

JMCC Public Opinion Poll No. 26

On Palestinian Attitudes Towards Politics - May 1998

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Introduction

The results of JMCC's opinion poll May 21-22, 1998, indicate to decrease in support for the peace process and for the Palestinian Authority in general, despite the fact that those supporting the peace process and the PA are more than those opposing them. The main results can be summarized as follows, in comparison with the previous poll with the same questions:

- Despite the fact that the majority of Palestinians remained optimistic, there was a drop in the percentage of optimists from 72.4% last November to 65.6% in May, 1998.
 - There was a decrease in the majority of those supporting the peace process in general from 74.2% in November, 1997 to 63.7% in May, 1998.
 - A decrease in the percentage of those who have confidence in President Yasser Arafat from 46.4% last November to 38.7% in May, 1998 while there was a rise in the percentage of those who trust Sheikh Ahmed Yassin from 5.8% last November to 8.4% in May 1998. It seems probable that the rise in confidence in Sheikh Yassin is attributed to the media focus on his recent Arab tour.
 - One of the main significant changes shown in this poll is the notable rise in the number of Palestinians who do not trust any of the political or religious factions or figures. The percentage of those who do not trust any of the political or religious factions increased from 17.3% last November to 29.1% in May, 1998 while those who do not trust any of the political or religious figures increased from 16.9% in November, 1997 to 24.8% in May.
 - Regarding confidence in Fateh, the most popular movement among the Palestinian people, the percentage, which was 40.9% last November, dropped to 32.9% in May 1998.
 - The percentage of Palestinians who trust Hamas dropped to its somewhat consistent rate of 13.3% in May, 1998 compared to 17.3% last November. It should be noted that the percentage of those who trust Hamas was 11.3% in July 1997 and 10.3% in May 1997. The abrupt increase in November, 1997 (17.3%) seems to have been temporary, resulting from special events, such as the assassination attempt against one of its leaders in Amman and the release of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, in addition to the broad media coverage.
 - Assessment of the performance of the Palestinian Authority registered a slight retreat from 71.4% last November to 64.6% in May 1998.
 - Palestinian public appraisal regarding the performance of the Palestinian Legislative Council showed a slight improvement from 56.7% who viewed it as good or very good last July to 52.2% in May, 1998.
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Methodology

A random sample of 1,208 Palestinians, over the age of 18 years, were interviewed throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip on 21 and 22 May 1998. The interviews were conducted on randomly selected homes, and the subjects inside each home were also selected randomly according to Kish tables. The interviews were conducted in 60 sampling points chosen randomly according to population.

In the *West Bank*, 775 people were surveyed from the following areas: **Jenin:** Jenin & Jenin Refugee Camp, al-Yamoun, Arraba & Kafr Rai, Zababdeh & 'Aqabeh & Ya'bad. **Nablus:** Nablus & Balata Refugee Camp, Beit Furik & Salfit, Farkha, Burqa, Huwwara, Burin. **Tulkarem:** Tulkarem & Tulkarem Refugee Camp, 'Azzun, Allar, 'Anabta. **Qalqiliya:** Qalqiliyaa. **Bethlehem:** Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Nahalin, Al-Khader. **Hebron:** Hebron, Dura, Fawwar RC, Halhul, Thahiriya, Yatta, Tarqumia. **Jerusalem:** Old City, al-Ram, Dahiyat al-Bareed, Beit Hanina, Ezzariya, Abu Dis. **Jericho:** Jericho. **Ramallah:** Ramallah, al-Bireh, al-'Amari Refugee Camp, al-Tayyiba, Kaubar, Ni'lin.

In the *Gaza Strip*, 433 people were surveyed from: al-Sabra, Shujaia (Daraj & Tufah), Zaytoon, Rimal, Naser, Sheikh Radwan, Beach Refugee Camp, Jabaliya, Jabaliya Refugee Camp, Beit Hanun, Beit Lahiya, Deir al-Balah Refugee Camp, Nuseirat, Bureij, Rafah, Rafah Refugee Camp, Yubna, Khan Younis, Khan Younis Refugee Camp, Bani Suheila, 'Abasan.

Sample Distribution

- 56.7% of the respondents were from the West Bank
- 35.8% from the Gaza Strip
- 7.5% from Jerusalem
- 36.5% said they live in villages
- 20.1% in refugee camps
- 43.4% in towns/cities
- 48.5% were male
- 51.5% were female
- 59.8% were married
- 30.5% were single
- 4.5% were widowed
- 1.9% were divorced
- 3.3% no answer
- The average of age of the respondents was 34 years.

Occupation respondents

- Students 14.5%
- Waged laborers 12.6%
- Housewives 34.4%
- Employees e.g. secretaries/teachers/nurses/municipal employees 16.7%
- Businessmen/private business 7.2%
- Farmers/fishermen 2.0%
- Craftsmen 1.3%
- Professionals - e.g. doctors/lawyers/pharmacists/engineers 1.8%
- Unemployed 5.7%
- Retired 1.5%

- No answer 2.3%
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Results

Q1. To what extent do you feel optimistic or pessimistic regarding the future in general? Would you say that you are very optimistic, optimistic, pessimistic or very pessimistic?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Very optimistic	6.6%	5.4%	8.8%
Optimistic	59.0%	59.9%	57.5%
Pessimistic	23.2%	23.1%	23.3%
Very pessimistic	10.3%	11.0%	9.2%
No answer	0.9%	0.6%	1.2%

Q2. In general, how do you feel about the Palestinian - Israeli peace process? Would you say that you strongly support, somewhat support, neither support or oppose, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the Palestinian - Israeli peace process?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Strongly support	16.1%	11.4%	24.5%
Somewhat support	47.6%	51.7%	40.2%
Neither support nor oppose	13.8%	14.5%	12.7%
Somewhat oppose	9.6%	9.4%	9.9%
Strongly oppose	11.8%	12.0%	11.5%
No answer	1.1%	1.0%	1.2%

Q3. Which Palestinian political or religious faction do you trust most?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Fatah	32.9%	30.7%	36.7%
Hamas	13.3%	11.4%	16.9%
PFLP	2.8%	3.2%	2.1%
Islamic Jihad	0.8%	0.5%	1.4%
PPP	1.2%	1.7%	0.2%
Other Islamic Faction	3.9%	4.9%	2.1%
Other Factions	2.9%	3.9%	1.3%
Do not trust anyone	29.1%	30.3%	27.2%
No answer	13.1%	13.4%	12.1%

Q4. Which Palestinian personality do you trust most?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Yasser Arafat	38.7%	34.5%	46.4%
Ahmed Yassin	8.4%	7.6%	9.7%
Haydar Abdel Shafi	3.4%	3.2%	3.7%
Hanan Ashrawi	2.4%	3.0%	1.4%
George Habash	1.8%	1.7%	2.1%
Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen)	1.1%	0.6%	1.8%
Faisal Husseini	0.9%	0.6%	1.4%
Saeb Erekat	0.9%	0.6%	1.4%
Other Personalities	6.7%	6.5%	6.9%
Do not trust anyone	24.8%	29.9%	15.7%
No answer	10.9%	11.8%	9.5%

Q5. What do you think about the Oslo agreement? Would you say that you strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose it?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Strongly support	8.9%	5.8%	14.5%
Somewhat support	55.6%	59.1%	49.4%
Somewhat oppose	14.9%	13.7%	17.1%
Strongly oppose	13.6%	14.2%	12.5%
No answer	7.0%	7.2%	6.5%

Q6. In general, how do you evaluate the Palestinian Authority's performance? Do you say its performance is very good, good, bad or very bad?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Very good	9.1%	7.0%	12.9%
Good	55.5%	56.5%	53.8%
Bad	21.6%	21.3%	22.2%
Very bad	10.2%	11.4%	8.1%
No answer	3.6%	3.8%	3.0%

Q7. In general, how would you evaluate the performance of the Palestinian Legislative Council?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Very good	5.8%	5.3%	6.7%
Good	46.4%	45.4%	48.3%
Bad	25.6%	26.5%	24.0%
Very bad	14.1%	13.8%	14.5%
No answer	8.1%	9.0%	6.5%