

Palestinians want elections; electoral preferences changing

An opinion poll carried out by Fafo in February and May provides insights into the attitudes of the West Bank and Gaza Strip populations concerning salient political issues.

On domestic issues, the poll found that Palestinians are split over an unilateral proclamation of a Palestinian state. They are generally more confident in the Fayyad government and less confident in the Haniyyeh government when compared to Fafo's poll a year ago. The security services in the West Bank have gained popular confidence, while the security services in Gaza have not. Our respondents voiced more confidence in the leadership of Fatah than that of Hamas but three in ten respondents said neither was qualified to lead the Palestinian people.

People are greatly in favor of new legislative elections this year (89%) but only if held in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and they think Hamas should participate (84%). If there were elections today, Fatah would have received considerably more electoral support than Hamas. Fafo's polls for 2008, 2009 and this year suggest that Hamas received a boost in support after the war in Gaza last year whereas Fatah lost 'voters', but that the relative strength of the two parties is now back to what it was two years ago. The backing of Hamas in Gaza may even be lower than in 2008. However, there is considerable uncertainty surrounding the poll data as we lack the party preference of nearly half the electorate. These are people who refuse to answer the question, claim they do not intend to cast their votes, or do not know which party (or candidate) to support.

Turning to relations with Israel, the poll finds that a larger share of the population favor a halt in rocket attacks from Gaza against Israel today than a year ago (61%, up from 53%). Seven in ten think that Palestinians should resist Israel by putting more weight on civil, non-violent means. Seventy-three percent are favorable to peace negotiations with Israel and believe a freeze in Israeli settlement construction should be a pre-condition for such talks. The poll records enhanced support for a two-state solution.

Fafo implemented the opinion poll in the West Bank on 9-15 February and in the Gaza Strip 8-12 May 2010. Interviews took place at 66 fieldwork points in both areas. The respondents were randomly selected individuals aged 18 and above: 960 in the West Bank and 933 in the Gaza Strip—all interviewed face to face.

Researchers

Åge A. Tiltnes ati@fafo.no +47 22 088 629 +47 974 33 960	Akram Atallah akram@fafo.ps +972 59 96 20 12 +972 2 27 60 232	Hani Eldada hani@fafo.ps +972 59 97 81 030
---	--	--