18 percent.

- Marwan Barghouthi is in third place with 12 percent, followed by Meshaal at 6 percent.
- All other leaders receive 4 percent or less.
- 25 percent say they will not choose any of the leaders listed in the poll.

Sixth: Government and Prime Minister

The poll results show significant shifts in the evaluation of the West Bank government and the Gaza government. For the first time since 2009, the Haniyeh government receives a more favorable evaluation than the Fayyad government:

- 39 percent of the respondents view the performance of the Haniyeh government positively, an increase of 17 points from 22 percent in March 2011. 36 percent view it as average and 16 percent as negative (a decline of 28 points from 44 percent in March 2011).
- As for the Fayyad government, 24 percent view its' performance as positive, a decline of 15 points from 37 percent in March 2011. 40 percent view it as average and 30 percent as negative.
- The positive evaluation of the Haniyeh government is higher in the West Bank (41 percent) than in Gaza (36 percent). In contrast, while 11 percent of West Bank respondents view the performance of his government negatively, 24 percent of Gazans share the same view.
- Fayyad's government is viewed more positively in Gaza (28 percent) than in the West Bank (22 percent).
- When asked to choose between the two governments to govern in their region, more respondents chose the Haniyeh government (34 percent) than the Fayyad government (25 percent). However, a larger percentage of respondents did not choose either of the two governments or were not sure (41 percent).
- It is noticeable that while 21 percent of the West Bank chose the Fayyad government, 33 percent chose Haniyeh's government (a 12-point gap). The gap between the two in Gaza, however, was smaller with 36 percent opting for Haniyeh and 33 for Fayyad (a 3-point gap).
- In the West Bank, 46 percent chose neither of the two governments, compared to 32 percent in Gaza.
- Fayyad, a long-standing favorite for prime minister is now surpassed by Haniyeh, who was selected by 34 percent as their number one choice for the prime minister position in a unity government from among seven candidates. Fayyad and Mustafa Barghouthi came in second place with 19 percent each, followed by MunibMasri (8 percent), HananAshrawi (4 percent), Jamal Khudari (2 percent) and Zaid Abu Amr (with less than 1 percent).