



## **Results of an Opinion Poll**

**Democracy and Freedoms**

**Performance of Government**

**Evaluation of Leaders**

**Peace Process and UN Initiative**

**Elections**

**Publication Date: 22 May 2012**

**Fieldwork: 11-13 May 2012**

**Sample Size: 1200 Palestinians in the West Bank & Gaza**

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

Kamal Nasser St. # 43, Masayef, Ramallah – Palestine. Phone/Fax number: 02-2950957;  
e-mail: [award@awrad.org](mailto:award@awrad.org); website: [www.awrad.org](http://www.awrad.org).

### **Introduction**

These are the results and analyses of the latest Arab World for Research & Development (AWRAD) public opinion poll, focusing on state of democracy, the performance of the Fayyad and Haniyeh governments, the peace process and the UN Initiative, and support for existing political parties and prospective future candidates.

The questionnaire was fielded May 11-13, 2012. For this survey, 1200 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](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.

## Highlights:

- 84 percent support the immediate conduct of elections.
- 55 percent support a return to negotiations.
- 10 percent are familiar with the content of the recent letter from President Abbas to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu.
- 24 percent believe that the Palestinian cause has been advanced by the UN Initiative, compared to 36 percent in November 2011.
- Increase in the percentage of Palestinians (from 55 percent in March to 62 percent now) who believe that things are moving in the wrong direction. Belief that things are moving in the wrong direction reaches 71 percent in Gaza, compared to 56 percent in the West Bank.
- 74 percent of Gazans believe that the Haniyeh government is not accountable to the people; 50 percent of West Bank respondents believe that the Fayyad government is not accountable to the people.
- 62 percent of Gazans and 27 percent of West Bank respondents believe freedom of speech has diminished compared to 10 years ago.
- 88 percent of Palestinian respondents believe that the recent arrests of journalists and bloggers in the West Bank are unjustified.
- 71 percent of Gazans and 44 percent of West Bank respondents believe that their governments are censoring freedom of expression.
- The overall approval rate of President Abbas stands at 55 percent; 48 percent approves of Fayyad's overall performance and 34 percent approves of Haniyeh's performance.
- Disenchantment with the government of Haniyeh in Gaza continues to rise with the overwhelming majority in Gaza expressing dissatisfaction on almost all issues. The evaluation of the government of Fayyad has improved on all issues compared to our March 2012 poll.
- 63 percent of Gazans say that their living conditions have worsened since the appointment of the Haniyeh government. In contrast, 23 percent of West Bank respondents believe that their living conditions have worsened since the appointment of the Fayyad government.
- Fayyad is the most trusted to lead a new government (30 percent), followed by Haniyeh (15 percent) and Mustafa Barghouthi (12 percent).
- In a presidential contest among 15 leaders, Abbas receives the support of 32 percent followed by Haniyeh with 11 percent and Marwan Barghouthi with 8 percent.
- In a four-way presidential race: Abbas (38 percent), Haniyeh (15 percent), Mustafa Barghouthi (9 percent) and Fayyad (6 percent).
- In another four-way presidential race: Marwan Barghouthi (28 percent), Haniyeh (16 percent), Fayyad (15 percent) and Mustafa Barghouthi (8 percent).

## **Analysis of Results**

### **1. Overall Outlook: Increasing pessimism**

The present poll shows an increase in the negative evaluation of present and prospective living conditions. A majority of Palestinians (62 percent) believe that things are moving in the wrong direction; an increase from 46 percent in October 2011 and 55 percent in March 2012. This negative evaluation is due to a number of factors including increasing dissatisfaction with economic conditions:

- 48 percent of the respondents negatively evaluate overall economic conditions. In addition, 35 percent evaluate economic conditions as average. 17 percent describe economic conditions as above average.
- Negative views of the economy are more prevalent in Gaza than the West Bank. Only 7 percent of Gazans describe their economic conditions as above average, compared to 23 percent of West Bank respondents. In contrast, 60 percent of Gazans negatively evaluate their living conditions, compared to 41 percent of West Bank respondents.
- 63 percent of Gazans say that their living conditions have worsened since the appointment of Haniyeh government. In comparison, 23 percent of West Bank respondents believe that their living conditions have worsened since the appointment of the Fayyad government.
- In contrast, 36 percent of West Bank respondents believe that their living conditions have improved since the appointment of Fayyad, while only 19 percent of Gazans feel the same way after the appointment of the Haniyeh government.
- Despite current attitudes, a majority of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza (55 percent) remain optimistic about the future. In contrast, 42 percent express pessimism.

### **2. Government Performance: The Fayyad Government makes a recovery, while the popularity of the Haniyeh government continues to decline**

- Negative evaluations of the Fayyad government have receded on all issues compared to our March 2012 poll:
  - Improving economic conditions, from 41 percent to 33 percent.
  - Providing electricity and water services, from 33 percent to 24 percent.
  - Providing health and education services, from 34 percent to 25 percent.
  - Providing job opportunities, from 65 percent to 59 percent.
  - Providing individual security, from 41 percent to 36 percent.
- The negative evaluation of the Haniyeh government among Gazans has slightly increased in most fields:
  - Improving economic conditions, from 60 percent to 63 percent.
  - Providing job opportunities, from 70 percent to 74 percent.
  - Improving the performance of government institutions, from 43 percent to 48 percent.

- The present poll confirms the findings of our March poll where on all issues evaluation of the Haniyeh government is less positive than that of the Fayyad government.
- The same trends apply to how Palestinians view the economic policies of both governments. A majority of respondents (51 percent) negatively view the economic policies of the Haniyeh government, compared to 25 percent who feel the same way about the policies of the Fayyad government. In contrast, 23 percent positively view the economic policies of the Fayyad government, compared to 10 percent who feel the same way about the policies of the Haniyeh government.

### **3. Unity and Reconciliation: Optimism about reaching unity declines in Gaza**

- The rate of optimism about the ability of Fatah and Hamas to reach a genuine reconciliation agreement declined in Gaza from 61 percent in March to 50 percent now. The overall rate of optimism declined by 4 points from 56 percent in March to 52 percent now. 49 percent continue to be pessimistic.
- Respondents continue to be more trusting of the intentions of Fatah on this issue than they are of Hamas. A majority of 55 percent say that Fatah is serious about ending the division, compared to 33 percent who feel the same way about Hamas (an 8-point decline from March 2012). As much as 54 percent do not believe that Hamas is serious compared to 36 percent who feel the same way about Fatah.
- Mistrust of Hamas intentions among Gazans increased from 59 percent to 66 percent. Mistrust of Hamas intention continues to be lower in the West Bank than Gaza (47 percent to 66 percent). The same trend applies to Fatah, with 43 percent of Gazans and 32 percent of the West Bank respondents with the belief that the movement is not serious.

### **4. Democracy and Freedoms: Concerns over respect for human rights and personal freedoms**

- The negative evaluation of the Gaza government in the fields of democracy and human rights is higher than that of the West Bank government:
  - While 43 percent believe that the Palestinian authority in the West Bank is transparent, only 24 percent say the same about the government in Gaza.
  - While 38 percent believe that the Palestinian authority in the West Bank is accountable to the people, only 21 percent say the same about the government in Gaza.
  - While 42 percent believe that the Palestinian authority in the West Bank is democratic, only 22 percent say the same about the government in Gaza.
  - While 47 percent believe that the Palestinian authority in the West Bank respects human rights, only 23 percent say the same about the government in Gaza.
- While the negative evaluation of the Gaza government is higher among Gazans than that of the PA in the West Bank, concerns are also present in the West Bank:

- 54 percent of all respondents believe that the government in Gaza is censoring freedom of speech. This is compared to 47 percent who believe that the West Bank government is censoring freedom of speech.
- Regional differences are apparent with 71 percent of Gazans and 44 percent of West Bank respondents believing that their respective governments are censoring freedom of expression.
- 57 percent of all respondents believe that the Gaza government does not respect human rights, while 47 percent feel the same way about the West Bank government.
- 71 percent of Gazans believe that their government does not respect human rights, while 48 percent of West Bank respondents feel the same way about their government.

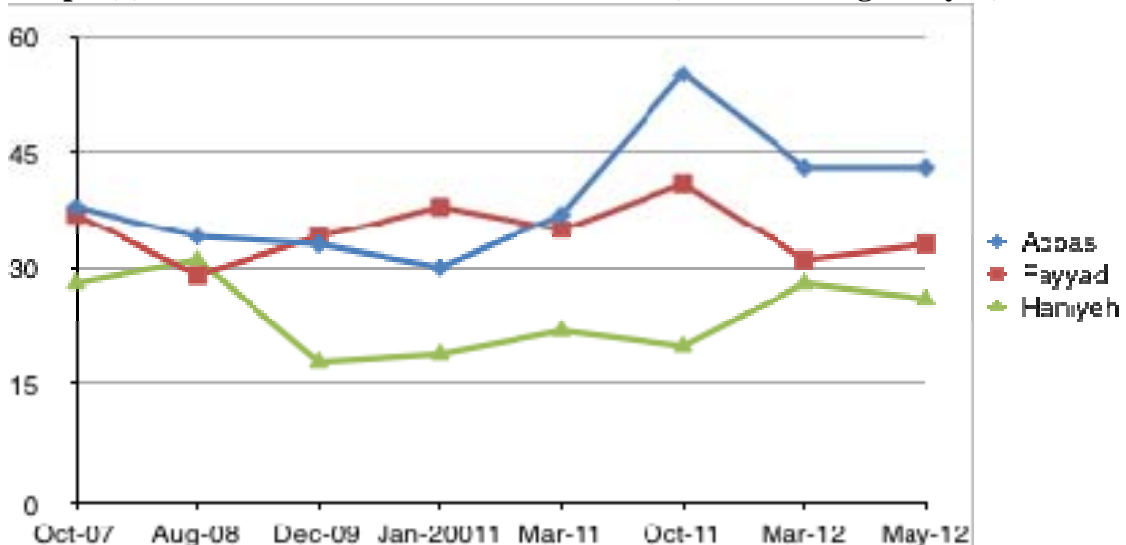
### 5. Evaluation of Leaders: No significant change in evaluations of leaders from March 2012

The overall evaluations of the personal performance of all three leaders -Abbas, Fayyad and Haniyeh- are the same as in AWRAD's March 2012 poll.

#### Overall Performance:

- President Abbas received a 43 percent positive evaluation. 30 percent gave him a "fair" evaluation and 25 percent a negative evaluation (the same as in the March poll).
- PM Fayyad received a 33 percent positive evaluation. 35 percent gave him a "fair" evaluation and 28 percent a negative evaluation (a 6-point decline in his negative evaluation).
- PM Haniyeh received a 26 percent positive evaluation. 31 percent gave him a "fair" evaluation and 37 percent a negative evaluation.
- The positive evaluation of Fayyad in the West Bank increased by 6 points from March, while his negative evaluation declined by 8 points.
- The evaluation of Haniyeh in Gaza did not change from the March poll.

**Graph (1): Evaluation of Leaders' Performance (Oct-07 through May12)**

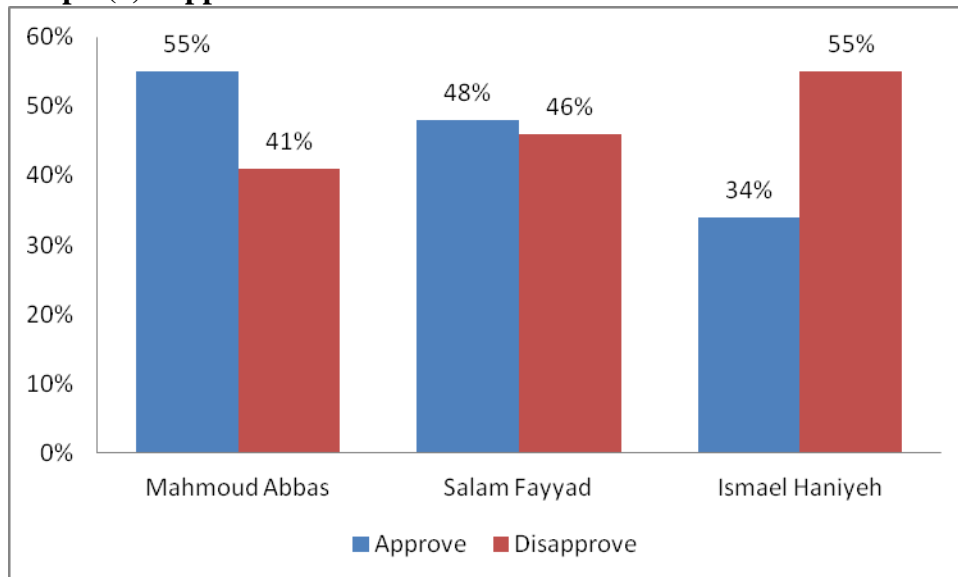


### **Approval Rates:**

When asked if they approve or disapprove of the functioning of each leader, the respondents gave the following answers:

- A majority of 55 percent approves of Abbas' performance and 41 percent disapproves.
- 48 percent approves of Fayyad's performance and 46 percent disapproves.
- 34 percent approves of Haniyeh's performance and 55 percent disapproves.

**Graph (2): Approval Rates of Leaders**



### **6. Prime Minister of Government: Fayyad is the most popular choice**

- When asked about the best person to head the Palestinian government, respondents gave the following responses:
  - Fayyad is the most favorable candidate with 30 percent (a 4-point increase from the March poll), followed by Haniyeh with 15 percent (a 3-point decline).
  - Mustafa Barghouti is in third with 12 percent and M. Masri is number four with 5 percent.
  - All other candidates receive less than 3 percent each.
- Concerning the intended cabinet reshuffle (which took place after the conduct of the field work), 68 percent agreed with it and 19 percent were against.

## **7. Elections: 82 percent support the immediate conduct of local and parliamentary elections**

- As much as 84 percent of the respondents support the conduct of a presidential election immediately.
- 82 percent support the conduct of local and parliamentary elections.
- Support for elections is equal in the West Bank and Gaza.

### **Party Support: Fatah remains on top**

The political parties listed in the poll enjoy the following popularity rates:

- Fatah at 42 percent, with equal support in both West Bank and Gaza,
- Hamas at 13 percent, with 12 percent in the West Bank and 16 percent in Gaza,
- The PFLP and the Palestinian National Initiative (Mubadara) enjoy 2-3 percent support.
- The rest of the listed groups receive less than 2 percent support,
- 15 percent say that they are undecided and 18 percent say that they will not vote (a 7-point increase for both categories).

### **Presidential Elections: Abbas is most popular**

*In a presidential race involving 15 candidates*, five from Fatah, four Islamists, three leftists and three independents, the following results emerge:

- Abbas receives 32 percent of the vote, followed by Haniyeh with 11 percent.
- Marwan Barghouthi receives 8 percent.
- Mustafa Barghouthi and Fayyad receive 4-5 percent each.
- Sa'adat receives about 3 percent.
- The rest of the candidates receive 2 percent or less each.

*In a four-way race* that involves Abbas, Haniyeh, Fayyad and Mustafa Barghouthi, the poll reveals the following results:

- Abbas receives 38 percent of the vote,
- Haniyeh receives 15 percent,
- Mustafa Barghouthi receives 9 percent,
- Fayyad receives 6 percent.
- The percentage of the undecided and those who say that they will not vote increases from 20 percent in March to 31 percent now.

*In a four-way race* that involves Marwan Barghouthi, Haniyeh, Fayyad and Mustafa Barghouthi, the poll reveals the following results:

- Marwan receives 28 percent of the vote,
- Haniyeh receives 16 percent,
- Fayyad in third place with 15 percent
- Mustafa Barghouthi in fourth with 8 percent.

- The percentage of the undecided and those who say that they will not vote increases from 21 percent in March to 34 percent now.

#### **8. Peace Process and the UN Initiative: Majority supports a return to peace negotiations**

- A majority of Palestinian respondents (55 percent) supports a return to negotiations at this time. In contrast, 40 percent oppose.
- Less than a third of the respondents have heard about the letter from Abbas to Netanyahu, while 65 percent have not.
- Overall, 10 percent confirm that they are familiar with the content of the letter. 12 percent say that they are somewhat familiar. The rest are not familiar with the content of the letter.
- Less than one quarter of the respondents believe that the Palestinian cause has been advanced by the UN Initiative. In contrast, 26 percent believe that it has been set back. The rest believe that there has been no change.
- As to the conditions on the ground, one fifth of the respondents believe that conditions have been advanced while 27 percent disagree with that. 49 percent believe that there has been no change.
- As much as 71 percent believe (in full or in part) that the present financial crisis is related to the UN Initiative. 23 percent disagree.