

JMCC Public Opinion Poll No. 6 - Part One

On Palestinian Attitudes To Democracy

May 1995

In cooperation with MBC and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

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Methodology

A random sample of 1,069 Palestinians, over the age of 18 years, were interviewed face-to-face throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip on 5-6 May 1995. The interviews were conducted on randomly selected homes, and the subjects inside each home were also selected randomly according to Kish tables method

The Poll was conducted by JMCC in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, a political foundation affiliated with the Social Democratic Party in Germany, and the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation in London. It aimed to study concepts of democracy among Palestinians.

The major of error is plus or minus 4% with a confidence level of 95%.

Sample Distribution

- 68% of the respondents were from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and autonomous Jericho
- 32% from the Gaza Strip (The Gaza Strip represents 37% of the Palestinian population according to the figures of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics).
- 60% were female
- 40% were male
- 96.4% were Muslim
- 2.4% were Christian
- 1.2% no answer
- The average of age of the respondents was 31 years.

Occupation respondents

- Students 8.5%
- Waged laborers 10.6%
- Housewives 40%
- Businessmen/private business 3.5%
- Professionals - e.g. doctors/lawyers/pharmacists/engineers 7.8%
- Clerks 6.5%
- Craftsmen 4.6%
- Unemployed 10%
- Retired 2%
- Other 6.5%

Results

Q1. How do you rate your interest in political events and issues in general?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Very interested	37.4%	34.2%	44.0%
Somewhat interested	44.5%	46.2%	41.1%
Not at all interested	16.8%	18.3%	14.1%
No opinion	1.3%	1.3%	0.8%

Q2. 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	21.7%	20.1%	25.5%
Optimistic	51.8%	53.3%	48.4%
Not optimistic	25.2%	25.3%	24.9%
No opinion	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%

Q3. Would you say you believe in democracy?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Yes	79.6%	78.1%	83.0%
No	12.3%	12.6%	11.4%
No opinion	8.1%	9.3%	5.6%

Q3-1 What is democracy? (The question was asked only to those who said they believe in democracy)

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Rule of the people	15.5%	13.9%	18.5%
Elections	9.9%	9.6%	10.8%
Constitution & law superiority	4.0%	3.6%	4.3%
Pluralism	3.6%	3.8%	3.4%
Human rights & minority protection	13.5%	12.7%	15.1%
Rule of law	1.1%	1.3%	0.6%
Equality before law	10.9%	9.1%	14.5%
Freedom to all	8.9%	9.2%	8.4%
Freedom of expression	16.1%	17.5%	13.1%
Division of responsibility	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%

Consultation	1.1%	1.3%	0.6%
More than one thing	0.8%	0.8%	0.6%
Individual Freedom	7.1%	8.6%	4.0%
Love, understanding devotion	1.8%	2.0%	1.3%
No answer	5.3%	6.1%	4.5%

Q3-2 Some consider democracy as "rule of the people through free elections resulting in government that respects the law and constitution". Do you agree? (The question was asked to those who did not give their opinion regarding their belief in democracy)

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Yes	62.1%	59.1%	75.0%
No	8.0%	7.6%	10.0%
No opinion	29.9%	33.3%	15.0%

Q3-3 If your answer was "I do not believe in democracy" what do you consider yourself then?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Islam & religion	30.6%	28.6%	35.4%
Regular person	13.6%	17.3%	6.2%
Democracy does not exist	10.9%	10.2%	12.5%
Believe in the right thing	6.8%	6.1%	8.3%
Our people do not deserve democracy	2.0%	1.0%	2.1%
No opinion	36.1%	36.8%	35.5%

Q4. What in your opinion is the best political system?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Proportional representation	26.2%	24.6%	29.6%
Two-party system	2.9%	2.1%	4.7%
One party	16.3%	16.3%	16.1%
Islamic system	40.0%	42.0%	35.6%
No opinion	14.6%	15.0%	14.0%

Q5. Which countries in the world you would say functions according to an Islamic system?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
No country	49.1%	52.8%	41.3%
Saudi Arabia	13.6%	11.2%	18.5%
Arab countries	4.1%	3.6%	5.3%

Palestine	2.2%	2.5%	1.8%
Iran & Afghanistan	13.1%	0.3%	12.3%
Sudan	5.9%	13.6%	8.8%
Iraq	1.0%	4.4%	0.9%
Pakistan	2.8%	1.1%	2.1%
Chechnya	0.1%	3.2%	0.3%
Malaysia	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
A group of countries	2.6%	1.7%	4.7%
No opinion	5.2%	5.3%	3.7%

Q6. Does the government have the right to intervene in?

Freedom of expression

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
All the time	11.7%	10.8%	13.8%
Sometimes	44.8%	43.4%	47.8%
No intervention	39.7%	42.2%	34.3%
No opinion	3.8%	3.6%	4.1%

Freedom of assembly

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
All the time	17.5%	16.3%	20.2%
Sometimes	50.5%	50.1%	51.3%
No intervention	26.2%	28.1%	22.3%
No opinion	5.8%	5.5%	6.2%

Freedom of religion

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
All the time	12.0%	11.8%	12.6%
Sometimes	13.9%	13.0%	16.1%
No intervention	70.1%	70.8%	68.0%
No opinion	4.0%	4.4%	3.3%

Freedom of Party formation

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
All the time	24.0%	24.8%	22.9%
Sometimes	33.9%	31.8%	38.1%
No intervention	32.1%	33.6%	28.7%
No opinion	10.0%	9.8%	10.3%

Individual rights

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
All the time	10.0%	9.0%	12.3%
Sometimes	28.0%	27.2%	29.6%
No intervention	53.8%	55.9%	49.6%
No opinion	8.2%	7.9%	8.5%

Opposition

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
All the time	15.0%	14.7%	15.8%
Sometimes	38.4%	38.7%	38.1%
No intervention	29.2%	29.5%	28.4%
No opinion	17.4%	17.1%	17.7%

Q6-1 Why do you say so? (This question was asked to those who said that the government has the right to interfere in individual rights).

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Public benefit	23.9%	23.5%	24.4%
Not everyone behaves in the right manner	15.8%	15.2%	17.1%
To protect individual rights	18.3%	18.1%	20.1%
To prevent crime and maintain order	7.5%	7.0%	8.5%
Because individual rights contravene with Islamic concepts	4.0%	5.1%	1.8%
Because it is one of its responsibilities	7.3%	6.0%	9.7%
No opinion	23.2%	25.1%	18.4%

Q6-2 Why do you say so? (This question was asked to those who said that the government has the right to interfere with the opposition)

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Public benefit	9.3%	8.9%	10.1%
Has the right to interfere	9.3%	9.6%	8.8%
To solve problems	12.8%	15.0%	8.4%
To protect opposition	0.7%	1.1%	0.0%
Interferes without using arms	0.9%	1.3%	0.0%
Because opposition is not always right	16.8%	17.9%	14.5%
To attract the opposition	1.3%	1.8%	0.4%
Opposition is a watchdog	2.8%	2.9%	2.6%
To prevent violence	20.8%	18.1%	26.0%
For the continuation of peace	0.7%	0.9%	0.4%
Because opposition will take the role of the government	0.6%	0.7%	0.4%
Interfering gradually only	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%
No opinion	23.7%	21.6%	28.0%

Q6-3 If the government was an elected one, would you insist that it should not interfere at all?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Yes	51.7%	52.7%	49.4%
No	30.3%	29.5%	32.0%
No opinion	18.0%	17.8%	18.6%

Q7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Total

	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
In some situations, the Palestinian Authority is allowed to break the constitution to protect national interest	75.5%	19.3%	5.2%
Using violence or the threat of violence by the elected authority as a political tool is never justified	73.5%	23.5%	3.0%
Using violence or the threat of violence by the opposition as a political tool is never justified	78.5%	16.4%	5.1%
Rights of the individuals should be determined by their adherence to the law	87.3%	7.4%	5.3%
Rights of the opposition should be determined by their adherence to the law	80.2%	12.4%	7.4%
There is too much attention for rights and little for law and order	48.4%	42.0%	9.6%
Establishment of political parties should be always guaranteed to everyone	64.8%	27.9%	7.3%

Elections may be suspended if the majority decided so	63.7%	30.2%	6.1%
There should be total separation between the authorities of the President, Parliament, and judiciary	56.4%	34.2%	9.4%
The Parliament should be the highest authority in the state	66.1%	24.2%	9.7%
Parliament should be above the judiciary and courts	43.0%	45.1%	11.9%
The legislative authority should be above the law	36.2%	54.1%	9.7%
The authority of the President and the executive body should be above Parliament	32.0%	58.4%	9.6%
Judiciary must be independent	73.2%	20.9%	5.9%
The president may be impeached by parliament	68.8%	22.9%	8.3%

West Bank

	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
In some situations, the Palestinian Authority is allowed to break the constitution to protect national interest	75.4%	19.6%	5.0%
Using violence or the threat of violence by the elected authority as a political tool is never justified	73.2%	23.8%	3.0%
Using violence or the threat of violence by the opposition as a political tool is never justified	78.1%	16.5%	5.4%
Rights of the individuals should be determined by their adherence to the law	87.3%	7.1%	5.6%
Rights of the opposition should be determined by their adherence to the law	79.8%	12.6%	7.6%
There is too much attention for rights and little for law and order	49.3%	39.6%	11.1%
Establishment of political parties should be always guaranteed to everyone	65.1%	26.4%	8.5%
Elections may be suspended if the majority decided so	62.7%	30.6%	6.7%
There should be total separation between the authorities of the President, Parliament, and judiciary	57.5%	33.1%	9.4%
The Parliament should be the highest authority in the state	66.9%	23.1%	10.0%
Parliament should be above the judiciary and courts	44.0%	43.7%	12.3%
The legislative authority should be above the law	36.0%	54.1%	9.9%
The authority of the President and the executive body should be above Parliament	32.2%	58.5%	9.3%
Judiciary must be independent	75.9%	16.9%	7.2%
The president may be impeached by parliament	71.1%	19.8%	9.1%

Gaza Strip

	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
In some situations, the Palestinian Authority is allowed to break the constitution to protect national interest	76.2%	18.5%	5.3%
Using violence or the threat of violence by the elected authority as a political tool is never justified	74.8%	22.3%	2.9%

Using violence or the threat of violence by the opposition as a political tool is never justified	79.2%	16.1%	4.7%
Rights of the individuals should be determined by their adherence to the law	87.4%	7.9%	4.7%
Rights of the opposition should be determined by their adherence to the law	81.2%	12.3%	6.5%
There is too much attention for rights and little for law and order	46.0%	47.2%	6.8%
Establishment of political parties should be always guaranteed to everyone	63.9%	31.4%	4.7%
Elections may be suspended if the majority decided so	66.3%	29.3%	4.4%
There should be total separation between the authorities of the President, Parliament, and judiciary	54.3%	37.0%	8.7%
The Parliament should be the highest authority in the state	64.8%	26.7%	8.5%
Parliament should be above the judiciary and courts	41.1%	48.1%	10.8%
The legislative authority should be above the law	37.2%	54.0%	8.8%
The authority of the President and the executive body should be above Parliament	32.0%	58.0%	10.0%
Judiciary must be independent	68.0%	29.4%	2.6%
The president may be impeached by parliament	64.2%	29.3%	6.5%

Q8. What do you think of majority rule? Is it an:

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Absolute right	39.5%	38.2%	42.2%
Conditional right	45.7%	47.0%	42.8%
Other	4.4%	4.3%	4.7%
No opinion	10.4%	10.5%	10.3%

Q9. What do you think of minority rights? Is it an:

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Absolute right	13.2%	12.6%	14.7%
Conditional right	58.3%	57.3%	60.7%
Other	13.1%	13.6%	12.0%
No opinion	15.4%	16.5%	12.6%

Q10. What do you think of the opposition right? Is it an:

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Absolute right	20.9%	17.7%	27.6%
Conditional right	60.5%	61.1%	59.8%
Other	5.6%	6.5%	3.5%
No opinion	13.0%	14.7%	9.1%

Q11. What do you think of the authorities of the President? Is it:

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Absolute right	23.0%	22.3%	24.9%
Conditional right	67.2%	67.5%	66.6%
Other	2.2%	2.6%	1.5%
No opinion	7.6%	7.6%	7.0%

Q12. The State Security Court is a military court established by the Palestinian Authority to try those whom it accuses of infringing on national security. Would you support the trying of people from the opposition in the court?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Support	49.2%	52.0%	43.4%
Oppose	42.4%	38.9%	49.9%
No opinion	8.4%	9.1%	6.7%

Q12-1 Would you support the trying of people who are accused of infringing national security to the State Security Court?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Support	57.5%	54.3%	64.6%
Oppose	21.8%	20.0%	25.5%
No opinion	20.7%	25.7%	9.9%

Q13. Who do you think is the best body for explaining the law?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Parliament	39.1%	39.1%	39.6%
President	10.4%	10.7%	10.0%
High court	40.2%	40.4%	39.9%
More than one	0.9%	1.2%	0.3%
Religion	1.3%	1.1%	1.8%
Experts	0.6%	0.4%	0.9%
No opinion	7.5%	7.1%	7.5%

Q14. Who of the following must appoint the judges?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
President	12.5%	12.0%	13.8%
Parliament	26.8%	26.7%	27.3%
Judges should be elected	52.5%	52.3%	53.1%
President & Parliament	0.7%	0.8%	0.3%
High court	0.9%	1.4%	0.0%
Government	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%
Independent body	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%
No opinion	6.0%	6.0%	5.2%

Q15. Who of the following must hold the president accountable?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Parliament	36.9%	37.1%	36.7%
Cabinet	9.2%	7.6%	12.6%
Courts of Law	32.9%	36.1%	26.4%
President above accountability	5.3%	5.0%	6.2%
People	5.1%	4.6%	6.2%
More than one of the above	1.8%	1.9%	1.5%
God / Islam	0.7%	0.3%	1.5%
No opinion	8.1%	7.4%	8.9%

Q16. Who of the following must hold the cabinet accountable?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
President	28.1%	26.0%	32.6%
Law & Courts	57.0%	58.0%	55.1%
Parliament	4.9%	5.9%	2.6%
People	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%
More than one	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%
No opinion	6.7%	6.8%	6.2%

Q17. How important is the role of the following in supporting democratic rule?**Total**

	Important	Somewhat important	Not Important	No opinion
Elected high government officials	74.0%	17.1%	2.8%	6.1%
Maintenance of the opposition rights	64.4%	23.2%	7.0%	5.4%
Constitutional restrictions on the government	64.6%	18.5%	7.5%	9.4%
Free and fair elections	89.4%	4.2%	1.5%	4.9%
Equality before the law	91.4%	3.6%	1.5%	3.5%
The opposition accepting the majority rule	61.7%	20.0%	10.1%	8.2%
Freedom of NGO's work	45.5%	28.7%	17.6%	8.2%

Gaza Strip

	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	No Opinion
Elected high government officials	73.9%	17.9%	4.4%	3.8%
Maintenance of the opposition rights	67.7%	21.7%	6.7%	3.9%
Constitutional restrictions on the government	65.4%	19.6%	7.0%	8.0%
Free and fair elections	89.1%	5.6%	1.8%	3.5%
Equality before the law	91.2%	4.4%	1.2%	3.2%
The opposition accepting the majority rule	65.1%	19.1%	9.7%	6.1%
Freedom of NGO's work	41.3%	31.7%	20.8%	6.2%

West Bank

	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	No Opinion
Elected high government officials	74.1%	16.9%	2.1%	6.9%
Maintenance of the opposition rights	62.9%	24.1%	7.1%	5.9%
Constitutional restrictions on the government	64.5%	18.1%	7.6%	9.8%
Free and fair elections	89.9%	3.6%	1.2%	5.3%
Equality before the law	91.7%	3.2%	1.7%	3.4%
The opposition accepting the majority rule	60.2%	20.1%	10.4%	9.3%
Freedom of NGO's work	47.4%	27.5%	16.0%	9.1%

Q18. What is the importance of the NGO's such as Labor union, Women's organizations, Research centers, Human rights organizations, Medical organization... etc in serving the democratic society?

Total

	Important	Somewhat important	Not Important	No opinion
Their role in supporting democratic is	69.1%	19.8%	4.4%	6.7%
Their role in monitoring state functions is	52.7%	24.8%	16.5%	6.0%
Their role in represent the point of view of their representatives in front of the government is	60.5%	25.1%	7.2%	7.2%

West Bank

	Important	Somewhat important	Not Important	No opinion
Their role in supporting democratic is	68.9%	20.5%	3.5%	7.1%
Their role in monitoring state functions is	52.4%	24.1%	17.0%	6.5%
Their role in represent the point of view of their representatives in front of the government is	61.3%	23.9%	7.1%	7.7%

Gaza Strip

	Important	Somewhat important	Not Important	No opinion
Their role in supporting democratic is	70.4%	18.5%	6.5%	4.6%
Their role in monitoring state functions is	53.7%	26.7%	15.2%	4.4%
Their role in represent the point of view of their representatives in front of the government is	59.8%	27.6%	7.3%	5.3%

Q19. Do you think the NGO's should be independent from the government somewhat independent or relate to the Government?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Independent	27.9%	26.1%	31.7%
Somewhat independent	32.0%	32.6%	31.1%
Relate to Government	34.8%	35.3%	34.0%
No opinion	5.3%	6.0%	3.2%

Q20. In many countries governments may violate individual rights. What would you do if the government violates your individual rights?

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Go to court	45.1%	46.7%	41.6%
Complain	26.3%	25.9%	27.6%
I will not elect the party responsible for that	8.5%	6.1%	13.5%
Go to human rights groups	2.3%	2.4%	2.3%
Pray to God	3.6%	4.1%	2.6%
Go to the Media	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Go to the highest authority	0.7%	1.0%	0.3%
Resist and revenge	5.9%	7.2%	3.2%
No opinion	7.3%	6.3%	8.6%