

Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research

Special Gaza War Poll

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Gaza War ends with a victory for Hamas leading to a great increase in its popularity and the popularity of its approach of armed resistance: for the first time since 2006, Hamas wins parliamentary and presidential elections if they were to take place today while West Bankers support transferring Hamas' approach to the West Bank.

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 26-30 August 2014. The period before the poll witnessed the eruption of the Gaza War which was preceded by the kidnapping and killing of three Israelis. More than 2000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, were killed during the war. About 70 Israelis, mostly from the military, were killed during the war. Our fieldwork started on the last day of the war and continued during the first four days of the ceasefire. This press release covers public perception of the war, who came out a winner, the ceasefire agreement, targeting of civilians, evaluation of the performance of various Palestinian actors during the war, and war impact on reconciliation. It also covers Palestinian elections, the internal balance of power, the June kidnapping and killing of the three Israelis, and others. 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:

Findings of this special Gaza War poll highlight dramatic changes in public attitudes regarding major issues. It goes without saying that the war was the major driver behind these changes. As expected, and as we saw in previous instances during and immediately after Israeli wars with Hamas, findings show a spike in the popularity of Hamas and its leaders and a major decline in the popularity of Fatah and president Abbas. But, as in previous cases, these changes might be temporary and things might revert in the next several months to where they were before the war.

It is worth noting that the size of the change in favor of Hamas is unprecedented since 2006. Indeed, if presidential elections were to take place today, Ismail Haniyeh would easily win over Abbas and Hamas would win the largest percentage of the popular vote in parliamentary elections. The overwhelming majority of the public views Hamas as the winner and Israel as the loser in this war. Furthermore, a similar majority views Hamas'

approach of armed confrontation with Israel as the most effective means of ending Israeli occupation. Indeed, an overwhelming majority of West Bankers wants to transfer “ Hamas’ way” to the West Bank and rejects the demand to disarm the Islamist group or to disband the other Gazan armed groups. Findings also indicate that the public see Iran, Turkey, and Qatar as the most instrumental in supporting Hamas and helping Gazans remain steadfast against the Israeli attacks. By contrast, Egypt’s role is seen as weak and unhelpful. Indeed, a majority believes that Egypt played a negative role in the ceasefire negotiations.

Finally, despite the fact that the Palestinian Authority, Abbas, and prime minister Rami al Hamdallah received little positive evaluation for their role during the war, a majority tends to give the reconciliation government a big role in the affairs of the Gaza Strip in the post war period. For example, a majority wants it to control border crossings and to supervise police and security sector employees; the largest percentage wants it to control borders with Israel and Egypt and to lead the reconstruction process in the Strip.

(1) Gaza War:

- 79% believe that Hamas has won the Gaza War; 3% believe Israel came out the winner; and 17% believe the two sides were losers.
- 79% believe Israel was responsible for the eruption of the Gaza war; 5% believe Hamas was responsible; and 12% believe the responsibility lies with the two sides.
- 63% believe that the ceasefire agreement satisfies Palestinian interests, but 34% disagree with that. Moreover, 59% are satisfied with the accomplishment gained in the agreement compared to the human and material losses sustained by the Gaza Strip; 39% are dissatisfied with the accomplishment.
- An overwhelming majority of 86% support the launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip at Israel if the siege and blockade are not ended.
- 60% say that Hamas does not launch rockets from populated areas, but 30% say it does. 49% think it is justified for Hamas to launch rockets from populated areas and 46% disagree with that. Percentage of those who believe that launching rockets from populated areas is unjustified increases to 59% among Gazans while standing at 38% among West Bankers.
- Only 30% believe that Hamas should warn Israeli civilians in the specific targeted areas before launching its rockets; 68% believe it should not do so.
- 57% oppose disarming armed groups in the Gaza Strip while 25% support such a measure after the ending of the siege and the conduct of elections; 13% support this measure but only after reaching a peace agreement with Israel. In our June 2014 poll, only 33% said it opposed disarming and dissolving armed groups in the Gaza Strip.

- Despite the current opposition to disarming Gaza groups, a majority of 54% support and 40% oppose Abbas' position that argues that the reconciliation government must be committed to existing agreements reached between the PLO and Israel and rejects Hamas position that opposes Abbas' argument. In our previous poll in June, support for Abbas' position stood at 59%.
- Yet, only 43%, compared to 53% last June, agrees with the statement that the inclusion of Hamas into the PLO means an implicit acceptance by Hamas of the PLO peace program and the existing agreements with Israel.
- About two thirds (64%) believe that Iran, Turkey and Qatar combined have given the Gaza Strip the ability to remain steadfast against Israeli attacks and to be able to continue to launch rockets during the war; only 9% believe Egypt too has contributed to that. Iran comes on top with 28%, followed by Turkey (21%) and Qatar (15%); 25% select other countries or actors.
- Moreover, only 25% describe Egypt's role in the ceasefire negotiations as positive while a majority of 52% describe it as negative and 22% as neutral.
- 94% are satisfied with Hamas' military performance in confronting Israeli forces; 78% are satisfied with its defense of civilians in Gaza; and 89% are satisfied with its media and communication performance.
- In an evaluation of the performance of the various Palestinian actors during the war, Prime Minister Rami al Hamdallah comes at the bottom, with 35% giving him a positive rating. The PA comes next with 36%, Abbas with 39%, the reconciliation government with 43%, and the PLO with 44%. On top comes Khalid Mish'al with 78% approval and Hamas with 88% approval. The approval rating for Abbas rises to 49% in the Gaza Strip and drops to 33% in the West Bank. By contrast, Khalid Mish'al's approval rating drops in the Gaza Strip to 70% and rises to 83% in the West Bank.

(2) The reconciliation government and its role in Gaza after the war:

- Optimism about the success of reconciliation and the end of the split rises to 69%; 28% remain pessimistic. In our last poll in June 62% were optimistic.
- Three months after its establishment, 46% are satisfied with the performance of the reconciliation government and 46% are dissatisfied. Indeed, 60% prefer to get rid of the reconciliation government and form a unity government in which leaders and politicians from all major factions would participate; 34% oppose such a step and prefer to keep the reconciliation government. The preference for a unity government drops significantly to 49% in the Gaza Strip and increases to 66% in the West Bank.
- A majority of 51% wants to place the reconciliation government in charge of the Rafah crossing, but 38% prefer to keep it under Hamas' control. In the Gaza Strip, 64% want to place the Rafah crossing under the control of the

reconciliation government and only 25% want it under Hamas' control. The same, with minor variation, applies to control over the crossings with Israel.

- 48% want the reconciliation government to control the border with Egypt and 39% want it under Hamas' control. The same, with minor variation, applies to the border with Israel; with 45% in favor of keeping the border under the control of the reconciliation government and 41% say they should stay under Hamas' control. In the Gaza Strip, 56% say borders with Egypt should come under the control of the reconciliation government and 49% say the border with Israel too should come under the control of the reconciliation government.
- 44% believe the responsibility for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip should be placed in the hands of the reconciliation government while 39% prefer to place it in Hamas' hands.
- 83% want the reconciliation government to pay the salary of the Gaza public sector that served the previous Hamas government; 13% are opposed to that.
- 65% want the reconciliation government to be in charge of supervising the work of the employees of Gaza security sector who worked in the past under Hamas government; 29% disagree with that, wanting instead to keep these employees under Hamas' control. In the Gaza Strip, the demand for placing the security sector employees under the control of the reconciliation government rises to 72% and only 24% want them under Hamas' control.
- Nonetheless, 72% agree with Hamas' demand that security and police should remain under its control during the next 6 months, up until the elections; 24% disagree with that. Two months ago 66% agreed with that.

(3) Presidential and Legislative Elections:

- If new presidential elections are held today and only two were nominated, Haniyeh, for the first time since we have started asking about his popularity about 8 years ago, would receive a majority of 61% and Abbas would receive 32%. Vote for Haniyeh stands at 53% in the Gaza Strip and 66% in the West Bank. Abbas receives 43% in the Gaza Strip and 25% in the West Bank. Two months ago, Abbas received the support of 53% in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and Haniyeh 41%. The rate of participation in such elections would reach 71%.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of Abbas decreases from 50% two months ago to 39% in this poll.
- If presidential elections were between Marwan Barghouti and Haniyeh, the former would receive 45% and the latter would receive 49% of the participants' votes. This is the first time in 8 years in which Haniyeh receives more votes than Barghouti. In our previous poll, Barghouti received the support of 58% and Haniyeh 38%. The rate of participation in this case would reach 77%.

- If presidential elections were between three: Mahmud Abbas, Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, Haniyeh would receive 48% of the vote, Barghouti 29%, and Abbas 19%. The rate of participation in this case would reach 80%. In our previous poll in June 2014, Barghouti received 36% of the vote, Haniyeh 33%, and Abbas 28%.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions, 78% say they would participate in such elections. Of those who would participate, 46% say they would vote for Hamas and 31% say they would vote for Fatah, 7% would vote for all other third parties combined, and 17% are undecided. Two months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 32% and for Fatah at 40%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands in this poll at 44% and in the West Bank at 47%. Vote for Fatah in the Gaza Strip stands in this poll at 36% and in the West Bank at 27%.
- A majority of 69% wants elections to take place within few to six months from today, 14% want them to take place after a year or more, and 12% do not want elections.

(4) Domestic Conditions:

- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip drops from 24% two months ago to 20% today, and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank remains almost unchanged at 32%.
- Perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip drops dramatically from 64% two months ago to 22% in this poll. In the West Bank perception of safety and security drops from 51% to 47% during the same period.
- Findings show that the percentage of Gazans who say they seek immigration to other countries stands at 43%; in the West Bank, the percentage stands at 20%.
- For the first time ever, Hamas' official TV station, Al Aqsa, is the one with the most viewership (37%) in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip followed by al Jazeera (21%), Palestine TV (16%), Ma'an-Mix (11%), and al Arabiya (5%).
- In the West Bank, 35% of the respondents expected economic conditions in their area to improve and a similar percentage (33%) expected them to worsen. But in the Gaza Strip 56% expected economic conditions to improve and only 20% expected them to worsen.

(5) Peace Process:

- Only 47% believe the chances for the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations are medium or high; 51% believe the chances are low or non-existent.

- The public is divided over the two-state solution: 49% support it and 50% oppose it. In our last poll two months ago, 54% supported this solution and 46% opposed it.
- A majority of 53% believe that armed confrontation is the most effective means to establish a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel. Only 22% believe negotiation is the best means to establish a Palestinian state and 20% believe that popular non-violent resistance is the most effective route to statehood.
- 62% say that the two-state solution is no longer practical due to Israeli settlement expansion and 35% think it is still practical. Yet, only 24% support the alternative one-state solution; 75% reject the one-state solution. These findings indicate a drop in the support for the one-state solution which two months ago stood at 31%.
- 81% are worried that they could be hurt by Israelis in their daily life or that their homes would be demolished and land confiscated. Only 19% are not worried.
- An overwhelming majority of 81% believe that Israel's long term aspiration is to annex the land occupied in 1967 and expel its population or deny them their political rights. By contrast, 63% believe that the long term aspiration of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO is to recover part or all of the land occupied in 1967.
- 57% of the public say that they supported the June 2014 kidnapping of the three Israelis in the West Bank when that incident took place. Support for the kidnapping reached 67% in the Gaza Strip and only 45% in the West Bank.
- Similarly, a majority of 54% supported the killing of the three kidnapped Israelis and 42% opposed it. Support for the killing reached 69% in the Gaza Strip and only 42% in the West Bank. 52% of the West Bankers opposed the killing of the three kidnapped Israelis.
- The public is divided over the identity of those who carried out the kidnapping and the killing of the three Israelis: 32% accuse Israel, 30% accuse Hamas, 21% believe a Palestinian acted on his own, and 2% accuse Fatah.
- In the absence of viable negotiations, 85% support joining more international organizations; 84% support joining the International Criminal Court; 62% favor resort to popular non-violent resistance; 60% support a return to an armed intifada; 42% support a dissolution of the PA; and 24% support abandoning the two-state solution in favor of a one-state solution. It is worth mentioning that two months ago only 41% indicated support for a return to an armed intifada.
- 61% believe that massive popular demonstrations could contribute to ending the Israeli occupation. But a larger majority of 72% favors the transfer of Hamas' armed approach to the West Bank. Support for emulating Hamas in the West Bank stands at 70% among West Bankers and 74% among Gazans.

- 82% say they participate in boycotting Israeli goods that have local alternatives and 18% say they do not participate in the boycott. An overwhelming majority believes that the boycott movement is effective and 11% believe it to be ineffective.

[<http://www.pcpsr.org/en/special-gaza-war-poll>]