

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 (86)

**The World Cup in Qatar helps to restore Palestinian public trust in the Arab World after years of disappointment; and in light of the escalating armed clashes in the West Bank and the near formation of a right wing and extreme government in Israel, the Palestinian public becomes more hardline while indicating a greater confidence in the efficacy of armed struggle**

7-10 December 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 7 and 10 December 2022. The period before the conduct of the poll witnessed several developments including a decision by the President of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Mahmoud Abbas, to form a high judicial council under his chairmanship, a new reconciliation agreement reached in Algeria by Palestinian factions, and media outlets reporting various cases of drowning of Palestinian emigrants in the Mediterranean Sea. On the Israeli side, after winning the November parliamentary elections, the Likud and other right wing and extreme right-wing groups agreed to form a governing coalition under Benjamin Netanyahu's premiership. In Palestinian-Israeli relations, a UN agency adopted a decision to seek the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the Israeli occupation. Moreover, various armed groups resisting the Israeli occupation in the northern parts of the West Bank, such as the "Lions' Den," which received a wide press coverage, went public during this period. In Qatar, the World Cup football games started and were widely followed by the Palestinians due to a considerable expression of support for and solidarity with Palestine by the fans attending the games.

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 1200 adults interviewed face to face in 120 randomly selected locations. Margin of error is +/-3%.

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### Main Findings:

The findings of the last quarter of 2022 point to a limited change in the domestic balance of power favoring Hamas and centering in the West Bank. Moreover, the popularity of president Abbas drops several percentage points, mostly in the West Bank. In other domestic issues, findings indicate that only one quarter of the public thinks that the factional agreement in Algeria will lead to actual reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and the level of pessimism about the prospects for reunification exceeds 70%. Findings also

show that the public views negatively Abbas' decree forming a high council for the judiciary under his chairmanship as only one in five Palestinians think it aims to strengthen the judiciary while a vast majority of more than 70% think it aims at weakening the independence of the judiciary.

The findings of the current quarter also indicate a significant decline in the level of support for the two-state solution accompanied by a significant rise in the percentage of those who think this solution is no longer feasible or possible due to settlement expansion. This change is not accompanied by an increase in the percentage of those who support the one-state solution in which Palestinians and Israeli Jews enjoy equal rights. To the contrary, support in the current quarter for this one-state solution has also dropped. These findings point to the possibility that the change in attitudes toward the political settlement with Israel reflects a hardening of public attitudes signifying less willingness to compromise. This hardening of attitudes can also be seen in the significant rise in support, in the West Bank, for a return to armed intifada. Furthermore, findings show a significant decrease, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in the percentage of those who view positively Israeli-Palestinian confidence building measures. On top of that, more than 70% of the public support the idea of forming armed groups, such as the "Lions' Den," and only one in ten says the PA has the right to arrest members of these groups or disarm them.

These findings come in a context of three major political and security-related developments, during the current quarter, that might have shaped Palestinian public attitudes, particularly in the West Bank:

- Perhaps the single most important development has been the escalating military clashes between Palestinian armed groups and the Israeli army in the northern part of the West Bank. The number of armed clashes and Israeli military incursions and the number of Palestinian casualties have been unprecedented since the end of the second intifada. This particular development sheds light on the fact that the most significant changes in our findings are centered in the West Bank.
- The results of the Israeli elections and the start of negotiations to form a right-wing coalition government, between the Likud, the religious parties, and the extreme right wing in Israeli politics, might have contributed to the increase in the percentage of those who think the two-state solution is no longer practical or possible. This same development might have also contributed to the rise in the belief that armed struggle, not negotiations, is the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation. Indeed, the findings indicate that a large Palestinian majority expects the worse from the upcoming Israeli government including high expectation that it will change the status quo in holy places in al Haram al Sharif in East Jerusalem, expel Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem, transfer Bedouin residents, such as Arab al Jahalin, from their villages and encampments in the southeastern parts of Jerusalem to other locations, and annex settlements or the Jordan Valley to Israel.
- Finally, it is clear from the findings that the pro-Palestine scenes at the World Cup in Qatar have contributed to a restoration of the confidence of the Palestinians in the justice of their cause and their right to resist the occupation by all legitimate means. The vast majority of the Palestinians say they have now regained much, or some, of the lost confidence in the Arab peoples in light of the solidarity with Palestine expressed by the fans during the football games. The findings show strong association between the restoration of trust and attitudes regarding the two-state solution and the return to an armed intifada.

**(1) “Lions’ Den” and other armed groups:**

- 72% of the public (84% in the Gaza Strip and 65% in the West Bank) say they are in favor of forming armed groups such as the “Lions’ Den,” which do not take orders from the PA and are not part of the PA security services; 22% are against that.
- Nonetheless, 59% are worried that the formation of such armed groups could lead to armed clashes with the PA security services; 39% are not worried.
- 79% say they are against the surrender of the armed groups’ members and their arms to the PA in order to receive protection against Israeli assassination; 17% say they are for it.
- The vast majority (87%) says the PA does not have the right to arrest member of these armed groups in order to prevent them from carrying out attacks against Israel or to provide them with protection; only 10% say they favor it.
- A majority of 59% expects these armed groups to expand and spread to other areas in the West Bank; 15% expect Israel to succeed in arresting or killing their members; and 14% expect the PA to succeed in containing or coopting these groups.

**(2) The formation of a new Israeli government of right wing and extreme right**

- A majority of 61% expects the policies of the upcoming Israeli government, that is currently being formed under the leadership of Netanyahu from the right wing and the extreme right, to be more extreme and aggressive while 30% expect them to be similar to the current policies; 4% expect them to be less extreme.
- A majority of 58% expects the upcoming Israeli government under Netanyahu to change the status quo in al Haram al Sharif in East Jerusalem by allowing Jews to pray at the site; 38% do not expect that.
- A majority of 64% expects the upcoming Israeli government under Netanyahu to expel Palestinian families from al Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem; 33% do not expect that.
- A majority of 68% expects the new Israeli government under Netanyahu to transfer the Palestinian Bedouin community currently living in the area between Jerusalem and Jericho, such as Arab al Jahalin, in order to build a big settlement to the east of Abu Din and al Ezariyya; 28% do not expect that.
- A majority of 69% expects the upcoming Israeli government under Netanyahu to annex settlements or the Jordan Valley to Israel; 27% do not expect that.
- A majority of 67% is less optimistic about the prospects of an improvement in Palestinian-Israeli relations, such as reaching new agreements on confidence building measures or reducing the expansion of the settlements during next year; 12% say they are more optimistic today; and 20% are neither optimistic nor pessimistic.

**(3) 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 75% in the Gaza Strip and 65% in the West Bank. However, a majority of 63% 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 36% and Haniyeh 54% of the votes (compared to 53% for Haniyeh and 38% for Abbas three months ago). In the Gaza Strip, Abbas receives 36% of the votes and Haniyeh receives 60%. In the West Bank, Abbas receives 36% and Haniyeh 46%. If the competition was between Marwan Barghouti and Ismail Haniyeh, participation would increase to 62% and from among those, Barghouti receives 61% and Haniyeh 34%. If the

competition is between Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Haniyyeh, participation rate would decrease to 43% and from among those, the former receives 31% and the latter 60%.

- If Abbas does not run for elections, the public prefers Marwan Barghouti to succeed him as the largest percentage (39%) selected him in a closed-ended question, followed by Ismail Haniyyeh (17%), Mohammad Dahlan (5%), Yahya al Sinwar (4%), Mohammad Shtayyeh, Khalid Mish'al and Hussein al Sheikh (3% each), and 22% said they do not know or have not decided.
- Level of satisfaction with the performance of president Abbas stands at 23% and dissatisfaction at 73%. Level of satisfaction with Abbas stands at 23% in the West Bank and 23% in the Gaza Strip. Satisfaction with the performance of Abbas three months ago stood at 26% and dissatisfaction at 74%. Moreover, a vast majority of 75% of the public wants president Abbas to resign while only 20% want him to remain in office. Three months ago, 74% said they want Abbas to resign. Demand for Abbas' resignation stands today at 73% in the West Bank and 79% in the Gaza Strip.
- If new legislative elections were held today with the participation of all factions that participated in the 2006 elections, 65% say they would participate. Of those who would participate, 34% say they will vote for Hamas and 34% say they will vote for Fatah, 10% will vote for all third parties combined, and 21% are undecided. Three months ago, vote for Hamas stood at 32% and Fatah at 34%. Vote for Hamas in the Gaza Strip stands today at 43% (compared to 44% three months ago) and for Fatah at 30% (compared to 29% three months ago). In the West Bank, vote for Hamas stands at 26% (compared to 21% three months ago) and Fatah at 38% (compared to 38% three months ago).
- 28% say Hamas is most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinian people while 25% think Fatah under president Abbas is the most deserving of representing and leading the Palestinians; 40% think neither side deserves such a role. Three months ago, 27% selected Hamas, 26% Fatah under Abbas, and 42% said neither side deserves such a role.

#### **(4) Domestic conditions, the “assassination” of Yasir Arafat, independence of the Judiciary, and those responsible for the drowning of Palestinian emigrants:**

- In light of the leaks in the media regarding the investigation into the death of Yasir Arafat, 50% of the public believe a Palestinian party or actor had implemented the plot to get rid of Arafat but that the planning had been done by Israel; 24% think no Palestinian actor or party had been involved in the death of Arafat; and 14% think a Palestinian party or actor had plotted and implemented the killing of Arafat.
- A large majority of 72% thinks the decree issued by president Abbas to form a high judiciary council under his chairmanship was meant to weaken the independence of the judiciary; 19% think it was meant to strengthen it.
- We asked the public about the party indirectly responsible for the drowning in the Mediterranean Sea of Palestinian emigrants from the Gaza Strip while attempting to illegally reach Europe. The largest percentage (27%) puts the responsibility on Hamas, 24% on Israel, 18% on the PA, another 18% blame the emigrants themselves, and 3% blame Egypt.
- 24% of the public say they want to emigrate due to political, security, and economic conditions. The percentage in the Gaza Strip stands at 30% and in the West Bank at 20%. Three months ago, 23% of West Bankers expressed a desire to emigrate and 29% of Gazans expressed the same desire.
- Positive evaluation of conditions in the Gaza Strip stands at 6% and positive evaluation of conditions in the West Bank stands at 22%.

- Nonetheless, perception of safety and security in the Gaza Strip stands at 77% and in the West Bank at 46%.
- Perception of corruption in PA institutions stands at 81%. When asked about institutions controlled by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, 69% indicated that there is corruption in these institutions. Three months ago, 86% said there is corruption in PA institutions and 73% said there is corruption in public institutions controlled by Hamas.
- 46% of West Bankers think people in the West Bank can criticize the PA without fear while 51% think they cannot. In the Gaza Strip, 48% think people in the Strip can criticize Hamas' authorities without fear and 51% think they cannot.
- In its assessment of the PA, a majority of the Palestinians (59%) views it as a burden on the Palestinian people while 36% view it as an asset for the Palestinian people. Three months ago, 57% viewed the PA as a burden and 38% viewed it as an asset.
- 26% are optimistic and 72% are pessimistic about the success of reconciliation. Three months ago, optimism stood at 25%. When asked about the prospects for the implementation of the agreement reached in factional meetings sponsored by Algeria, only 26% expressed the belief that the agreement would lead to actual reconciliation while 67% expressed the belief that it will not lead to reconciliation.
- 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, 78% expect failure; only 18% 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, 20% of the public expect success and 76% expect failure. In another question about the ability of the new government to improve economic conditions, a majority of 79% expects failure and 17% expects success.
- We asked the public about its TV viewership habits in the last three months. Findings indicate that al Jazeera TV has the highest viewership, standing at 31%, followed by Palestine TV (13%), al Aqsa TV (11%), Palestine Today TV (9%), Maan TV (6%), al Arabiya (3%), and al Mayadeen (2%).

**(5) Palestinian-Israeli Relations, the Peace process, and the decision to go to ICJ:**

- Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 32% and opposition stands at 66%. No description or details were provided for the concept. Three months ago, support for the concept stood at 37%.
- A majority of 69% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements while 28% believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 72% 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 25% believe the chances to be medium or high. Three months ago, only 64% 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, 26% say that they are in favor of such one state solution while 71% expressed opposition. Three months ago, support for Abbas' position on the one-state solution stood at 30%.
- When asked about support for specific policy choices to break the current deadlock, 59% supported joining more international organizations; 51% supported resort to non-violent resistance; 55% supported return to armed confrontations and intifada; 48% supported dissolving the PA; and 27% supported abandoning the two-state solution and embracing a

one state solution for Palestinians and Israelis. Three months ago, 48% supported a return to armed confrontations and intifada; 46% 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: 51% chose armed struggle (53% in the Gaza Strip and 50% in the West Bank), 21% negotiations, and 23% popular resistance. Three months ago, 41% chose armed struggle and 30% 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 57% said it looks positively, while 38% said it looks negatively, at such measures. Three months ago, 69% of the public said it viewed these measures positively.
- When asked about PA negotiations with the upcoming Israeli prime minister, Netanyahu, 47% said they opposed such negotiations while 25% said they support negotiations with him on a peace agreement and confidence building measures while 11% said they support negotiations if restricted to a peace agreement and 12% said they support negotiations with him if restricted to confidence building measures. In other words, a total of 36% are in favor of negotiations with Netanyahu about a peace agreement and 37% are in favor of negotiations with him about confidence building measures.
- In light of the decision by a UN agency to go to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to ask for its consultative opinion on the legality of the Israeli occupation, half of the public (50%) say the decision and any opinion by the ICJ will have no benefits for the Palestinian people; 28% say the benefit will be symbolic but will have no impact on Israeli policies; 16% say the decision will have an impact on constraining Israeli policies on matters such as settlement construction.

#### **(6) World Cup in Qatar:**

- 66% of the Palestinians say that they now, after having seen the scenes of solidarity and support for Palestine in the World Cup in Qatar, have regained much of the trust in the Arab peoples after many disappointments stemming from the Arab normalization with Israel; 21% say they have regained some of that trust; 5% say their trust in the Arab peoples has remained small; and 4% say they have no trust at all in the Arab World.
- In light of the Qatari organization of the World Cup, 68% of the Palestinians say they think Qatar's international standing has improved a lot compared to where it was before; 17% say it has improved somewhat; 8% say Qatar's standing has not changed; and 1% say it has worsened.
- We asked the public about its predictions for the winner in the World Cup. When the number of remaining country teams was eight, 48% said it expected Morocco to win; when the number of country teams went down to six, 54% expected Morocco to win. By contrast, 22% expect Argentina to win; and 15% expect France to win.

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

- 39% 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, 33% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 14% 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 13% 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 Palestinian society today, the largest percentage, 25% (8% in the Gaz Strip and 36% in the West Bank), say it is corruption; 21% (26% in the Gaza Strip and 17% in the West Bank) say it is unemployment and poverty; 20% say it is the continuation of the occupation and settlement construction; 17% (26% in the Gaza Strip and 11% in the West Bank) say it is continued siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip; 10% say it is the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and 4% say 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 (38%) said it is the Israeli occupation, while 22% said it is corruption, 15% said it is unemployment, 15% said it is the split or division, and 6% said it is the internal violence.