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| **Publication Date:**  **13 October 2014**  **Performance of Palestinian Leaders**  **Performance of Governments**  **The Aftermath of the Gaza War**  **President’s Speech before the UN**  **Popularity of Political Factions**  **Presidential Election** |



**Highlights:**

* Mahmoud Abbas’ positive evaluations are on the rebound: 36 percent of Palestinians evaluate his performance as “good”, 33 percent believe his performance is “average,” and 29 assess it as a “weak”.
* Khaled Mashal’s evaluations have dipped: 37 percent believe his performance is “good”, 30 percent believe his performance is “average,” and 25 percent evaluate it as “weak”.
* A higher percentage of respondents choose a Hamdallah-led government over a Haniyeh-led one.
* 50 percent of Gazans prefer a Hamdallah-led government, 35 percent prefer a Haniyeh-led government and 29 percent prefer a Hamdallah-led government in the West Bank.
* 74 percent have full or some confidence in the Unity Government to oversee reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.
* 56 percent believe that Palestinians won the recent Gaza war. 9 percent believe that Israel was the winner and 34 percent believe that neither won the war.
* 34 percent presently identify with the Abbas approach to ending the war on Gaza “an increase in popularity”, while 36 percent continue to identify with the Hamas approach.
* 56 percent did not follow the President’s speech in front of the UN General Assembly. Among the followers, 51 percent evaluate his speech as “positive”.
* Fatah and Hamas are equally distrusted; each faction is distrusted by an equal 37 percent of respondents; 25 percent says they either do not know which faction they trust less.
* Abbas and Marwan Barghouthi continue to be the most popular prospective presidential candidates, followed by Hamas leaders Haniyeh and Mashal
* In the event that President Abbas refrains from candidacy, Marwan Bargouthi leads the polls with 31 percent, followed by 22 percent for Mashal; 29 percent will not vote or do not know who they will vote for.

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**Introduction:**

The following are the results and analysis of the latest Arab World for Research & Development “AWRAD” national public opinion poll, focusing on elections, the aftermath of the recent Gaza War, as well as the performance of notable Palestinian leaders and government performance.

The questionnaire was fielded 1-2 October 2014, just over a month after the cessation of major fighting in the Gaza Strip.

In the weeks immediately preceding the survey, Fatah and Hamas agreed that authority in Gaza would be assumed by the Unity Government formed in June; President Abbas addressed the UN General Assembly on the failure of Palestinian efforts to achieve peace; Israel announced new settlement construction in East Jerusalem and other West Bank regions; and the donor community prepared for an October 12 conference in Cairo on Gaza reconstruction, which has been estimated to cost up to $4 billion.

For this survey, 1,200 Palestinians were interviewed “face-to-face” in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. All socioeconomic groups are represented in the poll. For more details on the sample, please refer to [www.awrad.org](http://www.awrad.org). The margin of error in this poll is ±3 percent. The survey was carried out by AWRAD researchers under the supervision of its president, Dr. Nader Said-Foqahaa.

**Analysis of Results**

**Section 1: Evaluation of the Performance of Palestinian Leaders**

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| **Highlight: Marwan Barghouthi and Ismail Haniyeh lead Abbas and Mashal in evaluations of performance** |

Palestinian respondents are divided in their overall evaluation of political leaders. Imprisoned leader Marwan Barghouthi garners the highest approval ratings, followed by Ismail Haniyeh, Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Mashal.

1. **Marwan Barghouthi**: 43 percent evaluate the performance of Marwan Barghouthi as “good”; 33 percent believe it is “average” and 13 percent assess it as “weak”. 11 percent say they do not know.
2. **Ismail Haniyeh**: 42 percent evaluate the performance of Haniyeh as “good”; 30 percent believe it is “average” and 24 percent assess it as “weak”. 4 percent say they do not know.
3. **Mahmoud Abbas**: Abbas’ ratings have recovered after a marked decline widely reported in the immediate wake of the Gaza conflict. The current poll indicates that 36 percent of Palestinians evaluate his performance as “good”, a 23-point increase from AWRAD’s July poll. 33 percent believe it is “average” and 29 assess it as a “weak”, a 30-point decline. 2 percent say they do not know.
4. **Khaled Mashal**: In AWRAD’s previous poll, conducted in June 2014, 66 percent of respondents evaluated Mashal’s performance positively, with only 10 percent evaluating it negatively. Currently, 37 percent of respondents believe his performance is “good”, a decline of 29 points. Furthermore, 30 percent believe his performance is “average,” and 25 percent evaluate it as “weak”, a 15-point increase. A final 5 percent say they do not know.
5. **Rami Hamdallah**: 26 percent of respondents evaluate Hamdallah’s performance as “good”; 40 percent believe it is “average” and 25 percent assess it as “weak”. 8 percent say they do not know.
6. **Mustafa Barghouthi**: 25 percent evaluate the performance of Mustafa Barghouthi as “good”; 45 percent believe it is “average” and 22 percent assess it as “weak”. 9 percent say they do not know.
7. **Salam Fayyad**: 14 percent of respondents evaluate the performance of Salam Fayyad as “good”; 33 percent believe it is “average” and 46 percent assess it as “weak”. 7 percent say they don’t know.

**Section 2: Evaluation of the Performance of Governments**

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| **Highlight: A higher percentage of respondents choose a Hamdallah-led government over a Haniyeh-led one**  **Highlight: 74 percent have full or some confidence in the Unity Government overseeing reconstruction of the Gaza Strip** |

Attitudes towards two governments, one led by Hamdallah and one led by Haniyeh are split. For example, trust in a Hamdallah government barely tops trust of a Haniyeh one; as 36 percent express greater trust in a Hamdallah-led government compared to 35 percent who place greater trust in a Haniyeh-led one. However, when respondents are asked to choose a government to administer their region, 37 percent choose a Hamdallah-led government compared to 31 percent who choose a Haniyeh-led government. 29 percent reject both options.

Concerning reconstruction, only 25 percent believe that the present Unity Government is “fully capable” of reconstructing the Gaza Strip. 49 percent say that is “capable to some extent”. In contrast, 23 percent do not believe that the Unity Government is capable of reconstruction.

**Section 3: The Aftermath of the Gaza War**

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| **Highlight: A majority of respondents continue to believe that Palestinians were victorious in the recent Gaza War**  **Highlight: Support for the Abbas approach to resolving the Gaza War increases** |

Over a month since the end of major combat in Gaza with reconstruction estimates as high as $4 billion, the majority of Palestinians (56 percent) believe that Palestinians won the war. 9 percent believe that Israel was the winner and 34 percent believe that neither won the war. Of note, 57 percent of respondents believe that Palestinians lost the most from the war and 14 percent believe that Israel lost the most.

With the conclusion of the Gaza War, 34 percent identify with the Abbas approach to ending the war, compared to 15 percent during the war, while 36 percent say that they identify with the Hamas approach to ending the war, compared to 64 percent during the war.

**Section 4: Evaluation of the President’s speech before the UN**

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| **Highlight: A majority did not follow the President’s speech before the UN General Assembly**  **Highlight: Among those who did follow the speech, a majority views it positively** |

Mahmoud Abbas delivered a speech at the UN General Assembly on the 26th of September 2014. Respondents were asked if they followed the speech. The present poll indicates that a majority of respondents (56 percent) did not follow the President’s speech, while 44 percent say that they did. Of the followers, 51 percent evaluate his speech as “positive”; 34 percent believe that it was “fair” and a final 14 percent view it as “negative”.

**Section 5: Evaluation and Popularity of Political Factions**

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| **Highlight: Distrust in Fatah and Hamas equal**  **Highlight: Fatah’s popularity is returning to its pre-war rates**  **Highlight: Hamas’ popularity is now less than Fatah’s, but higher than when the recent war began** |

Respondents are equally divided when it comes to distrusting Fatah and Hamas. While 37 percent state they distrust Fatah more than Hamas, 37 percent also say they distrust Hamas more than Fatah. However, a visible minority of 25 percent says they do not know which faction they distrust more.

According to the findings of various opinion polls conducted during and in the immediate aftermath of the Gaza War, Fatah’s standing declined significantly as a result of the conflict. The current AWRAD poll, however, indicates a return towards pre-war levels of support. In the present survey, the popularity of Fatah stands at 32 percent and that of Hamas at 25 percent.

**Section 6: Presidential Election**

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| **Highlight: Fatah’s Abbas and Marwan Barghouthi continue to be the most popular prospective presidential candidates, followed by Hamas leaders Haniyeh and Mashal** |

Of note, in analyzing the results of presidential ballot test questions at this time, the following must be taken into consideration: 1) no specific date has been set for an election; 2) the major parties have yet to indicate who their candidates might be; 3) Marwan Barghouthi, a perennial favorite, remains incarcerated in Israeli prison; and 4) Hamas leader Khaled Mashal resides outside of Palestine. Significantly, up to 35 percent of respondents at this time say they will not vote; a percentage of potential voters who will ultimately determine electoral results.

AWARD asked respondents to choose between candidates in a series of hypothetical two-way races. The following results indicate the popularity of each candidate and the level of ambivalence at the present time:

1. **Abbas vs. Mashal:** In a two-way race between the two leaders, Abbas is selected by 38 percent and Mashal by 27 percent. 35 percent say that they do not know or will not vote.
2. **Abbas vs. Haniyeh:** Abbas is chosen by 38 percent and Haniyeh by 30 percent. 32 percent say that they do not know or will not vote.
3. **Marwan Barghouthi vs. Haniyeh:** Marwan Barghouthi is the choice of 39 percent and Haniyeh of 29 percent. 32 percent say that they do not know or will not vote.

In the event that President Abbas refrains from candidacy in the presidential election and the following six candidates run, the poll reveals the following results:

1. Marwan Barghouthi leads the six candidates with 31 percent, followed by Khaled Mashal with 22 percent.
2. Salam Fayyad and Mustafa Barghouthi are next with 6 percent for Fayyad and 5 percent for Barghouthi.
3. Ahmad Saadat of the PFLP receives 4 percent and Ramadan Shalah of the Islamic Jihad receives 3 percent.
4. Under such a race, 29 percent of the public says it will not vote or do not know who they will vote for.

**Section 7: The “grass is always greener on the other side” phenomenon**

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| **Highlight: Gaza is slipping from underneath Hamas; the West Bank from underneath the PA of Abbas and Fatah**  **Highlight: Gazans want to be governed by the Hamdallah-led government while West Bank respondents lean towards a Haniyeh-led government** |

The West Bank-Gaza divide on internal political issues is deepening. The present poll confirms a trend that has emerged over the past five years. The Gaza public appears to be growing increasingly disillusioned and unhappy with the Hamas administration; while in the West Bank the public is becoming similarly disillusioned and unhappy with the Palestinian Authority, led by Abbas and Fatah. Over the past several years, AWRAD’s public opinion data has been confirming these developments in what appears to be a classic case of ‘the grass is always greener on the other side’ mentality. The following results are indicative of this situation:

1. **If a unified Fatah list runs for election in Gaza, it would win in a landslide:** 
   * Hamas is less trusted than Fatah by 53 percent among Gazans. 33 percent of Gazans hold the opposite view.
   * The present poll shows that Fatah’s support in Gaza is at 42 percent, compared to Hamas support of 27 percent.
   * Only 21 percent of Gazans are undecided or will not vote, indicating that the results of a future election are less vulnerable to the voting patterns of independent and ambivalent constituencies.
2. **If Hamas runs in the West Bank, it could seriously challenge Fatah:**
   * Fatah is less trusted than Hamas among 40 percent of West Bank respondents, while Hamas is less trusted than Fatah among 28 percent of West Bank respondents.
   * The present poll shows that Hamas’ popularity in the West Bank is 27 percent, equal to that of Fatah.
   * 38 percent of West Bank respondents are undecided or will not vote, indicating that the results of a future election are highly vulnerable to the voting patterns of independent and ambivalent constituencies.
3. **Abbas is more popular in Gaza while Haniyeh polls better in the West Bank:**
   * Abbas receives the support of 49 percent of Gazans, while Haniyeh receives 26 percent.
   * Abbas receives the support of 31 percent of the West Bank, while Haniyeh receives 33 percent
   * In a hypothetical Abbas-Haniyeh contest, 25 percent of Gazans and 36 percent of West Bank respondents are undecided or will not vote, making President Abbas even more vulnerable in the West Bank in a race with Haniyeh.
4. **A majority in Gaza want a Hamdallah-led government; much less support in the West Bank:**
   * 50 percent of Gazans prefer a Hamdallah-led government and only 24 percent prefer a Haniyeh-led government to run their region.
   * The pattern is the opposite in the West Bank where 35 percent prefer a Haniyeh-led government and 29 percent prefer a Hamdallah-led government.

**Fieldwork Date: 1-2 October 2014**

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

**Margin of error:** + 3 %

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