



## **Results of an Opinion Poll**

***The Public Mood***

***UN Vote***

***Gaza Confrontation***

***Elections***

***Reconciliation***

***Government Performance***

***Evaluation of Leadership***

***Popular Protests***

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**Fieldwork: 10-12 February 2013**

**Sample Size: 1200 Palestinians**

**Margin of error:  $\pm 3\%$**

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**Highlights:**

- 95 percent of Gazans support the immediate holding of legislative and presidential elections. 82 percent of West Bank respondents agree.
- 50 percent say that they have heard popular protest activities such as the erection of the Bab Al Shams camp.
- 69 percent believe that this kind of protest will have real impact on ending the occupation.
- In contrast, 65 percent of respondents oppose a new Intifada.
- The belief that the UN Vote advanced the Palestinian cause declined from 68 percent to 44 percent.
- 53 percent believe that the latest confrontations and resulting cease-fire in Gaza will not lead to real change in the affairs of Palestinians.
- 44 percent now prefer the Fatah approach to that of Hamas (28 percent).
- 68 percent of respondents support a return to negotiations at this time if Israel were to stop settlement building in the West Bank.
- Support for Fatah is back to its July 2012 level (42 percent), increasing from 37 percent in December 2012.
- Since December, support for Hamas has declined by 4 points to 18 percent.
- The approval rate for President Abbas stands at 58 percent compared to 45 percent for Haniyeh and 39 percent for Fayyad.
- In a two-way presidential race, Abbas could receive 64 percent compared to 36 percent for Meshaal or Haniyeh.
- For the position of a prime minister in a national unity government, 28 percent prefer Haniyeh while 23 percent prefer Fayyad.
- Fayyad is more popular in Gaza than in the West Bank, so is Fatah.

## **Introduction:**

This report presents the latest poll results and analysis from Arab World Research & Development, and includes an examination of the changing impact on Palestinian perceptions of the UN vote on November 29, 2012 and the Gaza confrontations in the last two weeks of November. This is achieved through a comparison of AWRAD's latest poll results with the results from its December 1-2, 2012 poll. Compared are the popularity of Palestinian leaders and other relevant parties; support for the peace process; views towards reconciliation; and future prospects. The poll also explores views on elections; registration for elections; the performance of the Fayyad and Haniyeh governments; existing political parties and prospective future candidates; the potential for another uprising (Intifada); and non-violent actions such as Bab Al Shams.

The questionnaire was fielded February 10-12, 2013 using a sample of 1,200 Palestinians 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](http://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**

### **First: Optimism, high though on the decline**

On November 29, 2012, the UN General Assembly voted to recognize Palestine as a non-member state. The initiative was led by Palestinian President M. Abbas. Immediately after the vote, an AWRAD poll revealed a renewed sense of optimism among Palestinians for a resolution of the Palestinian issue as well as an end to the current Gaza-West Bank division. The present poll shows that levels of hope and optimism have declined.

#### **1. The UN Vote:**

The majority of Palestinians continue to positively view the UN vote recognizing Palestine as a non-member state, though at lower levels than registered in December.

- 75 percent believe that the UN vote was a victory for the Palestinian cause, compared to 85 percent in December (10-point decline). In contrast, 23 percent disagree (9-point increase).
- 67 percent continue to be optimistic that the UN vote will be followed by tangible progress towards Palestinian independence, compared to 79 percent in December (12-point decline). In contrast, 31 percent now disagree, compared to 18 percent in December (13-point increase).

Palestinian respondents continue to recognize the potential positive impacts, but at lower levels. They also recognize the negative implications of the vote, though at higher levels.

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

In contrast, the percentage of Palestinians who believe that the UN vote will negatively affect the economy of the West Bank increased from 57 percent to 77 percent (20-point increase). When asked about the impact that the UN vote might have on daily realities, 52 percent believe that it will have no impact, increasing from 43 percent in December. Only 45 percent disagree (8-point decline).

The most significant change was the view of the UN vote in advancing the Palestinian cause. The belief that it will advance the cause declined from 68 percent to 44 percent (24-point decline). In contrast, 36 percent believe that nothing will change (compared to 17 percent previously) and 18 percent believe that the cause was set back by the vote (compared to 13 percent in December).

## **2. The Gaza Confrontation:**

The feelings of achievement as they relate to the Gaza conflict declined even more than those related to the UN vote:

- 78 percent of respondents continue to believe that the confrontation and the resulting truce represent a victory for the Palestinians (13-point decline). Now, 21 percent disagree (compared to 10 percent in December).
- 71 percent are hopeful that the Gaza confrontation will be followed by tangible progress towards Palestinian independence, compared to 84 percent in December.

The majority of respondents continue to positively view the outcome of the confrontation, albeit at lower rates:

- 62 percent believe that the Palestinian cause has been advanced by recent events in Gaza, compared to 73 percent in December. At the present time, 36 percent believe that the events have had no influence on the status quo (compared to 17 percent in December) and 18 percent believe that the cause has been set back (compared to 8 percent).
- The level of optimism towards reconciliation is stable with 87 percent continuing to believe that the conflict will lead to reconciliation and unity.

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

- 53 percent believe that the confrontations in Gaza will not lead to real change in the affairs of Palestinians (a 3 percent increase from December).

### **3. 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 dwindle**

- 66 percent now say that their views of Hamas have improved or improved to some extent, compared to 89 percent in December. At present, 25 percent say that their views have diminished (13-point increase).
- 63 percent say that their views of Haniyeh have improved or improved to some extent, compared to 86 percent in December (23-point decrease). In contrast, 24 percent say that their views diminished (17-point increase).
- The same trend applies to Khaled Meshaal.
- The passage of over two months has also influenced the evaluation of Islamic Jihad, with 60 percent saying that their views of the group have improved or improved to some extent, compared to 85 percent in December.

- **Views of the PA and Fatah suffer:**

- 70 percent say that their views of Abbas have improved or improved to some extent, compared to 83 percent in December.
- 62 percent say that their views of the PA have improved or improved to some extent, compared to 82 in December.
- 67 percent say that their views of Fatah have improved or improved to some extent, compared to 81 percent in December.
- Positive views of the Egyptian Government have also diminished from 86 percent to 61 percent.

### **4. Impact on Views of Political Approaches: Fatah regains its edge over Hamas; mostly in Gaza**

- In our December poll, and for the first time since 2006, more Palestinians (40 percent) believed that the approach supported by Hamas and other militant groups was preferable to that supported by Fatah and President Abbas (33 percent). Now, the results reveal that Fatah had regained its edge over Hamas. 44 percent now prefer the Fatah approach to that of Hamas (28 percent). In general, 28 percent continue to say that neither of the two approaches is preferable.

- Most of the gains for Fatah are in Gaza where 55 percent say that they prefer the Fatah approach while 27 percent say that they prefer the Hamas approach. Fatah did not recover much in the West Bank, where only 37 percent say that they prefer its approach, while 29 percent say that they prefer the Hamas approach.

#### **5. Negotiations and Coexistence: Significant increase in support for negotiations**

- 68 percent of respondents support a return to negotiations at this time if Israel were to stop settlement building in the West Bank. In contrast, 30 percent oppose.
- 54 percent of the respondents support an immediate return to negotiations. This is a 9-point increase from AWRAD's December poll.
- Opposition to negotiations declined from 49 percent to 43 percent.
- While support for the return to negotiations slightly increased in Gaza from 50 percent in December to 55 percent now, the poll shows renewed support in the West Bank where there was an increase from 43 percent to 53 percent.

### **Second: Elections**

#### **1. Support for election increases to 95 percent in Gaza:**

- 87 percent of respondents support the immediate holding of legislative elections. This is an increase from 78 percent in December.
- 95 percent of Gazans support the immediate holding of legislative and presidential elections. 82 percent of West Bank respondents agree.

#### **2. Interest in registration for election is more widespread in Gaza than in the West Bank**

- AWRAD's polling data on the level of interest in registration indicates that only 56 in the West Bank has heard about the updating of electoral records by the Central Election Commission between 11 and 18 February. This compares to 82 percent among Gaza respondents.
- The results show that while 80 percent of Gazans believe that the updating of electoral records will be followed immediately by elections, only 64 percent of West Bank respondents believe the same.

### **Third: Political Support**

- Support for Fatah is back to its July 2012 level (42 percent), increasing from 37 percent in December 2012.
- Support for Fatah in Gaza continues to increase: from 38 percent in July 2012 to 44 percent in December and 47 percent now. However, support for Fatah continues to be lower in the West Bank, where 38 percent say they support the movement now (5 points higher than December).

- In December 2012, support for Hamas increased by 7 points from 15 percent in July to 22 percent. Since then, support for Hamas has declined by 4 points to 18 percent. Support for the movement is equal in the West Bank and Gaza.
- One third of respondents are not supportive of any political group, 37 percent in the West Bank and 29 percent in Gaza.
- Groups such as PFLP, Mubadara and Islamic Jihad receive less than 3 percent support each.
- Groups such as Fida, PPP and Popular Struggle receive less than 1 percent.

#### **Fourth: Political Leaders**

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

##### **1. Approval Ratings**

- The approval rate for President Abbas stands at 58 percent, declining by 6 points from December, but higher than the 52 percent in July 2012. The approval rate for Abbas is equal in both regions.
- Our December poll revealed that Ismael Haniyeh gained the most from the confrontation in Gaza in November. At the time, his approval rate increased by 27 points from 33 percent in July to 60 percent. Now, his approval rate is down by 15 percent to 45 percent. His disapproval rate went up from 33 percent in December to 48 percent. Haniyeh's disapproval rate in Gaza increased by 17 points from 41 percent in December to 68 percent now. His disapproval rate is lower in the West Bank (42 percent) than in Gaza.
- Salam Fayyad's approval rate declined with 56 percent disapproving of his performance compared to 50 percent in December. His approval rate declined from 44 percent to 39 percent.
- Khaled Meshaal's approval rate declined from 58 percent to 44 percent. His disapproval rate increased from 34 percent to 49 percent. In Gaza, his disapproval rate reaches 58 percent compared to 43 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:

- Abbas is supported by 30 percent (5-point increase), followed by Haniyeh at 11 percent (7-point decline) and Marwan Barghouti at 11 percent.
- Khaled Meshaal is in fourth place with 6 percent, followed by Mustafa Barghouti at 4 percent and Ahmed Saadat at 3 percent.
- All other political personalities listed receive 3 percent or less.
- 29 percent say they will not choose any of the leaders listed in the poll.

### **3. Two-Way Presidential Races:**

- Abbas beats Meshaal (47 percent to 23 percent) in a two-way contest. 30 percent say they will not elect either of the two or will not vote. Eliminating those who say they will not vote, Abbas could receive upwards of 64 percent compared to 36 percent for Meshaal in a two-way competition.
- The same pattern applies to a race between Abbas and Haniyeh.

### **Fifth: Government and Prime Minister**

The latest poll results show low levels of positive evaluation of both governments - the West Bank government and the Gaza government. While the Haniyeh government receives a more favorable evaluation than the Fayyad government, its favorable evaluation declined significantly from December:

- 28 percent of respondents view the performance of the Haniyeh government positively, a 9 point decline from 39 percent in December 2012. 36 percent view it as average and 27 percent as negative (an increase of 11 points from 16 percent in December).
- As for the Fayyad government, 22 percent view its' performance as positive, almost the same as in December. 35 percent view it as average and 39 percent as negative (an increase of 9 points from 30 percent in December).
- While 23 percent of West Bank respondents view the performance of Haniyeh's government negatively, 33 percent of Gazans share the same view.
- Fayyad's government is viewed more positively in Gaza (30 percent) than in the West Bank (18 percent).
- In Contrast, 46 percent of West bank respondents view Fayyad's government negatively, compared to 27 percent of Gazans (a 19-point gap)
- When asked to choose between the two governments to govern in their region, 44 percent of the respondents did not choose either of the governments or were not sure. The percentage choosing the Haniyeh government declined by 6 point from 34 percent in December to 28 percent now. The percentage choosing the Fayyad government increased slightly from 25 percent to 28 percent.
- The Geography-Government Gap (GGG) noted earlier by AWRAD polling is increasingly reinforced with 23 percent of the West Bank choosing the Fayyad government and 28 percent choosing Haniyeh's government. In Gaza, 36 percent choose a Fayyad government and 29 percent a Haniyeh government.
- In the West Bank, almost 50 percent of the respondents chose neither of the two governments, compared to 35 percent in Gaza.
- Haniyeh was selected by 28 percent as their number one choice for the prime minister position in a unity government from among seven candidates (6-point decline from December). Fayyad came in second place with 23 percent (4-point increase), followed by



Mustafa Barghouthi (19 percent), Munib Masri (7 percent), Hanan Ashrawi (5 percent). All other candidates (Jamal Khudari and Zaid Abu Amr) received less than 2 percent.

#### **Sixth: The PA**

- 49 percent of respondents believe that the PA will be able to survive in the medium term. The rate in Gaza (61 percent) is much higher than in the West Bank (41 percent).
- 20 percent believe that it is possible that it will survive.
- 17 percent believe that it is possible that it will collapse and 9 percent believe that it will defiantly collapse.

#### **Seventh: Reconciliation**

- 69 percent are optimistic about achieving reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. In contrast, 30 percent are pessimistic.
- While 65 percent believe that Fatah is serious about ending the division, 52 percent believe that Hamas is serious.
- 36 percent believe that the best approach to end the impasse between Fatah and Hamas is an immediate call for elections. Another 32 percent believe that exerting popular pressure on the two groups is the best approach. 19 percent believe that the best approach is for the two groups to continue to pursue reconciliation talks. 10 percent believe that nothing will work.

#### **Eighth: Popular Protest and Intifada (Uprising)**

Respondents were questioned about recent initiatives and activities of the popular protests such as the erection of the Bab Al Shams camp:

- 50 percent say that they have heard about such activities, while another 50 percent have not heard about them.
- While 62 percent of West Bank respondents say that they have heard about the aforementioned popular protest activities, only 29 percent of Gazans say the same.
- The majority of respondents (69 percent) believe that this kind of protest will have real impact on ending the occupation. 27 percent disagree.
- In contrast, 65 percent of respondents oppose a new Intifada to achieve the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. 32 percent support a new Intifada.
- 41 percent believe that the outbreak of a new Intifada will lead to a decline in the status of the Palestinian issue. In addition, 30 percent believe that the results will be mixed or uncertain. Only 25 percent believe that it will lead to progress in the status of the Palestinian issue.