

The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) is an independent nonprofit institution and think tank of policy analysis and academic research. PSR was founded with the goal of advancing scholarship and knowledge on immediate issues of concern to Palestinians in three areas: domestic politics and government, strategic analysis and foreign policy, and public opinion polls and survey research. The center engages in several activities. It conducts academic and policy analysis studies. It organizes socio-political surveys and public opinion polls on current Palestinian political and social attitudes. It sponsors study groups and task forces on issues of critical importance to the Palestinians. Finally, it organizes conferences, public lectures, and briefings on current public policy issues. PSR is dedicated to promoting objective and nonpartisan research and analysis and to encouraging a better understanding of Palestinian domestic and international environment in an atmosphere of free debate and exchange of ideas.

This poll is part of PSR series of regular polls.

*This poll has been conducted in cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Ramallah*



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Press Release

### Public Opinion Poll No (85)

**While the domestic balance of power shifts a little in favor of Fatah, about 70% express worry, in light of the attempt to assassinate Dr. Nasser al Sha'ir, that internal armed strife might erupt at one point in the future, almost 90% do not trust the statements by the PA government regarding the transfer to Palestinian banks of the salaries of laborers who work in Israel, and about 80% oppose plans by the PA to cut down the size of the public sector employees; in Israeli-Palestinian relations, support for the two-state solution and for the one-state solution rises while support for armed attacks declines and support for negotiations increases**

13-17 September 2022

These are the results of the latest poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between 13 and 17 September 2022. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including armed confrontation between Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip and the Israeli army without the participation of Hamas, the visit of the US president Joe Biden to Bethlehem and his meeting with president Abbas, the appointment of Yair Lapid as a prime minister replacing Bennet and the setting of a date for new Israeli elections, an announcement by the United Arab Emirates of \$25 millions in support to al Makasid Hospital in East Jerusalem, talk about opening the Israeli Ramon airport to Palestinian travel, an Israeli decision to increase the number of Gazan laborers working in Israel, an attempted assassination against the former deputy prime minister in Hamas' government, Dr. Nasser al Sha'ir, near Nablus, a PA announcement that salaries of Palestinian laborers working in Israel would be paid via Palestinian banks, plans by the PA to reduce the number of employees working in the public sector, and Abbas talk during his visit to Germany of 50 Holocausts. This press release addresses these issues and covers other matters such as the general conditions in the Palestinian territories, the peace process and future possible directions for Palestinians in the absence of a viable peace process. Total size of the sample is 1270 adults interviewed face to face in 127 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is +/-3%.

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### Main Findings:

The results of the third quarter of 2022 show a limited change in the domestic balance of power as the gap between Fatah and Hamas is now two percentage points in favor of Fatah while, three months ago, it was one point in favor of Hamas. Similarly, the gap in the

popularity of president Abbas vs. Ismail Haniyyeh has now narrowed to 15 percentage points in favor of Haniyyeh while, three months ago, it was 22 points in favor of Haniyyeh. It seems there are two main reasons for this limited change: the disapproval of Hamas, especially in the West Bank, regarding its non-involvement in the armed confrontation between Islamic Jihad and Israel in August and the rise of Abbas popularity, also especially in the West Bank, in light of the Israeli and German criticism of his reference to the “Holocaust” when describing the Israeli massacres against the Palestinians.

Among the findings on the domestic side, three in particular stand out and should raise an alarm:

1. There is a widespread worry among all Palestinian sectors, reaching about 70% in the West Bank, who view the attempted assassination of Dr. Nasser al Sha’ir as an indication that an internal armed strife might erupt in the West Bank when conditions are ripe, as happened in the past in the Gaza Strip.
2. The narrative of the PA government, regarding the transfer of salary payments to Palestinian laborers who work in Israel, has no credibility among the public as the poll finds only one in ten Palestinians trusting the PA statements regarding this matter while the vast majority stand with the laborers and sympathize with their fears.
3. There is a widespread rejection, reaching about 80%, of the PA government plans to cut down the number of the public sector employees. In case the PA goes ahead with its plans, a large majority wants the cuts to take place in the security sector only which reveals existing concerns among the public regarding the justification for having such a large security sector to begin with.

On Israeli- Palestinian relations, support for the two-state solution and for the one-state solution rises in this poll. It now resembles the support that existed about 6 months ago. This development is accompanied, as expected, with a decline in the percentage of those who think the two-state solution is no longer feasible due to settlement expansion. The findings also show a continued rise in the positive view of the public regarding Palestinian-Israeli confidence building measures, reaching 70% for the first time, with an even greater appreciation of the measure in which a larger number of work permits are issued by Israel for laborers from the Gaza Strip.

Perhaps because of the above, but also due to the negative public assessment of the last armed confrontation between Islamic Jihad and Israel, the findings indicate a significant decline in support for armed attacks or a return to an armed intifada and a significant rise in support for Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

#### **(1) Legislative and presidential elections:**

- 69% say they support the holding of presidential and legislative elections in the Palestinian territories in the near future while 29% say they do not support that. Demand for elections stands at 78% in the Gaza Strip and 63% in the West Bank. However, a majority of 57% believes no legislative or legislative and presidential elections will take place soon.
- If new presidential elections were held today and only two were nominated, Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, only 46% would participate and from among those, Abbas would receive 38% and Haniyeh 53% of the votes (compared to 55% for Haniyeh and 33% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 37% of the votes and Haniyeh receives 59%. In the West Bank, Abbas receives 40% and Haniyeh 46%. If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, participation would increase to 64% and from among those, Barghouti receives 63% and Haniyeh 33%. If the competition is between Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyyeh, participation

rate would decrease to 45% and from among those, the former receives 32% and the latter 60%.

- If Abbas does not run for elections, the public prefers Marwan Barghouti to succeed him as the largest percentage (41%) selected him in a closed-ended question, followed by Ismail Haniyyeh (17%), Mohammad Dahlan (5%), Yahya al Sinwar (4%), Mohammad Shtayyeh (3%), Hussein al Sheikh (2%), and 22% said they do not know or have not decided.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 26% and dissatisfaction at 71%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 26% in the West Bank and 26% in the Gaza Strip. Satisfaction with the performance of Abbas three months ago stood at 23% and dissatisfaction at 73%. Moreover, a vast majority of 74% of the public want president Abbas to resign while only 23% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 77% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands at 73% in the West Bank and 77% in the Gaza Strip.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions that participated in the 2006 elections, 68% say they would participate. Of those who would participate, 32% say they will vote for Hamas and 34% say they will vote for Fatah, 12% will vote for all other third parties combined, and 22% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 36% and Fatah at 35%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 44% (compared to 43% three months ago) and for Fatah at 29% (compared to 32% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 21% (compared to 30% three months ago) and Fatah at 38% (compared to 37% three months ago).
- 27% say Hamas is most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people while 26% think Fatah under president Abbas is the most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinians; 42% think neither side deserves such a role. Three months ago, 33% selected Hamas, 23% Fatah under Abbas, and 38% said neither side deserves such a role.

## **(2) Domestic conditions and satisfaction with the Shtayyeh government:**

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 7% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 25%.
- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 76% and in the West Bank at 54%.
- 25% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 29% and in the West Bank at 23%. Three months ago, 26% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate and 27% of Gazans expressed the same desire.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 86%. When asked about institutions controlled by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, 73% indicated that there is corruption in these institutions. Three months ago, 86% said there is corruption in PA institutions and 71% said there is corruption in public institutions controlled by Hamas.
- 39% of West Bankers think people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear while 58% think they cannot. In the Gaza Strip, 46% think people in the Strip can criticize Hamas' authorities without fear and 54% think they cannot.
- In its assessment of the PA, a majority of the Palestinians (57%) views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 38% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, 59% viewed the PA as a burden and 36% viewed it as an asset.
- 25% are optimistic and 73% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 26%.
- After more than three years since the formation of the Shtayyeh government, findings indicate persistent pessimism. Responding to a question about expectations regarding the ability of the Shtayyeh government to make progress in reconciliation and reunification,

74% expect failure; only 21% expect success. When asked about the ability of the government to organize legislative or legislative and presidential elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 25% of the public expect success and 69% expect failure. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 73% expects failure and 22% expects success.

- The majority is satisfied with the performance of the various actors involved in the management of the Coronavirus crisis: 67% express satisfaction with the performance of the security services deployed in their areas and 68% are satisfied with the performance of the ministry of health. Satisfaction with the performance of the prime minister in the management of the coronavirus crisis stands at 49%. Three months ago, satisfaction with the prime minister's performance in the coronavirus crisis stood at 41%.
- We asked the public about its expectations regarding the identity of the perpetrators of the attempted assassination against Dr. Nasser al Sha'ir near Nablus two months ago. The responses did not indicate a clear trend but about 27% pointed the figure at the Palestinian security services and Fatah: 14% said the security services and 13% said armed men from Fatah. Additionally, about 14% said the assassination attempt came as a result of a struggle within al Najah university, where Dr. al Sha'ir works, while an identical percentage accused the Israeli army, 9% thought it resulted from personal or family conflict, and 6% thought it resulted from conflict within Hamas.
- A large majority of 63% is worried that this assassination attempt might lead to internal armed confrontations when conditions are ripe as had happened in the past in the Gaza Strip; 28% say they are not worried. The level of worry is higher in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip, 69% and 53% respectively.
- A majority of 61% is opposed the lawyers' strike which was waged to protest the decisions of the PA president to amend legislation affecting the judiciary; 26% stand in favor.
- An overwhelming majority of 79% says it opposes PA plans to cut down the size of the public sector while only 19% say they are in favor. When asked about the sector whose size should be cut, the majority (62%) selected the security sector, 15% selected education, 10% selected health, and 6% selected social affairs.
- The overwhelming majority (85%) expresses solidarity with Palestinian laborers who work in Israel in rejecting the PA announcement that the salaries of these laborers will be paid to them via Palestinian banks while only 12% say they trust the government assurances to the laborers that this measure will help protect their interests, allowing them to benefit from the banking services, and that no new taxes will be imposed on those salaries. Trust in the PA assurances stands at 6% in the West Bank and 22% in the Gaza Strip.
- The vast majority (73%) says the Palestinian government is not doing enough to reduce prices, while 25% say it is doing so.
- We asked the public about the burden imposed on their households due to the rise in prices and asked them to tell us which sector or sectors were the most affected: 48% selected the food sector; 27% selected energy such as electricity, solar, and gasoline, 14% said rent, 6% said education, 3% said transportation, and 3% said health.
- We asked the public about its viewership habits in the last three months. Findings indicate that al Jazeera TV has the highest viewership, standing at 29%, followed by al Aqsa TV (11%), Maan, Palestine Today TV, and Palestine TV (10% each), al Arabiya (4%), al Mayadeen (3%), and al Manar (1%).

### **(3) Islamic Jihad-Israel armed confrontation:**

- The largest percentage (42%) thinks that neither Israel nor Islamic Jihad won the last armed confrontations between the two sides last month. But 27% (33% in the Gaza Strip and 24%



in the West Bank) think Israel came out a winner while only 12% think Islamic Jihad came out a winner. Surprisingly, 11% think Hamas, who did not participate in the confrontation, came out a winner.

- Half of the public (50%) says that Hamas' decision not to become directly involved in the armed exchange between Islamic Jihad and the Israeli army was the correct decision while 37% say it was the wrong decision. The percentage of those who think it was the correct decision is much higher in the Gaza Strip (68%) than in the West Bank (38%).
- But only 27% expect Hamas' decision to lead to an improvement in economic conditions in the Gaza Strip while the largest percentage (42%) thinks economic conditions will remain unchanged and 22% think they will worsen. In the Gaza Strip, 34% expect conditions to improve while only 23% of West Bankers think that.

#### **(4) Palestinian-Israeli Relations and the Peace process:**

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 37% and opposition stands at 60%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 28%. When few details were added, such as "two states for two peoples" along the lines of 1967 with small and equal border modifications, support rose slightly to 38% and opposition dropped to 57%.
- A majority of 64% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 32% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 76% believe that the chances for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel in the next five years are slim or nonexistence while 18% believe the chances to be medium or high. Three months ago, only 70% said the two-state solution was no longer feasible or practical due to settlement expansion.
- Reflecting on the latest UN speech of president Abbas in which he described the situation on the ground in the West Bank as "apartheid" and that the Palestinian people will demand equal rights in one state for two peoples, 30% say that they are in favor of such one state solution while 67% expressed opposition. Three months ago, support for Abbas' position on the one-state solution stood at 22%.
- When asked about support for specific policy choices to break the current deadlock, 63% supported joining more international organizations; 55% supported resort to non-violent resistance; 48% supported return to armed confrontations and intifada; 46% supported dissolving the PA; and 23% supported abandoning the two-state solution and embracing a one state solution for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, 55% supported a return to armed confrontations and intifada; 47% supported dissolving the PA; and 23% supported abandoning the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution.
- When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation and building an independent state, the public split into three groups: 41% chose armed struggle (50% in the Gaza Strip and 35% in the West Bank), 30% negotiations, and 24% popular resistance. Three months ago, 50% chose armed struggle and 22% chose negotiations.
- We asked the public about its views regarding Palestinian-Israeli confidence building measures that would improve living conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, such as approval of family unification permits or making available to the PA additional financial resources. A majority of 69% said it looks positively, while 27% said it looks negatively, at such measures. Three months ago, 65% of the public said it viewed these measures positively. A vast majority of 78% looks positively at the Israeli decision to increase the number of laborers from the Gaza Strip who work in Israel; only 20% look at that decision negatively.
- We asked the public about its willingness to use the Israeli Ramon airport, located near Eilat, instead of the Amman or Cairo airports: 41% expressed willingness to do so while a

majority of 55% said it is not willing to do so. But when we asked the public if it looks positively or negatively about the possibility of allowing Gaza residents to use that airport, the majority (58%) said it looks at such a step positively and only 37% said it looks at it negatively.

- Under current conditions, a majority of 68% opposes and 24% support an unconditional resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. But when asked about support and opposition to negotiations with Israel under Arab and international sponsorship, 42% were in favor and 56% against.
- Similarly, when asked about PA negotiations with the current Israeli prime minister, Yair Lapid, only 35% said they opposed such negotiations while 30% said they support negotiations with him on a peace agreement and confidence building measures while 13% said they support negotiations if restricted to a peace agreement and an identical percentage said they support negotiations with him if restricted to confidence building measures. In other words, a total of 43% are in favor of negotiations with Lapid about a peace agreement and an identical percentage is in favor of negotiations with him about confidence building measures.
- The largest percentage (36%) expects Netanyahu to win the upcoming Israeli elections and form the next government while 21% expect Lapid to win the elections; 26% say neither will win.
- 61% are opposed, and 34% are supportive, of a return to dialogue with the US administration under president Joe Biden.
- In light of the visit to Bethlehem by the US president Joe Biden, 53% say they are less optimistic about the prospects for improvement in economic conditions after the visit and the meeting with Abbas while only 16% express optimism and 26% say they are neither optimistic nor pessimistic.
- Similarly, 53% are less optimistic that internal conditions, such as reconciliation or the holding of elections, will improve now after the visit by Biden; 17% are more optimistic and 27% are neither optimistic nor pessimistic.
- Moreover, 58% are less optimistic that Israeli-Palestinian relations, such as agreement on more confidence building measures or reduction in settlement construction, will see improvement now after the Biden visit; only 13% are more optimistic and 27% are neither optimistic nor pessimistic.
- Despite the overall lack of optimism, 43% say they now, after the Biden visit, expect the US to increase its aid to the PA while 53% say they do not expect that.
- Two-thirds think it was right for Abbas to use the “Holocaust” in reference to Israeli massacres against Palestinians during his visit to Germany; 26% think it was wrong for him to use that term.

##### **(5) Support from the UAE to East Jerusalem hospital:**

- We asked about the support provided by the United Arab Emirates to al Makasid Hospital in East Jerusalem: 61% said the support helps the steadfastness of the Palestinians while 36% said it does not help.
- We then asked about expectations that other Arab countries, that recently normalized relations with Israel, such as Bahrain and Morocco, would also provide similar support to Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank: a majority of 54% said it does not expect that while 42% said they expect that.
- We then asked the public if it welcomes or does not welcome support to Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip from these countries that recently normalized relations with Israel: two thirds said they do not and 31% said they do.

**(6) Most vital Palestinian goals and the main problems confronting Palestinians today:**

- 40% believe that the first most vital Palestinian goal should be to end Israeli occupation in the areas occupied in 1967 and build a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital. By contrast, 32% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 17% believe that the first and most vital goal should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings and 11% believes it should be to establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians.
- In a question about the main problem confronting the Palestinians today, the largest percentage, 27% (28% in the Gaza Strip and 26% in the West Bank), said it is unemployment and poverty; another 27% (13% in the Gaza Strip and 37% in the West Bank) said it is corruption in the PA; 24% (34% in the Gaza Strip and 17% in the West Bank) said it is the continued siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip; 11% said it is the continuation of the occupation and settlement construction; 8% (11% in the Gaza Strip and 6% in the West Bank) said it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and 4% said it is the weakness of the judiciary and the absence of liberties, accountability and democracy.
- When asked about the most pressing problem confronting the Palestinians today, the largest percentage (36%) said it is the Israeli occupation, while 22% said it is corruption, 16% said it is unemployment, 13% said it is the split or division, and 9% said it is the internal violence.