

# National Opinion Poll

*Government Performance*

*Reconciliation*

*Elections*

*BNC Movement*

*Normalization*

Publication Date: 1 April 2014

Fieldwork Date: 9-11 March 2014

Sample size: 1,200 Palestinians in the West Bank &  
Gaza Strip

*“Quality Research... Matters”*

**Highlights:**

- 58 percent of Palestinians approve of President Abbas' job performance, while a separate 38 percent evaluate his performance positively.
- 31 percent of Palestinians have a positive view of the Hamdallah government, while only 20 percent have a similar view of the Haniyeh government.
- 50 percent of Palestinians are optimistic about reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, and forming a national unity government, while 47 percent are pessimistic.
- 34 percent of Palestinians blame all political parties, including Hamas and Fatah, for the failure to achieve reconciliation.
- 69 percent of Palestinians support the creation of a Vice President position within the Palestinian Authority.
- 83 percent of Palestinians support the immediate conducting of national legislative elections, while a separate 82 percent support the immediate conducting of national presidential elections.
- If national legislative elections were held today, a Fatah electoral list would receive 42 percent of votes, and a Hamas list would receive 12 percent. However, 34 percent of Palestinians would not vote or are undecided.
- While a majority of Palestinians disapprove on "normalization" activities, 78 percent of respondents have not heard of the Palestinian BNC National Committee (BNC). Of those who are aware, 51 percent are familiar with the activities of the BNC.
- Of Palestinians who are aware of BNC, 52 percent believe the Movement will have a positive impact, while 33 percent believe it will have no impact.
- Palestinians are opposed to normalization measures or "people-to-people contacts." For example, 70 percent believe that engaging in cultural or sporting activities with Israelis is unacceptable to varying degrees.
- 55 percent believe that working jointly with Israelis on scientific/environmental/health projects or practical interests to both sides is unacceptable to varying degrees.

## **Government Performance:**

### 1. President Abbas' evaluation stable: 58 percent approve performance

38 percent evaluate the "overall performance" of President Abbas as "positive" and 42 percent evaluate his performance as "fair." In contrast, 18 percent evaluate his performance as negative.

In regards to his approval rating, 58 percent of respondents approve of the performance of President Abbas, a number that has remained consistent since February 2013. Abbas' disapproval rate is 33 percent. The results are consistent among West Bank and Gaza respondents.

### 2. Evaluation of the Haniyeh government

Evaluation of the Haniyeh government is consistent with the results of AWRAD's previous two polls. 20 percent positively evaluate the performance of his government and 33 percent view it as fair. In contrast, 38 percent view the performance of the Haniyeh government as negative, a 4 percent increase since December 2013.

### 3. Evaluation of the Hamdallah Government

Evaluation of the Hamdallah government remains stable, with 31 percent of respondents evaluating the performance of his government as positive. 40 percent of respondents evaluate the performance of the Hamdallah government as fair; 16 percent evaluate it as negative; and 13 percent state that they don't know.

### 4. Respondents continue to prefer a Hamdallah-led government

When asked to choose between the two governments to govern in their respective region, 45 percent choose the Hamdallah government, compared to 17 percent who selected the Haniyeh government. 32 percent reject both options, and 6 percent are unsure.

## **Reconciliation**

Palestinians are divided on the prospects of Fatah and Hamas forming a national unity government. 50 percent of respondents are optimistic about the prospects and 47 percent are pessimistic. 3 percent state that they " don't know."

34 percent of respondents blame all Palestinian political parties, including Hamas and Fatah, for the failure to achieve reconciliation. 13 percent of respondents state that Fatah alone bears the greatest responsibility for the failure to achieve reconciliation, while 22 percent state that Hamas alone bears the greatest responsibility. 23 percent of respondents attribute the failure to other actors without specifying whom.

## **Vice President Position**

69 percent of Palestinians support the creation of a Vice President position within the Palestinian Authority structure, while 24 percent disapprove, and 7 percent state that they are unsure.

## **Elections**

83 percent of Palestinians support the immediate conduct of national legislative elections, while only 14 percent oppose. Support is highest in the Gaza Strip 94 percent, though also significant within the West Bank 77 percent.

Furthermore, 82 percent of Palestinians support the immediate conduct of national presidential elections, while 16 percent oppose. Once again, support is higher in Gaza 93 percent than in the West Bank 75 percent.

If national legislative elections were conducted today, a Fatah electoral list would receive the highest support 42 percent, followed by Hamas 12 percent; few other parties receive significant support.<sup>1</sup> Support for Fatah is greater in Gaza 51 percent, than in the West Bank 37 percent. Similarly, support for Hamas is also stronger in Gaza 16 percent than the West Bank 10 percent.

It is significant to note that 19 percent of all respondents have not decided how they would vote, and a further 15 percent say they would not vote at all. Indecision is greater in the West Bank 23 percent than Gaza 13 percent. Among those who say they will not vote show there is a similar regional difference at 17 percent and 10 percent, respectively. This data would appear to indicate that undecided and independent voters could significantly influence the outcome of any future election.

## **Presidential Ballot Test**

In a hypothetical matchup between Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Meshaal, Abbas would come out on top. 50 percent of respondents say they would vote for Abbas, compared to 17 percent who say they would vote for Meshaal. 55 percent of respondents in Gaza would vote for Abbas, compared to 47 percent in the West Bank. Similarly, 22 percent of Gaza respondents would vote for Meshaal compared to 15 percent in the West Bank.

In an Abbas-Meshaal presidential vote, 11 percent of respondents are undecided, and a further 22 percent say they would not vote. Similar to potential legislative elections, there are a greater number of undecided respondents in the West Bank 13 percent than Gaza 8 percent, as well as a larger number of Palestinians who say they would not vote 25 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

In a hypothetical contest between Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, Abbas would win by a similar margin. In such an election, 51 percent of respondents would vote for Abbas, and 17 percent for Haniyeh. 55 percent of respondents in Gaza would support Abbas, compared to 48 percent in the West Bank. Similarly, 21 percent of Gaza respondents would support Haniyeh, compared to 14 percent in the West Bank.

In an Abbas-Haniyeh race, 12 percent of respondents are undecided and 21 percent say they would not vote. Once again, these rates are greater in the West Bank, where 14 percent are unsure who they would choose in such an election, compared to 8 percent in Gaza. Additionally, 24 percent of

---

<sup>1</sup> All other party options receive 3 percent or less, for a full list of the parties included please look at the tables.

respondents in the West Bank say they would not vote in such an election, compared to 16 percent in Gaza.

### **The BNC**

The majority of Palestinians 78 percent have not heard of the Palestinian BNC National Committee (BNC) compared to 22 percent who have heard about it. Territorial disaggregation has no effect on awareness.

Among those Palestinians 22 percent who are aware of the BNC, 51 percent are familiar with its various activities, while 49 percent are unfamiliar. Familiarity is greater among Gaza respondents 60 percent than West Bank 45 percent.

Among Palestinians who are aware of the BNC, 87 percent are supportive, while 10 percent oppose.

When Palestinians, who are aware of the BNC, are asked to evaluate its impact on the Palestinian cause, 52 percent say it will have a positive impact, while 33 percent believe it will have no impact, 11 percent are unsure, and 3 percent believe the impact will be negative. While respondents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are equally likely to believe that the BNC will have a positive or negative impact, there is greater variety among those who are unsure or believe it will be insignificant. Specifically, respondents in the West Bank 37 percent are more likely than those in Gaza 26 percent to believe BNC will have no impact, while Gaza respondents 17 percent are more likely to be uncertain of the impact than those in the West Bank 11 percent.

### **Normalization**

As part of AWRAD's most recent public opinion poll, respondents were asked about certain aspects of normalization or "people-to-people contacts" that have been reported on in the media. The following are Palestinian opinions on different types of engagement:

70 percent of respondents believe that engaging in cultural or sporting activities with Israelis is unacceptable to varying degrees, compared to 28 percent who believe the opposite. This scenario is the most rejected of all contacts. Opposition is more pronounced in Gaza 77 percent than the West Bank 66 percent. In addition, 61 percent of Gaza respondents and 48 percent of West Bank respondents find such a scenario to be completely unacceptable.

55 percent of Palestinians consider working jointly with Israelis on scientific/environmental/health projects on projects of practical interest to both sides to be unacceptable to varying degrees, while 43 percent believe the opposite. Gaza respondents 57 percent are more likely to reject this idea than those in the West Bank 53 percent. It is also significant to note that 42 percent of respondents in Gaza find such contact completely unacceptable, along with 35 percent of those in the West Bank.

57 percent of Palestinians believe it is unacceptable to varying degrees to welcome Israelis to the Palestinian territories to show them local realities, while 43 percent believe the opposite.

Palestinians in Gaza 63 percent are more likely to oppose such contact than their counterparts in the West Bank 52 percent. Similarly, 52 percent of respondents in Gaza stated that such contact is completely unacceptable.

53 percent of Palestinians find the idea of building the Palestinian economy through improved trade relations with Israelis unacceptable to varying degrees, while 46 percent believe the opposite. Territorial disaggregation has no effect on opinion. Of the 53 percent of Palestinians who find this contact unacceptable to varying degrees, 38 percent find it completely unacceptable (40 percent in Gaza, 36 percent in the West Bank).

(52 percent) of Palestinians believe it is unacceptable to varying degrees to engage Israelis in political discussions on a wide range of issues, while 42 percent consider it acceptable to varying degrees. Respondents in the West Bank 50 percent are more likely to approve of this contact, than those in Gaza 40 percent. In contrast, 59 percent of respondents in Gaza consider this unacceptable to varying degrees, compared to 48 percent in the West Bank. Furthermore, among the 59 percent of Gazans, 47 percent consider such contact to be completely unacceptable.

Palestinians are divided on allowing Israeli journalists to enter Palestinian territories to report on the local situation. 49 percent believe such contact is acceptable to varying degrees, while 51 percent say that it is unacceptable. Respondents in Gaza are more likely to find this idea acceptable 52 percent than those in the West Bank 46 percent.