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Opinion Poll # 12

Living Conditions, the New Palestinian Government, and the Road Map

Field Research: May 8 - 10, 2003

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Palestinians speak out on Abu Mazen's New Government:

- Widespread support (75%) for Mahmoud Abbas' (Abu Mazen) proposal to centralize decision-making on national issues.
- The majority (72%) wants to give Abu Mazen's government a "fair chance" to succeed.
- Conditional support for stopping attacks against Israeli targets (71%).
- Ending the occupation (59.2%), improving economic conditions (13.6%) and rooting out corruption (9%) are priorities.
- The public is split on the competence of the new government.
- The public is split over the issue of ending the possession of "unlicensed" weapons (48% support, 46% oppose).
- A Majority (52%) thinks the new government was appointed through "undemocratic mechanisms".
- Broad support for resumption of negotiations with Israel (63%).
- Widespread doubts about the intentions of Israel and the United States concerning the new government and the Road Map.

- Sample Size: 1200 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza
 - Number of Sampling Localities: 75
 - Margin of Error: $\pm 3\%$
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- For questions or inquiries, please contact Dr. Nader Said or Ayman Abdulmajeed at the listed numbers.
- All results represent the opinions of the respondents and do not represent the viewpoint of Birzeit University or the Development Studies Programme or any other related body.
- For details on our methodology, refer to our web page.
- Many thanks go to the field researchers, and to the International Republican Institute (IRI) for their support.

Background

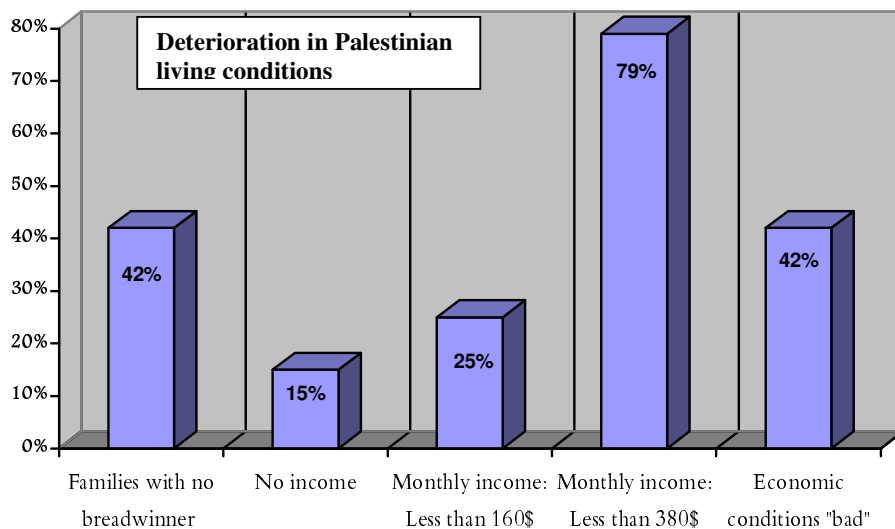
- This poll was conducted under extreme conditions; roadblocks, curfews and invasions were the main characteristics. Living conditions continue to deteriorate, with higher poverty and unemployment rates recorded. The ongoing conflict with Israel resulted in escalated numbers of deaths and detainment during the period preceding and during polling.
- The war against Iraq has ended, with the United States and allied forces defeating Saddam Hussein's regime. The sympathy of Palestinians towards the parallel plight of the Iraqi people (i.e., military occupation and deteriorating living conditions) has exacerbated existing negative feelings towards American foreign policy.
- Political dialogue within Palestinian society was measurably heightened over the last two months. Internal political processes and perceived external pressure have resulted in the inauguration of a new ministerial cabinet, headed by Mahmoud Abbas as its Prime Minister. While the new post is widely perceived to have been imposed on Palestinians by external forces, the Palestinian people feel strongly that this government should be given a fair opportunity to implement its plans.

Main Results

1. Further deterioration in living conditions

The results of the poll show that further deterioration in living conditions has taken place among Palestinians.

- 42% of the households have no working breadwinner.
- 15% have no income whatsoever.
- 25% of the households have a monthly income less than \$160.
- In general, 79% of the households are poor (living below \$380 per month; \$1.9 per person per day for a family of 6.7 members)).



- 42% of the respondents described their economic conditions as (bad) or (very bad). In addition, 38% described their economic conditions as (fair). In contrast, only 20% describe their conditions as (good) or (very good). This perception of deteriorating household economic condition has been on the increase.

2. *Lost sense of security*

Most Palestinians have lost any sense of security as the results indicate:

- 61% feel insecure about themselves, their families and their property. In contrast, 20% feel secure.
- Regardless of this lost sense of security, most Palestinians are still hopeful for the future. About 44% say they are optimistic and 32% say they are pessimistic. In addition, 22% say they have mixed feelings.

3. Mixed feelings about the new government

Palestinians believe that the new government should be given a fair chance to succeed, but they also realize the challenges and understand the real constraints, leaving them with mixed feelings about future prospects.

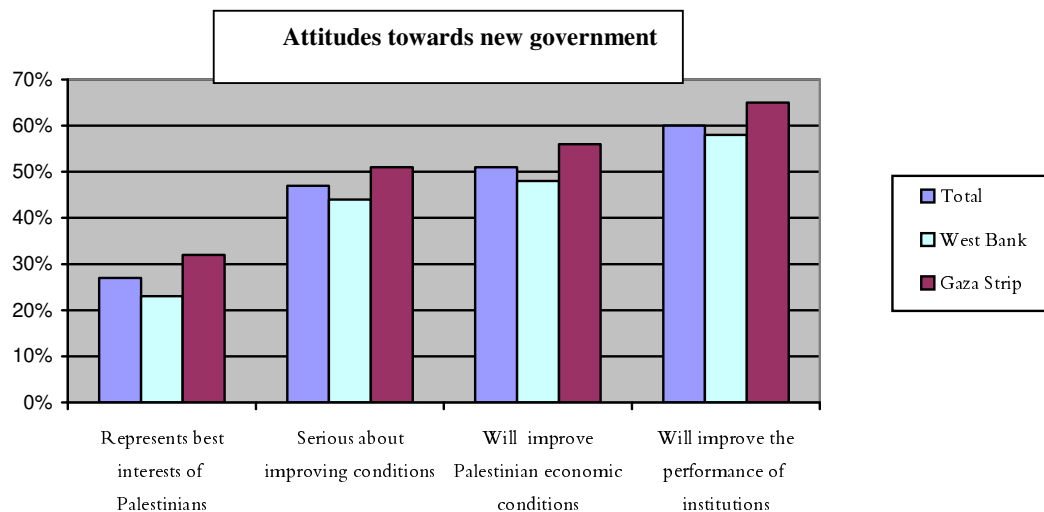
- About 47% feel that the new government is serious in its intent to improve Palestinian living conditions. In comparison, 35% feel that it is not serious.
- The majority (51%) supports the confidence vote given to the new government by the Palestinian Legislative Council. In comparison, 33% oppose.
 - Respondents were divided on the government's platform (as proposed by the new Prime Minister). About 27% say that they support this platform, 39% say that they support it "to an extent", while 19% say they oppose it.
 - Respondents were also divided on the question of representation. When asked if the new government best represents the interest of the Palestinians, 27% agreed and 36% disagreed. At the same time, 27% felt that the new government best represents the interest of Palestinians "to an extent".
 - As to the competence of the members of the cabinet, 24% say that the members are "weak", 40% say that they are "fair", and 22% feel they are "good."
 - If the new government is capable of achieving its goals, 26% feel that it is competent, 30% feel that it is "somewhat competent", while 32% feel that it is not competent.
 - Still, respondents were somewhat optimistic when it came to specific objectives. When asked about the ability of the new government to resolve economic problems, 51% said that it would be able to do that. In addition, 50% said that it would be able to unify the work of security agencies. Over 60% said that the new government would be able to improve the performance of governmental institutions.
 - Respondents were more cautious when it came to the issue of corruption; only 40% were optimistic that the new government would be able to resolve this problem, and 47% said that it would not be able to do that.
- While respondents have mixed feelings about the prospects of the new government, there was less division about the method through which the new government was appointed. A majority (52%) said that the process through which the new government was formed was "undemocratic". Another 20% felt that it was "somewhat democratic". Only 16% felt that the process was "democratic".

- In general, 27% support the platform (i.e., plan) of the new government, 19% oppose it, while 39% support it "to some extent."
- Finally, 34% were generally optimistic about the ability of the new government to improve living conditions, compared with 33% who were pessimistic.

4. Gaza - West Bank Variance

Gaza respondents were more hopeful and optimistic:

- 32% of Gaza respondents felt that the new government best represents the interests of the Palestinian people, compared with 23% among West Bank respondents.
- 51% of Gaza respondents believe that the new government is serious in its intentions, compared with 44% among West Bank respondents.
- 56% of Gaza respondents believe that the new government will be able to improve economic conditions, compared with 48% among West Bank respondents.



5. Priorities

Respondents felt that the top priority of the new government must be to force the Israeli army to withdraw from Palestinian cities. The second most important priority was the improvement of economic conditions, followed by eliminating corruption from Palestinian institutions.

Priorities expected of the new government			
	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
The withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian cities	59.2	61.8	54.5
Improving of economic conditions	13.6	11.9	16.6
Rooting out corruption	9.0	8.7	9.6
Reinforcing the rule of law	4.1	3.5	5.2
Dealing with social chaos	3.9	4.2	3.4
Continuing negotiations	2.9	2.6	3.6
Conducting elections	2.4	1.7	3.6
Improving the performance of institutions	0.3	0.5	0.0
Others	4.6	5.1	3.6

6. Internal Challenges to the New Government

- A majority (71%) support Abu Mazen's call to halt all attacks against Israeli civilians to provide a chance for negotiations. Support by 52% was conditional upon a halt to the Israeli military's killing of Palestinians.
- In addition, 72% believe it is necessary that all Palestinians must give the new government a real chance to implement its programs; 20% feel otherwise.
- In contrast, 47% feel that Palestinian opposition groups will not give the new government a chance to implement its programs, while 38% feel that the opposition will.
- The vast majority (75%) support Abu Mazen's call for the centralization of authority and the end of the perceived chaos concerning national decision making. Abu Mazen said that all national decision making powers must be placed in the hands of one legitimate government approved by the legislative council.

- In terms of ending illegal possession of weapons, there was a split among the respondents, as 48% approve of Abu Mazen's call in this regard. In contrast, 46% opposed his call to collect all unlicensed weapons. This is due to a widespread feeling of insecurity caused by the ongoing conflict with Israel and its occupation of the Palestinian territories, as well a lack of confidence that the Palestinian Authority will be able to defend Palestinians from Israeli military attacks. It is also due to fears that attempts to force opposition groups to surrender their weapons might result in internal Palestinian fighting.

7. External Challenges

Respondents feel that the new government will face external obstacles, especially those placed by Israel and the United States.

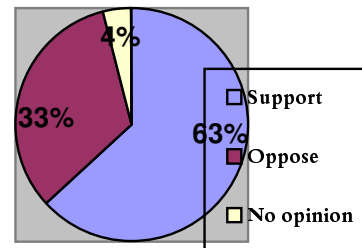
- 58% feel that the Israeli government will actively work to cause the new government to fail.
- 45% feel the United States will do the same. However, 47% feel that the United States will not be an obstacle to the success of this government.
- 73% think that Israel will not implement the Road map, 17% disagree.
- In addition, 56% believe that the United States is not serious about its calls to implement the Road Map, 31% believe that it is serious.

8. Support for Negotiations

Increasingly Palestinians are supportive of the resumption of negotiations with Israel. The appointment of the new government (led by Abu Mazen) might be one factor explaining this increase.

- A majority (63%) supports the resumption of negotiations with Israel. Support has dramatically increased from 52% in February 2003. Support for negotiations is higher in the West Bank (66%) than in Gaza (58%).

**Support for
Negotiations**



- Concerning the (Road Map), respondents were evenly split on this issue. One third opposed it, 24% supported it to (some extent), and 30% supported it.

Annex 1

Results of Opinion Poll # 12

Field Research: May 8-10, 2003

Issues:

Living Conditions

Evaluation of the New Government

Expectations from the New Government

Attitudes towards the New Government's Platform

Prospects for the Future

The Road Map

Sample size 1200 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza

Number of sampling localities: 75

Margin of error: $\pm 3\%$

Section 1: Living Conditions

	Total %	West Bank %	Gaza Strip %
1. How do you evaluate your family's economic condition at the present time?			
1) Very good	3.7	3.3	4.3
2) Good	16.3	16.0	16.9
3) Fair	38.1	37.5	39.2
4) Bad	25.9	26.9	24.0
5) Very bad	16.1	16.4	15.6

2. Does the family have any breadwinner currently working?			
1) Yes	58.5	57.7	59.9
2) No	41.5	42.3	40.1
3. Monthly income per household (average for the months of January - April 2003)			
1) No Income	14.9	13.7	16.9
2) Less than 700	24.6	23.2	27.1
3) 70 0-1000	21.6	21.2	22.4
4) 1001-1700	17.5	16.0	20.2
5) 1701-2500	12.2	14.3	8.6
6) 2501-3000	3.6	4.3	2.3
7) More than 3000	5.6	7.4	2.6
4. At present, do you feel secure about yourself, your family, and your property?			
1) Yes	19.7	17.5	23.5
2) To an extent	19.1	20.8	16.0
3) No	61.1	61.4	60.5
4) Do not know	0.2	0.3	0.0
5. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future?			
1) Optimistic	44.2	41.8	48.4
2) In between	22.2	23.5	19.9
3) Pessimistic	32.2	33.4	29.9
4) Do not know	1.4	1.3	1.8
Section Two: Evaluation of the New Government			
6. Do you believe that the new government represents the best interests of the Palestinian People?			
1) Yes	26.5	23.3	32.4
2) To an extent	26.8	28.1	24.6
3) No	35.5	37.3	32.2
4) No opinion	11.2	11.4	10.8
7. Do you believe that the new ministerial cabinet is qualified to do a proper job?			
1) Yes	26.2	25.3	27.9
2) To an extent	30.3	30.7	29.7
3) No	32.3	31.9	33.1
4) No opinion	11.2	12.2	9.3
8. Do you think that the process used to appoint the new government was democratic or undemocratic?			
1) Democratic	15.7	14.5	17.8
2) To an extent democratic	20.2	19.8	20.9
3) Undemocratic	52.0	53.0	50.2
4) Don't know	12.1	12.7	11.0
9. In general, how do you evaluate the make-up of the new cabinet (group of ministers)?			
1) Good	21.8	20.5	24.1

2) Fair	39.6	40.8	37.4
3) Weak	24.1	22.9	26.2
4) Don't know	14.5	15.8	12.3
10. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) has given its confidence to the new cabinet (with 51 votes for); do you support or oppose this vote by the PLC?			
1) Support	51.3	50.2	53.2
2) Oppose	33.2	32.0	35.4
3) No opinion	15.5	17.7	11.4
Section Three: Expectations from the New Government			
11. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the ability of the new government led by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) to improve the general living conditions of the Palestinians?			
1) Optimistic	34.3	33.5	35.7
2) In between	24.7	24.5	25.1
3) Pessimistic	33.1	33.3	32.7
4) Do not know	7.9	8.7	6.5
12. Do you believe that the new government is serious about improving Palestinian living conditions?			
1) Yes	46.7	44.2	51.2
2) No	35.2	34.6	36.2
3) No opinion	18.1	21.2	12.6
13. Do you think that the new government will succeed in improving economic conditions?			
1) Yes	51.0	48.3	55.9
2) No	37.2	39.3	33.4
3) Don't know	11.8	12.4	10.7
14. Do you think that the new government will succeed in unifying the security agencies?			
1) Yes	50.0	48.9	52.0
2) No	36.4	36.3	36.4
3) Don't know	13.6	14.8	11.5
15. Do you think that the new government will succeed in improving the performance of governmental institutions?			
1) Yes	60.0	57.5	64.5
2) No	25.1	26.4	22.7
3) Don't know	14.9	16.0	12.7

16. Do you think that the new government will succeed in rooting out corruption in governmental institutions?			
1) Yes	40.2	39.6	41.4
2) No	47.4	46.8	48.6
3) Don't know	12.4	13.7	10.1
17. Out of the following priorities, which one do you believe should be most important on the agenda of the new government?			
1) The withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian cities	59.2	61.8	54.5
2) Improving of economic conditions	13.6	11.9	16.6
3) Rooting out corruption	9.0	8.7	9.6
4) Reinforcing the rule of law	4.1	3.5	5.2
5) Dealing with social chaos	3.9	4.2	3.4
6) Continuing negotiations	2.9	2.6	3.6
7) Conducting elections	2.4	1.7	3.6
8) Improving the performance of institutions	0.3	0.5	0.0
9) Others	4.6	5.1	3.6
Section Four: Attitudes towards the New Government's Platform			
18. Mr. Abbas, the new prime minister, called upon Palestinian factions to refrain from attacking Israeli civilians to provide a chance for negotiations, do you support or oppose this call?			
1) Support	19.9	21.2	17.7
2) Support, if Israel refrains from using violence against Palestinians	51.5	53.0	48.8
3) Oppose	24.2	20.0	31.7
4) No opinion	4.4	5.8	1.8
19. Do you support or oppose the continuation of negotiations with Israel?			
1) Support	63.4	66.3	58.1
2) Oppose	33.2	29.9	39.2
3) No opinion	3.4	3.8	2.7
20. In his inauguration speech, Mr. Abbas said that the new government will (end the illegal possession of weapons, as the current chaos represents a threat on citizens ... There are no weapons but the legal weapons that are used by the security agencies to implement law and order). Do you support or oppose this statement?			
1) Support	47.8	50.5	43.1
2) Oppose	46.3	42.3	53.5
3) No opinion	5.8	7.2	3.4
21. In his inauguration speech, Mr. Abbas stated that (there will only be one center of authority, it is the legally appointed authority. On this land and for this people, there is only one authority, one law, and one democratic decision that is binding to all). Do you support or oppose this statement?			
1) Support	75.0	74.3	76.1
2) Oppose	17.2	15.5	20.5
3) No opinion	7.8	10.2	3.4

22. In general, do you support or oppose the program proposed by the new government (as presented by Mr. Abbas to the PLC)?			
1) Support	26.8	26.0	28.2
2) Support, to some extent	38.9	39.2	38.5
3) Oppose	18.9	17.2	22.0
4) No opinion	15.4	17.6	11.3
23. Did you have a chance to review in full or in part (through TV, newspapers, or other mechanisms) the inauguration speech (program) delivered by Mr. Abbas before the PLC?			
1) Yes	36.4	35.6	37.7
2) No	63.6	64.4	62.3
Section Five: Prospects for the Future			
24. Do you believe Palestinians must give the new government a real chance to execute its proposed programs?			
1) Yes	72.0	72.3	71.5
2) No	19.9	17.9	23.5
3) Don't know	8.0	9.6	5.0
25. Do you think that opposition groups will in fact give the new government a chance to implement its plan?			
1) Yes	38.1	41.3	32.1
2) No	46.7	41.5	56.1
3) Don't know	15.2	17.2	11.7
26. Do you think that the proposition by the new government concerning ending the possession of illegal weapons and ending attacks against Israelis might lead to internal fighting?			
1) Yes	31.4	27.3	38.7
2) Maybe	36.1	37.9	32.8
3) No	27.0	27.9	25.4
4) No opinion	5.5	6.9	3.1
27. Do you think that Israel will place obstacles to cause the new government to fail?			
1) Yes	57.5	54.2	63.3
2) No	32.1	34.2	28.4
3) Don't know	10.4	11.6	8.3
28. Do you think that the United States will place obstacles to cause the new government to fail?			
1) Yes	44.6	42.1	49.2
2) No	46.6	47.4	44.9
3) Don't know	8.8	10.5	5.8
Section Six: The Road Map			
29. Do you think that Israel will implement the Road Map proposed by the United States to resolve the conflict?			
1) Yes	16.7	18.3	13.9
2) No	72.9	69.3	79.4

3) Don't know	10.4	12.4	6.7
30. Do you believe that the United States is serious about implementing the Road Map?			
1) Yes	31.2	32.6	28.9
2) No	55.6	52.9	60.4
3) Don't know	13.2	14.6	10.7
31. Do you support or oppose the implementation of the Road Map?			
1) Support	29.5	29.1	30.1
2) Support to some extent	24.0	26.2	20.1
3) Oppose	32.8	30.4	37.3
4) No opinion	13.7	14.3	12.5

Annex 2: Sample distribution

Region	Percent	Type of locality	Percent	Refugee Status	Percent
West Bank	64.4	City	33.8	Refugee	41.0
Gaza Strip	35.6	Village- town	46.1	Non-refugee	59.0
Governorate	Percent	Camp	20.0	Sector	Percent
Jenin	7.2	Gender	Percent	Private sector	69.3
Tubas	1.5	Male	50.9	N.G.O.'s	9.2
Tulkarm	4.8	Female	49.1	Public Sector	21.5
Nablus	8.7			Education	Percent
Qalqilya	2.9	Marital status	Percent	Illiterate	19.6
Salfit	1.3	Single	30.5	Preparatory	21.4
Jericho	1.2	Married	64.9	Elementary	31.7
Ramallah	7.8	Others	4.6	Secondary	16.7
Jerusalem	8.9	Age	Percent	Diploma	5.0
Bethlehem	6.0	16-17	8.3	B.A. or more	5.7
Hebron	14.1	18-22	18.0	Place of	Percent
North Gaza	7.4	23-27	15.3	Residence prior	Percent
Gaza City	13.2	28-32	12.7	to 1994	
Deir al-Balah	5.2	33-37	10.9	West Bank & Gaza	92.4
Khan Younis	5.9	38-42	8.8	Abroad	7.6
Rafah	3.9	43-47	6.3	Income (NIS)	Percent
Occupation	Percent	48-52	4.8	No Income	14.9
Laborers	7.9	> 52	14.9	Less than 700	24.6
Craftsman	4.6	Occupation	Percent	700-1000	21.6
Housewives	39.9	Professional	1.3	1001-1700	17.5
Unemployed	16.1	Employees	8.1	1701-2500	12.2
Merchants	3.7	Retired	1.4	2501-3000	3.6
Students	15.0			More than 3000	5.6
Farmers	2.1				