

THE AFTERMATH OF THE GOLDSTONE REPORT: EVERYBODY'S LOSS

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INTRODUCTION

This is an analysis of the results of two polls: one carried out at the outset of the discussions over the postponement of the Goldstone Report (between September 31 and October 3) and another poll on October 11 after the discussions took their course among Palestinians and in the media; but only hours before the speeches delivered by President Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Mashal of Hamas.

The results of both polls show that Palestinians are dismayed and dissatisfied with the status quo, as support for Hamas and Fateh, Abbas and Haniyeh is declining. In fact, West Bank residents are punishing Hamas and Haniyeh for their handling of the debate over the Goldstone Report, while Gazans are punishing Fateh and Abbas over the handling of the Report within the United Nations (UN).

The majority of Palestinians are dissatisfied with how Hamas and Al-Jazeera handled the aftermath of the withdrawal of the Report from the UN Human Rights Council. Contrary to popular belief, the perceived exaggerated criticism is having a reverse impact on the popularity of Hamas, especially in the West Bank, with its support declining to an all-time record low, and with no increase in its popularity in Gaza. In contrast, the popularity of Abbas and Fateh are increasing in the West Bank.

The results of the two polls might be summarized as follows:

INTEREST IN, AND KNOWLEDGE OF, THE REPORT NOT AS HIGH AS EXPECTED

1. Only 21 percent are following the news on the Goldstone Report to a large extent. In addition, 42 percent say that they are following the news to some extent.
2. The rest (38 percent) are barely following the news or not following at all.
3. A small fraction of the respondents (3.5 percent) say that they have detailed information on the Report.
4. In addition, 42 percent say that they have some information on the Report.
5. In contrast 55 percent barely have any information or have none.

DIVISION OVER THE FAIRNESS OF THE REPORT

1. Only 10 percent believe that the Report was fair to a large extent from the point of view of Palestinians. In addition, 38 percent believe that it was fair to some extent.
2. In contrast, 39 percent believe that it was not fair. About 14 percent say that they have no opinion or do not know.

MORE PALESTINIANS SUPPORT THE POSITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP

1. About one-third supports the position of the Palestinian leadership regarding the handling of the Report, and believes that the leadership has the right to postpone the vote on the Report if needed.
2. In contrast, 22 percent support the position of Hamas and believe that it is appropriate and balanced.
3. About 30 percent believe that the positions of both parties on the Report are disagreeable. About 18 percent had no opinion.

MAJORITY BELIEVES THAT THE CRITICISM BY HAMAS/AL-JAZEERA IS NOT JUSTIFIED

1. A majority of respondents disagree with the criticism waged against the Palestinian leadership, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and President Abbas over the Report by Hamas and Al-Jazeera.
2. About 51 percent believe that the criticism was exaggerated and that Hamas and Al-Jazeera will use every opportunity to attack the Palestinian leadership.
3. Only one-fourth of the respondents believe that the criticism is justified because postponing the vote sacrifices the rights of the Gaza victims.
4. Another 24 percent have no opinion on the matter.

HAMAS'S POPULARITY REACHES A RECORD – LOW; FATEH LOSES SOME

1. The popularity of both Hamas and Fateh went down also. Hamas lost by 21 percent (from 17.5 percent to 13.5 percent), while Fateh lost by about 14 percent (from 45 percent to 39 percent).
2. In contrast, the percentage of the undecided and the independents went from 38 percent to 47.5 percent (25 percent increase).

THE WEST BANK-GAZA DIVIDE REINFORCED

The gap between the West Bank and Gaza is reinforced by the raging rhetoric, where Hamas and Haniyeh are losing by a large margin in the West Bank, while Fateh and Abbas are losing in Gaza, with no gains for Hamas there. For example:

- About 36 percent of West Bank respondents take the side of the Palestinian leadership, while only 11 percent of them take the side of Hamas.
- In contrast, 38 percent of Gazans take the side of Hamas and 25 percent take the side of the Palestinian leadership.
- In both regions, the largest groups believe that the criticism of the leadership by Hamas and Al-Jazeera is uncalled for (exaggerated and opportunistic).
- The gap however, persists between both regions. About 57 percent of West Bank respondents believe that the leadership does not deserve the exaggerated criticism by Hamas and Al-Jazeera as a result of the postponement of the Goldstone Report; this is compared with 43 percent in Gaza.
- About equal percentages in both regions believe that Hamas and Al-Jazeera are justified in their criticism (about 25 percent).
- In less than one week, support for Haniyeh in the West Bank seems to be withering away, going down from 18 percent before the Goldstone Report debate to less than half of that (7.5 percent).
- Support for Abbas, however, increased slightly from 41 percent to 44 percent in the West Bank as compared with before the Goldstone Report.
- Support for Abbas in Gaza declined drastically by about 22 points from 47 percent to 25 percent. As for Haniyeh, his popularity also declined in Gaza from 26 percent to 20 percent.
- The popularity of Hamas in the West Bank dips to a record low as a result of its handling of the Goldstone Report, where its popularity after the 2006 election was 50 percent, and its popularity before the Goldstone debate (early this month) was about 16 percent, and now reaching about 6 percent after the debate. Its support in Gaza is not increasing by the Goldstone Report debate.
- Fateh attains higher support in the West Bank now than before the Goldstone debate, going from 43 percent to about 51 percent.
- In Gaza, however, support for Fateh declined sharply from 48 percent to about 25 percent.
- This decline is not translated into higher support for Hamas in Gaza, but rather to increasing the percentage of the undecided and the independents from 31 percent to 54 percent.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

- **Results reflect the performance of government in each region:** All of these significant variations between the West Bank and Gaza might be due to the objective circumstances on the ground, where the poll also shows greater satisfaction with the performance of the PA Government in the areas of service delivery, economic development and security. The situation in Gaza is the opposite, with increasing dissatisfaction with the performance of the Haniyeh government.

- **Caution during time of polarization:** Given the high-pitch rhetoric and the ensuing polarization in both regions, higher percentages of respondents might be cautious in their answers to polling questions. This is applicable in the West Bank with greater security measures against Hamas, but applies even more in Gaza given the governance style of Hamas and the general animosity against the PA and Fateh.
 - **Internal politics leading to further division:** The results also confirm the widening gap between the West Bank and Gaza populations, where the traditional tendency to criticize the government in each region by its own populace is turning into more regionalist tendencies and prejudice.
 - **Results as warning to parties:** It is expected that the present level of support for Fateh and Hamas is temporary and that it will go back to its previous average and will be more consistent with historic trends after the debate over Goldstone wanes away. But the current dismay and dissatisfaction might continue to be present if the parties do not handle themselves in a way that is more accountable to the population. The public is speaking out loud and clear and warning the two main parties that they can not continue to perform as they presently do. The public, through this poll, is calling for a united front in dealing with the Palestinian cause and to moderation in handling internal issues.
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- The first poll was carried out among 1200 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza; the follow-up poll was carried out among 200 Palestinians in both regions, for a total of 1400 interviews.
 - The polls are carried out with support from the International Republican Institute and MEPI.
 - The views expressed in this feature are those of Dr. Said and not necessarily the views of sponsoring institutions.

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Table of Results

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	Total (WB&G) (%)	West Bank (%)	Gaza (%)
1. Do you follow the news on the Goldstone report?			
Yes, to a large extent	20.5	19.2	22.5
Yes, to some extent	41.5	39.2	45.0
No, not much	24.5	29.2	17.5
Not at all	13.5	12.5	15.0
2. Do you know details of the Goldstone report?			
Yes, to a large extent	3.5	2.5	5.0
Yes, to some extent	41.5	39.2	45.0
No, not much	37.5	43.3	28.8
Not at all	17.5	15.0	21.3
3. Do you see that the Goldstone report that investigated what happened during the war on Gaza was fair to the Palestinians?			
Yes, to a large extent	10.0	11.7	7.5
Yes, to some extent	38.0	36.7	40.0
No, not much	21.0	23.3	17.5
Not at all	17.5	13.3	23.8
Don't know	13.5	15.0	11.3
4. The PA postponed voting on the report in the United Nations because it believes that the timing is not suitable, and Hamas accused the leadership of compromising and sacrificing the rights of the victims in Gaza, what do you think?			
The Palestinian leadership has the right to postpone the vote on the report until the time is right	31.5	35.8	25.0
Hamas's position against the postponement is suitable and balanced	21.5	10.8	37.5
Disagree with the positions of both Hamas and the PA on the report	29.5	37.5	17.5
Don't Know/ not sure	17.5	15.8	20.0
5. Do you think the criticism by Hamas and AL Jazeera against the PNA and its President Abbas is proportional/to the action of postponing the vote on the report?			
Yes, postponing the vote on the report sacrifices the rights of victims in Gaza	24.5	23.3	26.3
No, the accusations are exaggerated and they will take any opportunity to criticize the PA	51.0	56.7	42.5
Don't know	24.5	20.0	31.3