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**National Opinion Poll: Negotiations,
Evaluation of Government and Elections**

The West Bank and Gaza Strip

Highlights

- 50 percent of Palestinian respondents are pessimistic about the future and 63 percent believe that things are going in the wrong direction.
- 49 percent support the current round of negotiations, while 47 percent oppose it.
- 52 percent support a two-state solution, while 46 percent oppose.
- 58 percent are pessimistic about the prospects of the current round of negotiations; 36 percent are optimistic.
- 20 years after Oslo, 63 percent believe that Palestinians are now farther from achieving their goal of a Palestinian state.
- 59 percent believe that a peace agreement will never be reached.
- 58 percent approve of the performance of President Abbas while 34 percent disapprove.
- 42 percent would choose a Hamdallah-led government and 19 percent a Haniyeh-led government. 34 percent would not choose either of the two governments.
- 61 percent are dissatisfied with the performance of electricity providers during the Alexa snow storm; 87 percent in Gaza and 45 percent in the West Bank.
- 33 percent are dissatisfied with the performance of government in responding to the storm. In contrast, 66 percent are satisfied.
- Power outages are considered the most important impact of the snow storm by 53 percent, followed by agricultural damage at 10 percent.

Fieldwork Date: 21-23 December 2013

Sample size: 1,200 Palestinians in the West Bank & Gaza Strip

Margin of error: ± 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 ongoing negotiations and peace process; the aftermath of winter storm Alexa; support for elections; Fatah-Hamas reconciliation; performance of leaders; and support for political parties and prospective future candidates.

The questionnaire was fielded December 21-23, 2013; less than one week after the snowstorm that produced power outages, floods and closure of roads in both the West Bank and Gaza. Meanwhile, U.S.-mediated efforts to revive the peace process continued with a visit by the U.S. Secretary of State and the media reporting on a number of proposals to bridge differences between the two sides.

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

Section 1: Overall Conditions

For the first time, AWRAD polling shows that optimism about the future is not the feeling of the majority (49 percent). In contrast, pessimism had reached 50 percent. Significantly, 63 percent of poll respondents believe that “things are heading in the wrong direction.” In regards to security and economic welfare, respondents express largely negative opinions. 49 percent say their family’s economic situation has become worse since the previous year, while an additional 42 percent state that internal security in their region has diminished. These feelings are especially widespread in Gaza, where 62 percent say that their family’s economic situation has become worse compared to 41 percent in the West Bank. At the same time, 50 percent in Gaza state that internal security in their region has diminished compared to 38 percent in the West Bank.

Section 2: The Peace Process

1. Continued support for negotiations and the two-state solution

- Current negotiations: Against a backdrop of controversial reporting and statements in the media (including proposals regarding security in the Jordan Valley), 49 percent of Palestinians supports the current round of negotiations (51 percent among West Bank respondents and 46 percent among Gaza respondents). In contrast, 47 percent oppose the current round of negotiations (45 percent in the West Bank and 50 percent in Gaza).
- The two-state solution: A majority of respondents (52 percent) support the two-state solution, while 46 percent oppose. Support in the West Bank is higher (57 percent) than

in Gaza (44 percent). In contrast, opposition is higher in Gaza (55 percent) than in the West Bank (40 percent).

- Peaceful approaches to independence: A majority of Palestinians prefers peaceful approaches to achieving independence. 60 percent of the respondents prefer one of the following methods to achieve independence: peaceful, non-violent resistance (19 percent); direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis (22 percent); and an international conference under the auspices of the UN (19 percent).

2. Various factors shape present attitudes

The results show that positions on the peace process, negotiations and the various propositions reported on by the media are influenced by various factors, including:

- Limited information: Only 8 percent confirms that they have significant information (i.e., “to a large extent”) on the current round of negotiations. 36 percent say that they have information “to some extent”. A majority (54 percent) either have limited or no information.
- Insufficient information: According to the poll, 48 percent state that they “cannot judge” proposals reported on by the media as the information is insufficient. However, 29 percent consider the reported proposals as negative. Only 17 percent consider them as positive.
- Trust in the negotiation team: 26 percent have no trust in the Palestinian negotiation team and 21 percent have limited trust. In contrast, 34 percent have some trust and only 15 percent trust the team “to a large extent.”
- Seriousness of parties involved: While a majority (75 percent) believes that the Palestinian leadership is serious or to some extent serious about peace negotiations, a majority does not believe that any of the other parties is serious. For example, 85 percent do not believe that Israel is serious; 80 percent do not believe that the US is serious; 63 percent do not believe that the UN is serious; and 61 percent do not believe that the EU is serious.
- Pessimism about the outcome of the negotiations: 58 percent of Palestinians are pessimistic that the current round of negotiations will produce positive results. In contrast, 36 percent are optimistic. This is further elaborated in the responses about the prospects of the current round of negotiations as 57 percent do not believe that a peace agreement will ever be reached; 16 percent believe that such an agreement will be reached, but in more than 5 years; 12 percent believe that a serious peace agreement will be reached within the next 5 years; and 8 percent believe that current efforts will yield an agreement before the end of 2014.

Other long-term perceptions play a role in the level of support for the present round of negotiations. These include:

- The Oslo Accords: 20 years after the Oslo Accords, 63 percent of respondents believe that Palestinians are farther from achieving their goal of a Palestinian state. 34 percent disagree.
- Less hope for peace: The above results are confirmed by 63 percent who report they have less hope in the peace process than they did a year ago. 34 percent say they have more hope.

3. Conditional support for further concessions

Only 21 percent of the respondents say they are willing to support a resolution involving further concessions, even if President Abbas states that it would best serve Palestinian interests. 30 percent say they might consider supporting a deal involving further concessions if President Abbas deems preferable, while 46 percent would not support further concessions.

This lack of willingness to unconditionally support additional concessions may be due, in part, to the public's perception that the failure of the current round of negotiations would have a limited impact on the status quo. 34 percent believe that "nothing will happen", if negotiations were to fail. 26 percent believe that President Abbas will return to the UN. 11 percent believe that the PA will collapse, while 25 percent believe that a new uprising (Intifada) would take place.

Additionally, a majority of Palestinians (61 percent) are willing to support the PA seeking remedies through the UN if the current negotiations fail.

Section 3: Evaluation of the response to winter storm Alexa

During the period of 12-16 December 2013, a severe snowstorm impacted the region. It resulted in power outages, sewage and water floods, and closure of internal and external roads.

1. Overall evaluation: Palestinians least satisfied with electricity providers

Overall, Palestinians were lenient in their evaluation of the role of most service providers, including the government, in addressing the impact of the storm:

- Palestinians were most dissatisfied with electricity providers, with 61 percent believing their performance in responding to the storm was unsatisfactory or somewhat unsatisfactory. In contrast, 39 percent say that the performance of electricity providers was satisfactory or somewhat satisfactory.
- The second greatest level of dissatisfaction was with the performance of government (ministries and local councils in general). 33 percent say that the performance of government in responding to the storm was unsatisfactory or somewhat unsatisfactory. In contrast, 66 percent say that the performance of government was satisfactory or somewhat satisfactory.

- As to telephone and Internet providers, 28 percent say that their performance was unsatisfactory or somewhat unsatisfactory. In contrast, 68 percent say that their performance was satisfactory or somewhat satisfactory.
- The performance of civilian police was perceived positively with only 25 percent stating that their performance in responding to the storm was unsatisfactory or somewhat unsatisfactory. In contrast, 72 percent say that the performance of the police was satisfactory or somewhat satisfactory.
- Local media outlets received the highest positive evaluation with only 22 percent stating that their performance in responding to the storm was unsatisfactory or somewhat unsatisfactory. In contrast, 76 percent say that the performance of the local media was satisfactory or somewhat satisfactory.

Overall, power outages are considered the single most significant impact of the snowstorm (53 percent), followed by “damage in the field of agriculture” (10 percent). The third most significant impact is flooding with 9 percent of respondents perceiving sewage or water flooding to be the most significant, respectively. 7 percent consider the impact on road conditions inside Palestinian communities as the most significant and another 5 percent the road conditions on external roads. 4 percent cite shortages in heating/cooking gas and 1 percent food shortages as most significant impact of the storm.

2. The winter storm left varying perceptions in the West Bank and Gaza

Compared to West Bank respondents, the results show that Gazans are more critical of the response of institutions in their region to the storm:

- While 45 percent of West Bank respondents are dissatisfied with the performance of electricity providers, 87 percent are dissatisfied in Gaza.
- Whereas 29 percent of West Bank respondents are dissatisfied with the performance of the government in responding to the storm, 41 percent are dissatisfied in Gaza.
- While 26 percent of West Bank respondents are dissatisfied with the performance of telephone/Internet providers, 32 percent are dissatisfied in Gaza.
- Whereas 21 percent of West Bank respondents are dissatisfied with the performance of the police, 30 percent are dissatisfied in Gaza.
- The lowest gap between the two regions is in their evaluation of the performance of Palestinian media outlets, where 20 percent of West Bank respondents and 24 percent of Gazans are dissatisfied with their performance.

In addition, there are variations between the two populations’ perceptions of challenges in the aftermath of the storm:

- While respondents in the West Bank and Gaza both rank power outages as the most significant impact of the crisis, the urgency of the issue is higher in Gaza (57 percent) than the West Bank (50 percent).
- The table below illustrates that the second most important impact of the storm in the West Bank is the damage to the agricultural sector and the third is conditions of internal roads, followed by water flooding and conditions of external roads. In Gaza, the second most significant aspect of the crisis is sewage flooding, followed by water flooding and shortage of heating/cooking gas.

Ranking of the most significant impact of the storm across the West Bank and Gaza

West Bank			Gaza		
#	Impact of storm	%	#	Impact of storm	%
1	Power outages	49.8%	1	Power outages	57.1%
2	Agricultural damage	15.8%	2	Sewage flooding	16.4%
3	Conditions on internal roads	8.7%	3	Water flooding	10.4%
4	Water flooding	7.9%	4	Shortage of heating/cooking gas	6.2%
5	Conditions on external roads	7.2%	5	Conditions of internal roads	2.9%
6	Sewage flooding	4.5%	6	Conditions on external roads	1.8%
7	Shortage of heating/cooking gas	2.3%	7	Agricultural damage	1.6%
8	Food shortage	2.0%	8	Food shortage	1.1%
9	Shortage in clean water	0.8%	9	Shortage in clean water	1.1%
10	Other	1.0%	10	Other	1.4%

Respondents were queried on responses of the governments in the West Bank and Gaza to the issues of electricity and water in their regions:

- 66 percent of Gaza respondents negatively evaluate the response of the authorities in Gaza to the electricity and water crisis. One third of the respondents are either satisfied (12 percent) or somewhat satisfied (21 percent).
- 37 percent of West Bank respondents negatively evaluate the response of the Palestinian Authority to the electricity and water crisis in their region. 62 percent of the respondents are either satisfied (21 percent) or somewhat satisfied (41 percent).
Despite problems resulting from the snow storm, poll results show limited impact on levels of confidence in the governments in the West Bank and Gaza:
- In the aftermath of the storm, 27 percent say that their confidence in the Haniyeh government decreased, while 18 percent say that their confidence in the Hamdallah government decreased.

- In contrast, only 15 percent say that their confidence in the Haniyeh government increased, while 19 percent say that their confidence in the Hamdallah government increased.
- 51 percent say that their level of confidence in the Haniyeh government did not change and 53 percent say the same about the Hamdallah government.

Section 4: Evaluation of governments and leaders

1. Increase in the positive evaluation of President Abbas

Presently, 43 percent evaluate the “overall performance” of President Abbas as “positive,” an increase from 32 percent in October. 32 percent view his performance as “fair” and 22 percent as “negative.” Evaluations are more positive in the West Bank than in Gaza. 32 percent of Gazans consider his performance as negative, while only 16 percent of West Bank respondents feel the same way.

When it comes to approving or disapproving of the President’s performance, 58 percent approve, a number that has remained unchanged since February 2013. Abbas’s disapproval rate is 34 percent. Again, there is a difference between the West Bank and Gaza with his disapproval rate at 31 percent in the West Bank and 39 percent in Gaza.

2. Evaluation of the Haniyeh government stable

Evaluation of the Haniyeh government is consistent with the results of AWRAD’s last poll in October. 21 percent positively evaluate the performance of his government and 38 percent view it as fair. In contrast, 34 percent negatively assess the performance of his government.

3. Knowledge of the Hamdallah government increases

In AWRAD’s October poll, 22 percent of Palestinians stated they did not know enough to accurately evaluate the performance of the Hamdallah government. This rate has declined by 10 points in the current poll to 12 percent. Hamdallah’s positive evaluation increased by 5 points from 26 percent in October to 31 percent today; his “fair” evaluation increased by 2 points from 37 percent to 39 percent and his “negative” evaluation increased by about 3 points from 16 percent to 19 percent.

4. Respondents prefer Hamdallah government

When asked to choose between the two governments to govern in their region, 42 percent choose the Hamdallah government over 19 percent for the Haniyeh government. 34 percent say that they would prefer neither of the two governments and about 5 percent do not know. West Bank respondents are slightly more inclined to choose neither of the two governments (36 percent) compared to their Gaza counterparts (32 percent).

Section 5: Elections and political support

The current poll affirms the high support for the immediate conducting of parliamentary (81 percent) and presidential elections (80 percent). If elections took place today, Fatah would garner the highest voter support at 42 percent, followed by Hamas at 14 percent. Of note, 37 percent of Palestinians state that they are either undecided or will not vote. Besides the two largest political groups, no other group receives more than 2 percent of public support.

In a two-way race for president, Abbas wins over Khaled Mashaal (48 percent to 18 percent). 34 percent say they would not vote or do not know who they would vote for in such a contest (37 percent in the West Bank and 30 percent in Gaza). A similar pattern applies to a two-way race between Abbas and Haniyeh.
