

NEC's monthly bulletin on Palestinian perceptions towards politics and economics

**Special Focus:
Palestinian Leadership**

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I. Introduction

This bulletin is part of a running series of General Perception Surveys conducted monthly by the NEC since January 2006. These surveys seek to document and analyze Palestinian perceptions of the political, economic, social, and security-related issues that frame daily life in the West Bank and Gaza. Results from the NEC's General Perception Survey are provided freely to the general public, complementing our on-going research and assessment work in Palestine and the wider region.

The special focus in this bulletin is on the Palestinian leadership. Respondents were asked to state inter alia their views about the leader they trust most as well as who do they think is more capable of leading Fateh and who is capable of leading Hamas. The analysis in this respect covers the views of the respondents of the various political 'affiliations' as well as the opinions and attitudes of respondents according to their place of residence. Further cross referencing of these and other issues can also be examined from NEC's website.

This latest survey was conducted by telephone between the 11th and 14th of August, 2007, and has a margin of error of +/- 3.35%, with a 95% confidence level. The results of this survey and the other earlier surveys, along with accompanying bulletins, are available online from the NEC's web site. Visit us at www.neareastconsulting.com.

About Near East Consulting (NEC)

NEC is a survey and research firm based in Ramallah, Palestine. Drawing on extensive, inter-disciplinary experience in the Near East region and beyond, we work in a range of fields, including but not limited to such areas as democracy and democratization, food security, health and education, women and children, poverty and the labor market, peace and conflict resolution, arms control and disarmament, electoral processes, Palestinian refugees, demography, legal and judicial systems, and the impact of aid and assistance.

II. Main findings

Feeling of security and concern

Absence of personal security, is the major issue of concern among respondents from the two regions, followed by the economic hardship of the households and the internal power struggle;

The highest level of concern is among those trusting Fateh (90%), those trusting no faction (83%), and among the Gaza residents (80%);

The highest feeling of security is among Hamas respondents (61%) and Gaza Strip respondents (50%). In the West Bank, only 34% feel secure about their family and property. Feeling of insecurity slightly decreased (-3%) between July and August, 2007.

Factional Trust

Trust in Hamas has increased from 18% in July to 23% in August while trust in Fateh remained unchanged at 38%.

Support for Fateh is higher in Gaza (43%) than in the West Bank (33%). In the Gaza Strip, 29% of Gaza respondents give their trust to Hamas, as opposed to 18% of West Bank respondents. Lack of trust in any faction is significantly higher in the West Bank (42%) than in the Gaza Strip (24%).

Early elections

Level of confidence that dialogue between Fateh and Hamas will resume is among 55% of the respondents. This confidence is significantly higher among Hamas and Gaza Strip respondents;

66% of the respondents oppose holding elections in phases. Ironically, this opposition is higher among Fateh respondents than among Hamas respondents;

Approximately 70% of the respondents are in favor of early PLC and presidential elections. About 90% of Fateh respondents support holding early PLC elections as opposed to 40% of Hamas respondents. Other respondents tend to be more in tune with Fateh than with Hamas respondents on this matter. As for the presidential elections, support for it among Hamas respondents increases to 60% while it drops among Fateh respondents to 78%;

Between 27%-30% of the respondents said that they will not participate in either election. As for the other respondents, approximately 40% stated their preference to Fateh and 15% to Hamas. Non-participation in elections is four times higher among Hamas than among Fateh respondents.

Over 70% believe that Hamas will sabotage the early elections. This view is stronger among Gaza respondents as well as Fateh respondents;

The majority of the respondents who do not trust any faction said that they will not participate in either election.

The peace process

The majority of the Palestinians do not believe that the appointment of Tony Blair will have a positive impact on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Only 27% believe that his presence will have a positive impact. The highest positive attitude towards Blair's role is among Fateh respondents (42%);

Level of support for convening a peace conference, as outlined by President Bush, in the Middle East is evenly split. As for Fateh supporters, 74% of their respondents think of this call rather positively;

69% of the Palestinians support a peace settlement with Israel, a 10% increase since May 2007). Support for a peace settlement is among 85% of Fateh respondents and 45% of Hamas respondents;

63% of the respondents are of the position that Hamas should change its position regarding the elimination of the state of Israel. This view is significantly stronger among Fateh than among Hamas respondents.

The economic situation

It is estimated that 59% of the respondents in August fall below the poverty line. Poverty is more prominent among Fateh and Hamas supporters. While the percentage of poverty in the West Bank is 51%, the level of poverty in the Gaza Strip reaches 71%;

About 20% of the **labor force** is unemployed and 9% are partially employed. In the Gaza Strip, unemployment reaches 23%, as compared to 18% in the West Bank.

Other issues

81% of the respondents do not support an expansion of Hamas's control to the West Bank. Even 48% of Hamas supporters are not in favor of such a prospect;

The majority (66%) believe that the surrender of weapons by some Palestinian fighters in exchange for amnesty is a positive step. This view is also shared by 49% of Hamas supporters.

THE LEADERSHIP

Trust in Abu Mazen has dropped from 66% in July to 63% in August. As for Hanieh, there has been a slight increase in his favor (from 34% in July to 37% in August). The increase in the level of trust for Hanieh is also witnessed when comparing his standing with Salam Fayyad,

The most trusted Palestinian leader is Mahmoud Abbas (29%) followed by Ismael Hanieh (22%) and Marwan Barghouti (20%). About 10% of the respondents mentioned Dr. Mustapha Barghouti as the most trusted Palestinian leader. Only 2% mentioned

Muhammad Dahlan and 1% mentioned Dr. Mahmoud Zahhar. Support for both Abbas and Hanieh is stronger in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank;

The majority of the Palestinians (42%) view Marwan Barghouti as the most suitable person to lead Fateh, as opposed to 33% who mentioned Mahmoud Abbas. As for Fateh supporters, the majority (53%) see Abbas as the most suitable leader while only 35% mentioned Marwan Barghouti;

The majority of the Palestinians (34%) view Ismael Hanieh as the most suitable person to lead Hamas, followed by 14% who mentioned Abdul Aziz Dweik the imprisoned leader of the PLC. As for Hamas supporters, 62% mentioned Ismael Hanieh while 19% mentioned Khaled Mashal. Support for Dr. Zahhar is very negligible even among Hamas supporters (6%).

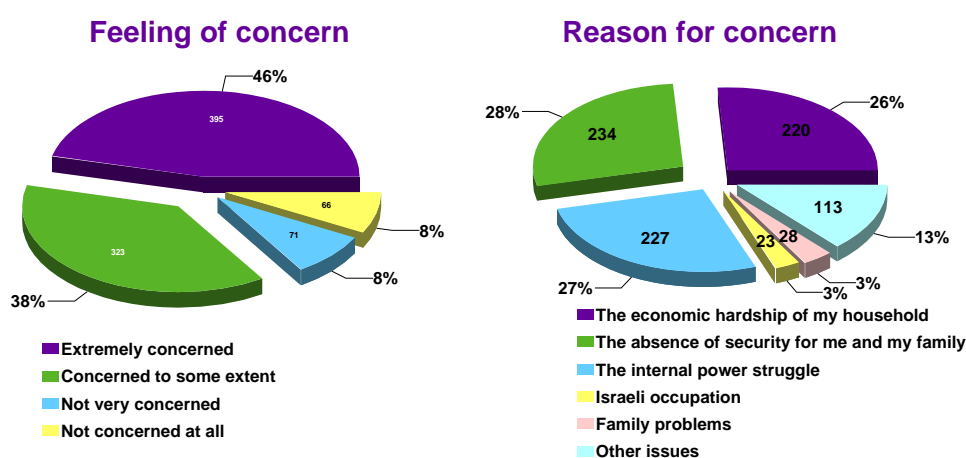
III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A. Levels of insecurity and concern

1. Feeling of concern about the situation

The level of concern amongst the Palestinian population remains high with only 16% of the respondents saying that they are not very concerned or not concerned at all. As indicated in figure 1, below, the main reasons for concern about the situation is the absence of security (28%), the economic hardship (26%), and the internal power struggles (27%).

Figure 1: Feeling and reason for concern



The latest problems in the Gaza Strip have undermined the ease that many Fateh supporters normally used to portray prior to the takeover of Hamas of the Gaza Strip. As can be established from table 1, below, the level of concern is much more pronounced by Fateh supporters than by all other respondents. This concern among Fateh respondents is primarily strong in the Gaza Strip.

Table 1: Level of concern about the current situation according to faction and region

		Level of concern about the current situation			
		Extremely concerned	Concerned to some extent	Not very concerned	Not concerned at all
Faction	Hamas	28%	43%	14%	15%
	Fateh	57%	33%	6%	3%
	PFLP	48%	48%	5%	0%
	Others	50%	45%	5%	0%
	I trust no Faction	46%	37%	7%	9%
Region	West Bank	42%	45%	7%	6%
	Gaza Strip	52%	28%	9%	10%
Total		46%	38%	8%	8%

As outlined in table 2, below, the primary reason for concern is the feeling of personal insecurity and the internal power struggle. This is manifested more by Fateh supporters than by Hamas

supporters. While 32% of the respondents supporting Fateh attribute their concern primarily to the absence of security, the percentage among Hamas supporters is 18%. Even in the Gaza Strip and in spite of the economic hardship of the citizens there, the issues of personal security and the internal power struggle are more frequently stressed.

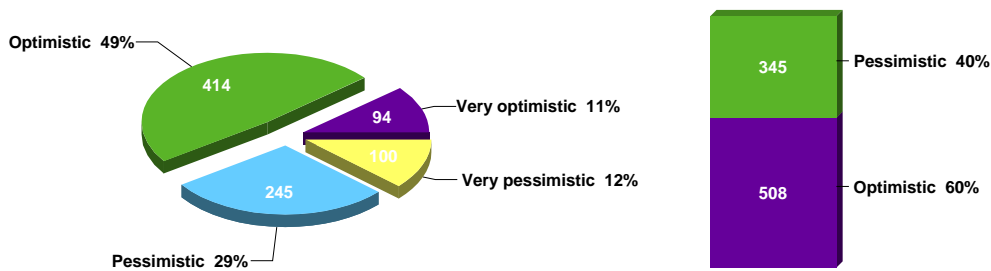
Table 2: Main reason behind feeling of concern according to faction and region

		Main reason behind feeling of concern					
		The economic hardship of	The absence of security for my family	The internal power struggle	The Israeli occupation	Family problems	I have no concerns
Faction	Hamas	29%	18%	23%	4%	2%	24%
	Fateh	25%	32%	31%	3%	3%	7%
	PFLP	24%	48%	19%	5%	0%	5%
	Others	20%	20%	50%	0%	5%	5%
	I trust no Faction	24%	29%	25%	2%	4%	15%
Region	West Bank	26%	30%	26%	3%	4%	11%
	Gaza Strip	25%	26%	29%	3%	2%	15%
Total		25%	28%	27%	3%	3%	13%

2. Optimism about the future

Although the situation in the West bank and the Gaza Strip is serious and grave in many respects, the respondents seem to have hope in the future. When asked about whether they feel optimistic or pessimistic with respect to the future, the majority (60%) said that they are optimistic, as illustrated in figure 2, below.

Figure 2: Level of optimism with the future



This optimism, nonetheless, varies across the various sectors of the Palestinian society. As overviewed in table 3, below, the level of optimism is significantly higher among Hamas supporters than by Fateh supporters and the supporters of the other political groups.

Surprisingly, also, is the higher level of optimism among Gaza respondents when compared to their counterparts in the West Bank. This optimism could be explained partially by the respondents trusting Hamas most who are probably under the impression that the developments in the Gaza Strip will usher a new phase that can lead to a resolution of the situation they live under.

Table 3: Level of optimism about the future according to faction and region

		Level of optimism about the future.			
		Very optimistic	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Very pessimistic
Faction	Hamas	22%	54%	20%	5%
	Fateh	10%	46%	31%	13%
	PFLP	0%	29%	52%	19%
	Others	10%	45%	25%	20%
	I trust no faction	7%	46%	31%	16%
Region	West Bank	9%	52%	29%	10%
	Gaza Strip	14%	43%	28%	15%
Total		11%	48%	29%	12%

3. Feeling of personal security

Many officials and observers have been talking about the improvement in the security situation in the Gaza Strip after Hamas took over the responsibility for law and order there. The results of the recent survey also direct to this assessment. As indicated in figure 3, feeling of security has increased from 39% in July to 42% in August.

Figure 3: Feeling of security



This conclusion is clearly affirmed when examining this feeling of security according to the region of residence. As established in table 4, below, the level of security is higher in the Gaza Strip than it is in the West Bank. Whereas 50% of the former said that they feel secure, the percentage is 35% among the later.

Despite the increase in the feeling of security in the past two months among the Palestinians, particularly those living in the Gaza Strip, this feeling is not essentially reiterated by all sectors of the Palestinian society. As expounded also in table 4, the feeling of security is by far more articulated by Hamas supporters than by Fateh supporters and the supporters of the other political groups.

Table 4: Feeling of security according to faction and region

		Feeling of security with respect to yourself, family, and	
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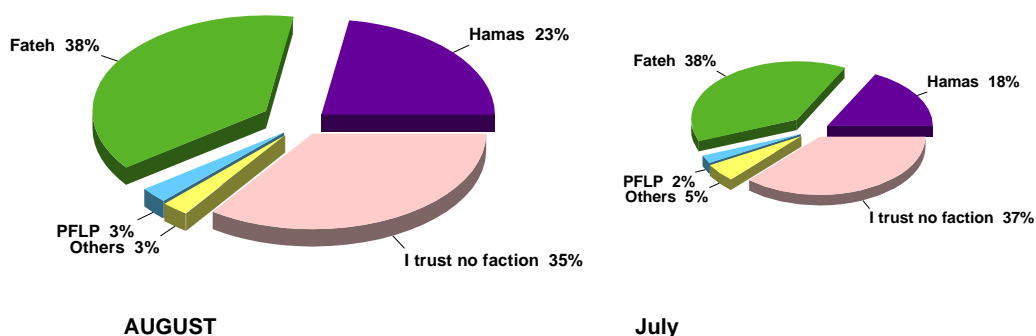
		property.	
		I feel secure	I do not feel secure
Faction	Hamas	61%	39%
	Fateh	31%	69%
	PFLP	25%	75%
	Others	40%	60%
	I trust no faction	39%	61%
Region	West Bank	35%	65%
	Gaza Strip	50%	50%
Total		41%	59%

B. Trust in main political parties

1. Factional trust

As in every month, the respondents were also asked to mention the political party or faction they trust most. As portrayed in figure 4, below, Fateh remains to be the most trusted organization with 38% of the respondents mentioning it. However, trust in Hamas has increased from 18% in July to 23% in August while trust in Fateh remained unchanged at 38%. Still, 35% of the Palestinians do not trust any of the existing factions. In this respect, it is worth noting that the views of those not trusting any faction seem to be more in tune with Fateh than with Hamas on most of the issues covered by this survey.

Figure 4: Factional trust



2. Factional trust according to region

Again, and contrary to expectations, support for Fateh is higher in Gaza (43%) than in the West Bank (33%). In the Gaza Strip, 29% of Gaza respondents give their trust to Hamas, as opposed to 18% of West Bank respondents. As a result of the apparent polarization of the Gaza Strip, lack of trust in any faction is significantly lower in the Gaza Strip than it is the case in the West Bank. While 24% of the respondents in the Gaza Strip said that they do not trust any faction, the percentage in the West Bank is 42%. These figures are overviewed in table 5, below.

Table 5: Factional trust according to region

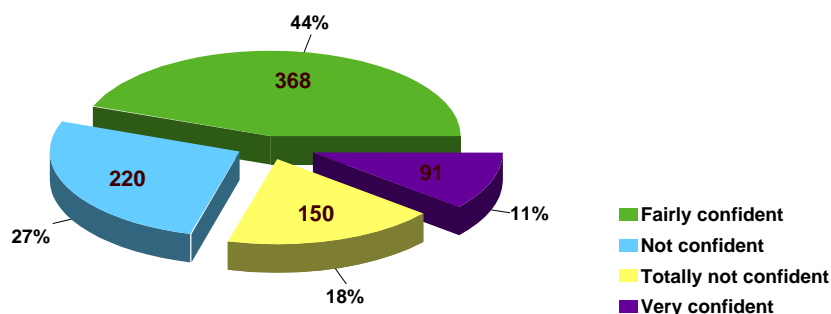
		Factional trust					
		Hamas	Fateh	PFLP	Islamic Jihad	Others	I trust no faction
Region	West Bank	18%	33%	3%	2%	1%	42%
	Gaza Strip	29%	43%	2%	3%	0%	24%
	Total	22%	37%	3%	3%	0%	34%

C. Attitude towards elections

1. Attitude towards future relations between Fateh and Hamas

Level of confidence that dialogue between Fateh and Hamas will be resumed soon is an indicator as to how the Palestinian public perceives the future relations between the two main political entities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt). As illustrated in figure 5, below, 55% of the respondents believe that such a dialogue will resume. An attestation to the importance the Palestinians put on ending the current predicament confronting the Palestinian body politic through dialogue.

Figure 5: Level of confidence that dialogue between Fateh and Hamas will resume



This confidence is significantly higher among Hamas and Gaza Strip respondents than among their counterparts in Fateh and the West Bank. The high level of confidence among Hamas supporters can probably be explained by the deadlock that Hamas sees itself in and the inability to recover from this deadlock without reconciliation with Fateh and the other political parties. Given that 48% of Fateh respondents feel confident about such a dialogue could imply that this scenario is gaining momentum and might in actuality materialize as a way to end the internal problem and the misery which the people of Gaza are confronted with socially, economically, and politically.

Table 6: Level of confidence that dialogue between Fateh and Hamas will resume according to faction and region

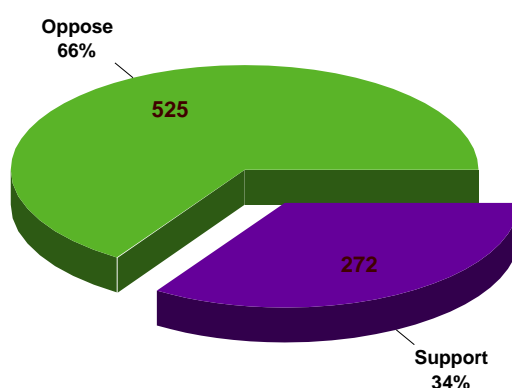
		Level of confidence that dialogue between Fateh and Hamas will be resumed.			
		Very confident	Fairly confident	Not confident	Totally not confident
Faction	Hamas	19%	53%	20%	8%

	Fateh	8%	40%	33%	19%
	PFLP	0%	24%	52%	24%
	Others	20%	35%	25%	20%
	I trust no faction	10%	40%	25%	25%
Region	West Bank	7%	46%	25%	21%
	Gaza Strip	16%	41%	29%	14%
	Total	11%	44%	27%	18%

2. Election in phases

Some reports were entertaining the idea that the proposed elections in the Palestinian territory might be carried out in phases. Accordingly, NEC asked the Palestinian public about their views regarding this idea. As revealed in figure 6, below, 66% of the respondents declared their opposition to it.

Figure 6: Level of support for holding elections in phases



Ironically, this opposition is higher among Fateh respondents than among Hamas respondents. Whereas 67% of Hamas respondents oppose the elections to be held in phases, the level of opposition among Fateh respondents is 69% as can be shown in table 7. As for region of residence, opposition to elections in phases is higher among Gaza Strip respondents than among West Bank respondents. Whereas 70% of the former oppose elections to be held in phases, the level of opposition is 63% among the later.

Table 7: Level of support for elections in phases according to faction and region

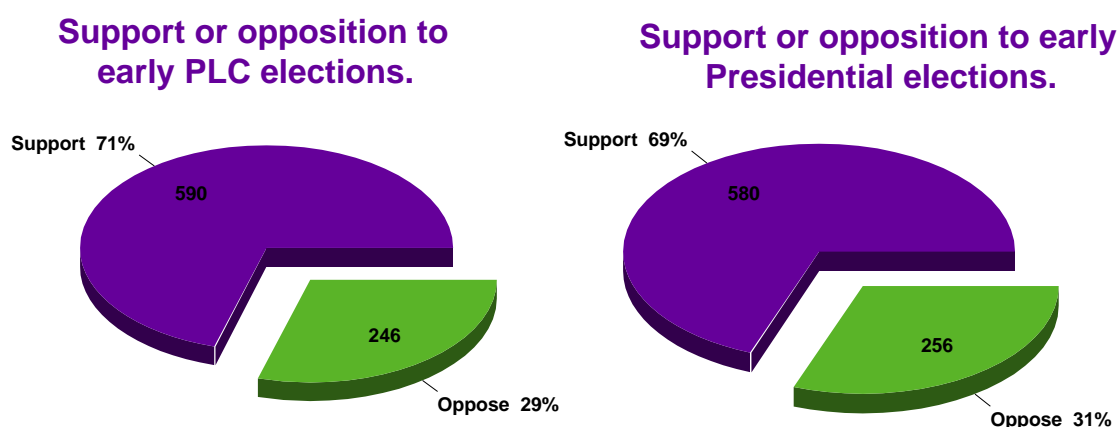
Support or opposition to holding elections in phases.			
Faction		Support	Oppose
	Hamas	33%	67%
	Fateh	31%	69%

	PFLP	24%	76%
	Others	32%	68%
	I trust no faction	37%	63%
Region	West Bank	37%	63%
	Gaza Strip	30%	70%
	Total	34%	66%

3. Attitude towards PLC and presidential elections

Although the opposition to elections in phases is strong among all sectors of the Palestinian society, support for elections in general is rather clear. As illustrated in figure 7, below, approximately 70% of the respondents are in favor of early PLC and presidential elections.

Figure 7: Level of support for elections



Further analysis show that about 90% of Fateh respondents support holding early PLC elections as opposed to 40% of Hamas respondents. Other respondents tend to be more in tune with Fateh than with Hamas respondents on this matter. As for the presidential elections, support for it among Hamas respondents increased to 60% while it drops among Fateh respondents to 78%. These results are overviewed in tables 8 and 9 below.

Table 8: Level of support for PLC elections according to faction and region

Support or opposition to early PLC elections.			
		Support	Oppose
Faction	Hamas	41%	59%
	Fateh	90%	10%
	PFLP	71%	29%
	Others	84%	16%
	I trust no faction	68%	32%
Region	West Bank	72%	28%

Gaza Strip	68%	32%
Total	71%	29%

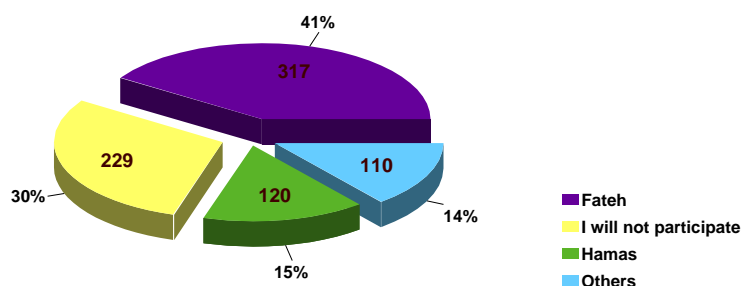
Table 9: Level of support for presidential elections according to faction and region

Support or opposition to early Presidential elections.			
		Support	Oppose
Faction	Hamas	60%	40%
	Fateh	78%	22%
	PFLP	67%	33%
	Others	79%	21%
	I trust no faction	66%	34%
Region	West Bank	69%	31%
	Gaza Strip	70%	30%
Total		69%	31%

4. Voting preferences

When asked about the party or group the respondents will vote for if elections for the PLC were held soon, approximately 40% stated their preference to Fateh and 15% to Hamas, and 15% said that they will vote for other factions and independents. As depicted in figure 8, below, a significant proportion (3%) of the respondents said that they will not participate in such elections. As will be discussed later, non-participation in elections is four times higher among Hamas than among Fateh respondents, which explains why preference for Fateh is much higher than it is for Hamas.

Figure 8: Voting preferences if PLC elections are to be held next week.



As mentioned above, 23% of the Hamas supporters said that they will not participate in early PLC elections as compared to only 6% of Fateh respondents.

Surprisingly is the proportion of West Bank respondents who said that they will not participate as opposed to Gaza respondents. Whereas 36% of the former said that they will not participate, the percentage is 21% among the later.

Also worth noting in this regard is that while the respondents who do not trust any faction normally have a similar position as Fateh on most issues, in this issue, the majority of them (61%) have noted that they will not participate. This trend also explains why non-participation is

articulated more in the West Bank where the percentage of non-partisans is proportionally higher.

These results are detailed in table 10 and 11 below.

Table 10: Voting preferences if PLC elections are to be held next week according to faction and region

Voting preferences if PLC elections are to be held next week.					
Faction		Fateh	Hamas	Others	I will not participate
Faction	Hamas	3%	66%	9%	23%
	Fateh	89%	1%	4%	6%
	PFLP	29%	0%	57%	14%
	Others	22%	0%	50%	28%
	I trust no faction	14%	3%	22%	61%
Region	West Bank	37%	11%	16%	36%
	Gaza Strip	46%	21%	12%	21%
Total		41%	15%	14%	30%

The attitude towards presidential election is similar as far as voting preferences are concerned. Again, the majority gave their preference to Fateh but a significant proportion (27%) said that they will not participate, as illustrated in figure 9, below.

Figure 9: Voting preferences if Presidential elections are to be held next week.

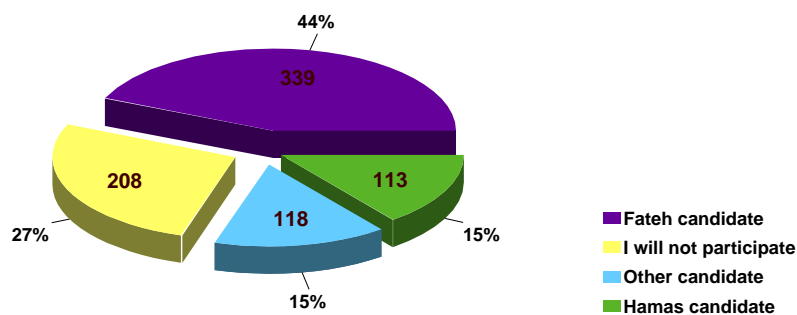


Table 11: Voting preferences if Presidential elections are to be held next week according to faction and region

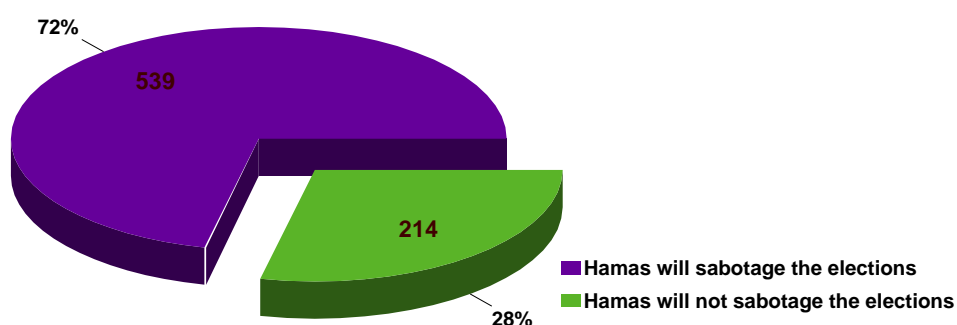
Voting preferences if Presidential elections are to be held next week.					
Faction		Fateh candidate	Hamas candidate	Others	I will not participate
Faction	Hamas	7%	61%	13%	18%
	Fateh	92%	0%	4%	4%
	PFLP	29%	0%	52%	19%

	Others	12%	0%	53%	35%
	I trust no faction	17%	4%	24%	56%
Region	West Bank	39%	11%	17%	33%
	Gaza Strip	50%	19%	12%	18%
	Total	44%	15%	15%	27%

5. Attitude towards Hamas's possible reaction

When asked about the reaction of Hamas in case elections were held early, 72% of the respondents, as shown in figure 10, below, believe that Hamas will try to hinder the elections process.

Figure 10: Attitude towards the reaction of Hamas if elections were to take place early



The view that Hamas will sabotage the election process is more pronounced among Fateh respondents than among Hamas respondents. Whereas 81% of Fateh respondents feel that Hamas will attempt to disrupt the elections, the proportion of Hamas supporters that share this view is 64%. The feeling towards a possible Hamas action against the election is reflected in the opinions of the respondents supporting the other political factions as well as the non-partisans. The view that Hamas will disrupt the elections is also more vocal in the Gaza Strip where 78% of the respondents believe that.

Table 12: Attitude towards the reaction of Hamas if elections were to take place early according to faction and region

Will Hamas try to sabotage the elections if they take place early?		
Faction	Hamas	64%
	Fateh	81%
	PFLP	71%
	Others	80%
	I trust no faction	67%
Region	West Bank	67%
	Gaza Strip	78%
		No
		36%
		19%
		29%
		20%
		33%
		33%
		22%

Total	72%	28%
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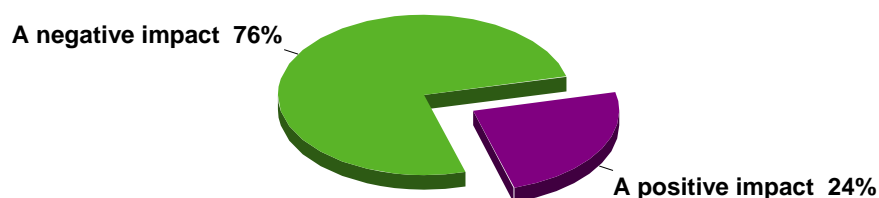
D. The peace process

1. The appointment of Blair

The recent appointment of Tony Blair as the head of the Quartet is seen by some as an attempt to revive the peace process by bringing in a politician who is well-acquainted with the region, have a strong experience in peace negotiations, and who has strong relations with many leaders in the region.

This feeling is not necessarily shared by the majority of the Palestinian public of whom 76% of them feel that his presence will have a negative impact on the Palestinian-Israeli issue. As noted in figure 11, below, only 24% of the respondents look at his appointment favorably.

Figure 11: Attitude towards the impact that Tony Blair might have on the Palestinian-Israeli problem



This view, nonetheless, is not consistent among all sectors of the Palestinian society. As outlined in table 13, below, 42% of Fateh supporters believe that Tony Blair's presence might prove to be positive as far as the Palestinian-Israeli problem is concerned. This view is shared only by 10% of Hamas supporters as well as by only small minorities among the respondents who trust other factions as well as those trusting none of the national or religious groups.

Table 13: Attitude towards the impact that Tony Blair might have on the Palestinian-Israeli problem by faction and region

Will Tony Blair make a positive or negative impact on the Palestinian-Israeli problem?			
		A positive impact	A negative impact
Faction	Hamas	10%	90%
	Fateh	42%	58%
	PFLP	10%	90%
	Others	22%	78%
	I trust no faction	16%	84%
Region	West Bank	22%	78%
	Gaza Strip	27%	73%
Total		24%	76%

2. Attitude towards the Washington initiative for a peace conference

The negative view about Tony Blair is not paralleled when it comes to the attitude respondents have about the recent call by President Bush for an international conference in the Middle East. As can be noticed below, the Palestinian public is split between support and opposition to such a call.

Figure 12: Level of support to the call by George Bush to convene a peace conference in the Middle East.



The support for an international conference is very strong among Fateh supporters (74%) as opposed to Hamas supporters (26%). Moreover, the support among the rest of the respondents lies between the position of the two, as indicated in table 14, below.

Table 14: Support or opposition to the call by George Bush to convene an international conference for peace in the Middle East by faction and region

Support or opposition to the call by George Bush to convene an international conference for peace in the Middle East.			
		Support	Oppose
Faction	Hamas	26%	74%
	Fateh	74%	26%
	PFLP	40%	60%
	Others	40%	60%
	I trust no faction	41%	59%
Region	West Bank	48%	52%
	Gaza Strip	53%	47%
Total		50%	50%

3. Attitude towards peace with Israel

a. Support for a peace agreement

The control of Hamas over the Gaza Strip did not seem to have influenced Palestinian support for a peace agreement with Israel. In fact, as illustrated in figures 13 and 14 below, support for peace seems to be even higher nowadays.

Figure 13: Support or opposition to a peace settlement with Israel

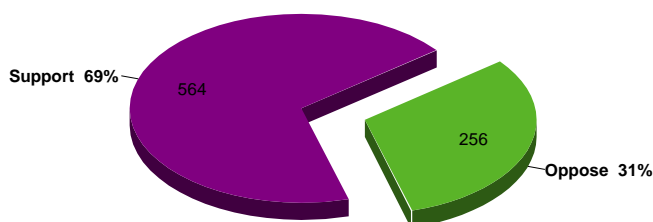
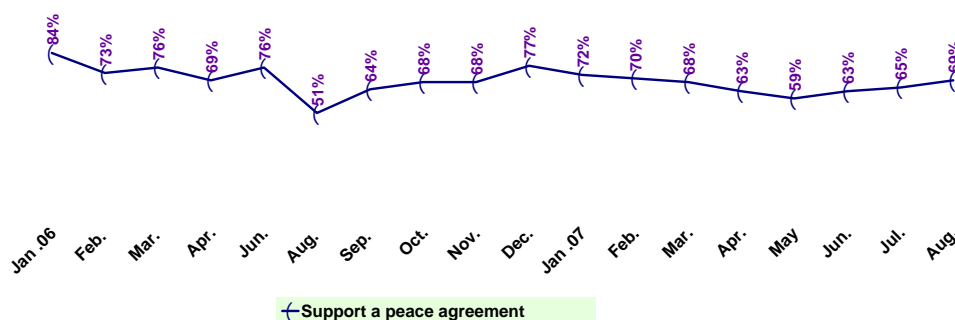


Figure 14: Level of support for a peace settlement: Comparison between Jan 2006- Aug 2007



As could be predicted, support for a peace agreement with Israel is much more prominent among Fateh where the support there is among 85% of its supporters. Again, the support for a peace agreement among the other political factions is lower than among the Fateh supporters but higher than among the supporters of Hamas, as overviewed in table 15, below.

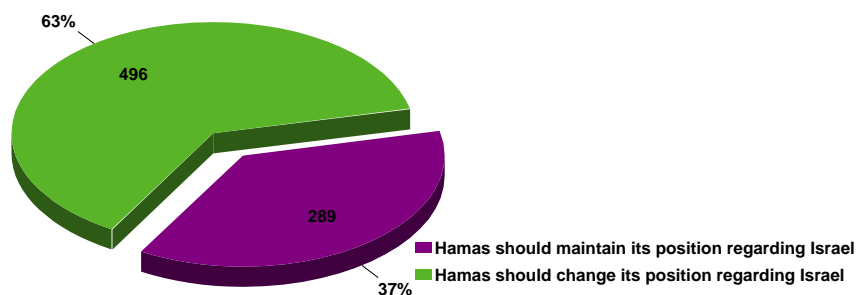
Table 15: Support or opposition to a peace settlement with Israel by faction and region

Support or opposition to a peace settlement with Israel.			
		Support	Oppose
Faction	Hamas	45%	55%
	Fateh	85%	15%
	PFLP	52%	48%
	Others	60%	40%
	None	69%	31%
Region	West Bank	69%	31%
	Gaza Strip	68%	32%
Total		69%	31%

b. Attitude towards Hamas’s position vis-à-vis the state of Israel

Support for a peace agreement with Israel is also observed in people’s attitudes towards the position of Hamas towards the existence of Israel. As illustrated in figure 15, below, 63% of the Palestinians feel that Hamas should change its position vis-à-vis Israel as opposed to 37% who want it to remain unchanged.

Figure 15: Should Hamas maintain its position on the elimination of Israel?



Once again, the major differences in opinion account for factional trust more so than region of residence. Whereas 81% of Fateh supporters and 69% of the ‘non-partisans’ want Hamas to change its position, the percentage among Hamas supporters is 27%, as outlined in table 16.

Table 16: Should Hamas maintain its position on the elimination of Israel? According to faction and region

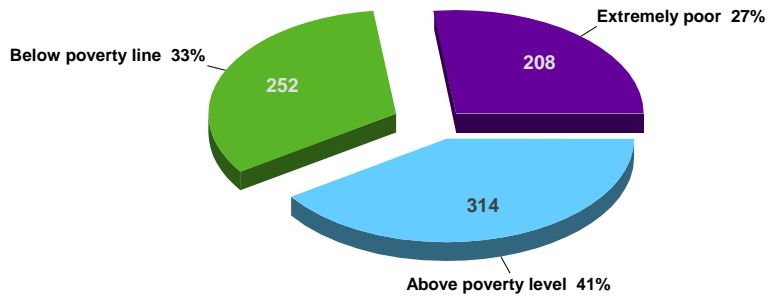
		Should Hamas maintain its position on the elimination of Israel?	
		Hamas should maintain its position regarding Israel	Hamas should change its position regarding Israel
Faction	Hamas	73%	27%
	Fateh	19%	81%
	PFLP	29%	71%
	Others	60%	40%
	I trust no faction	31%	69%
	Total	37%	63%
Region	West Bank	35%	65%
	Gaza Strip	40%	60%
Total		37%	63%

IV. Economic conditions of respondents

A. Poverty

The calculation of the poverty level is also carried out on a monthly basis by NEC. The poverty indicator here is measured according to the reported household income of the respondents and the household structure. As illustrated in figure 16, below, the August poverty level of NEC stands at 41% of the household being determined as living above the poverty level while the rest live below the poverty level. Of those living below the poverty level, almost 45% live in extreme poverty.

Figure 16: Poverty level for August 2007



As indicated in table 17, below, poverty is graver among Fateh and Hamas supporters than among the supporters of the other factions. In addition, while the percentage of poverty in the West Bank is 51%, the level of poverty in the Gaza Strip is 71% with over half of them living in extreme poverty.

Table 17: Poverty according to region and factional trust

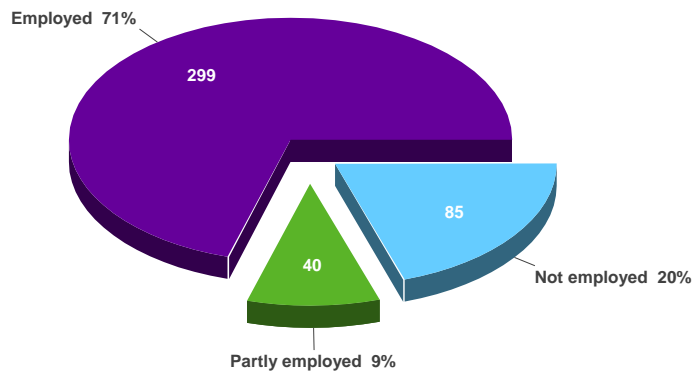
		Poverty level.			Poverty all.	
		Extremely poor	Below the poverty level	Above the poverty level	Below the poverty level	Above the poverty level
Faction	Hamas	33%	34%	33%	67%	33%
	Fateh	28%	36%	36%	64%	36%
	PFLP	14%	24%	62%	38%	62%
	Others	17%	28%	56%	44%	56%
	I trust no Faction	24%	31%	46%	54%	46%
Region	West Bank	19%	32%	49%	51%	49%
	Gaza Strip	38%	33%	29%	71%	29%
Total		27%	33%	40%	60%	40%

B. Employment of the Labor force

In addition to the poverty level, NEC has been following on a monthly basis the employment situation of the respondents. The information gathered in this regard covers only the Palestinians who are over the age of 18 and excludes many respondents, particularly females, who chose to remain at home.

As indicated in figure 17, about 20% of the respondents are unemployed and 9% are partially employed,

Figure 17: Employment of the labor force



When comparing the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, unemployment in the Gaza Strip, reaches 23%, as compared to 18% in the West Bank. The lowest level of unemployment appears to be among PFLP and Hamas respondents.

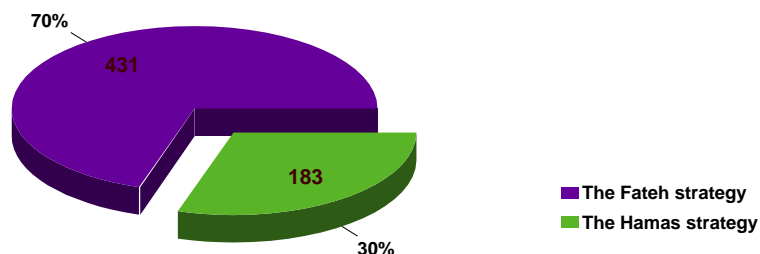
Table 18: Labor force according to faction and region of residence

		Labor force.		
		Fully employed	Partially employed	Unemployed
Faction	Hamas	76%	9%	15%
	Fateh	71%	8%	21%
	PFLP	80%	7%	13%
	Others	64%	9%	27%
	I trust no Faction	67%	11%	22%
Region	West Bank	72%	10%	18%
	Gaza Strip	68%	8%	23%
Total		71%	9%	20%

V. What's next

The course and strategy that Fateh is using appear to be evaluated by the respondents as being more practical than that of Hamas. As can be observed in figure 18, below, 70% of the respondents believe that the Fateh strategy is more practical and can better achieve Palestinian national interest compared to 30% who preferred the Hamas strategy.

Figure 18: Attitude about the strategy that best serves the Palestinian national interest



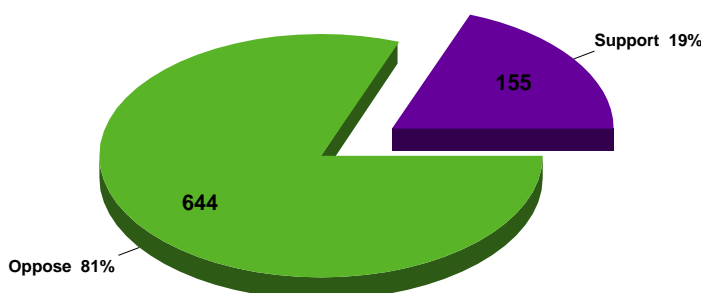
Even in the Gaza Strip where Hamas is currently in total control, 65% of the respondents there have reported that the Fateh strategy is more feasible and appropriate to the national interest. Moreover, as clearly indicated in table 19, below, the majority of the non-partisans who amount to over 37% of the sample, stated that the Fateh strategy is more practical, only Hamas respondents think otherwise.

Table 19: Attitude about the strategy that best serves the Palestinian national interest by faction and region of residence

The best strategy for the Palestinian national interest.			
		The Fateh strategy	The Hamas strategy
Faction	Hamas	8%	92%
	Fateh	99%	1%
	PFLP	93%	7%
	Others	71%	29%
	I trust no faction	77%	23%
	Total	70%	30%
Region	West Bank	74%	26%
	Gaza Strip	65%	35%
Total		70%	30%

The inauspicious position most respondents have regarding the strategy of Hamas is also reflected in the answers that were given by the respondents regarding whether Hamas's control should spread into the West Bank. As indicated in figure 19, below, 81% of the respondents believe that it should not.

Figure 19: Support to the expanding of Hamas's control to the West Bank



This view is shared even by 48% of the respondents who stated their trust in Hamas. As pointed out in table 20, all other factions strongly oppose such a prospect. Even when examined according to region of residence, the results reveal that about 79% of Gaza respondents oppose the thought that Hamas should extend its control to the West Bank as well. This attitude begs, once again, the question as why do Palestinians support Hamas, or if such support merely reflects an expression of distrust of Fateh.

Table 20: Support to the expanding of Hamas's control to the West Bank according to faction and region

Support or opposition to the Hamas control of the Gaza Strip expanding to the West Bank.			
Faction	Hamas	Support 52%	Oppose 48%
	Fateh	6%	94%
	PFLP	10%	90%
	Others	5%	95%
	I trust no faction	14%	86%
Region	West Bank	18%	82%
	Gaza Strip	21%	79%
Total		19%	81%

NEC tried to examine the position of the Palestinian public on another polarizing issue between Fateh and Hamas, namely the issue of the surrender of weapons by some Palestinian fighters in exchange for amnesty. As illustrated in figure 20, below, 66% of the respondents support such a move while 34% oppose it. Once again, as pointed out in table 21, Hamas stands alone on this position while the other factions are more in line with the Fateh supporters.

Figure 20: Level of support for the decision of some Palestinian fighters to surrender their weapons in exchange for amnesty

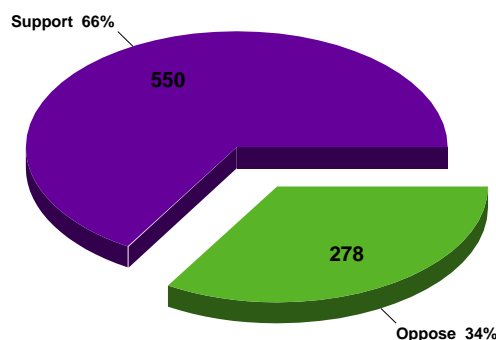


Table 21: Level of support for the decision of some Palestinian fighters to surrender their weapons in exchange for amnesty according to faction and region

Support or opposition to Palestinian fighters surrendering weapons in exchange for amnesty.			
Faction	Hamas	Support 49%	Oppose 51%
	Fateh	74%	26%
	PFLP	67%	33%
	Others	65%	35%
	I trust no faction	70%	30%
Region	West Bank	72%	28%
	Gaza Strip	60%	40%
Total		67%	33%

VI. Special focus: the Palestinian leadership

A. *Palestinian leadership*

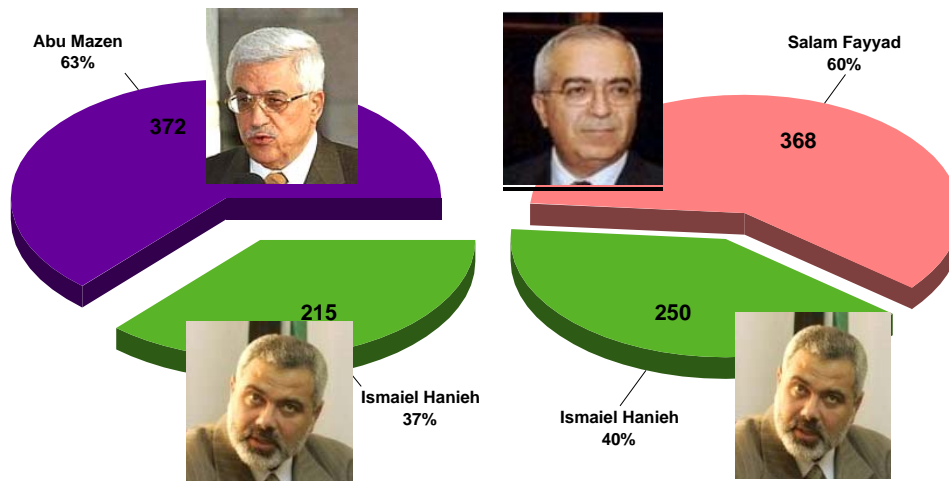
Many observers have recently been entertaining ideas and asking questions about the Palestinian leadership: where it stands now and who will succeed Abu Mazen if he decides not to run for elections? Other questions were also raised about Hamas and its leaders: who is really in control of Hamas? How is Hanieh perceived by the general public in general and the Hamas supporters in particular.

In an attempt to answer these questions and to shed some light on this debate, NEC added some questions to this extent, in addition to the other questions that are regularly examined every month. The following pages will briefly discuss the results of this special focus on the Palestinian leadership.

1. Abbas vs. Hanieh and Hanieh vs. Fayyad

As indicated in figure 21, below, Mahmoud Abbas is perceived as more trustworthy by the majority of Palestinians with 63% of the respondents stating their trust in him as opposed to 37% who gave their trust to Ismael Hanieh. However, trust in Abu Mazen has dropped from 66% in July to 63% in August. As for Hanieh, there has been a slight increase in his favor (from 34% in July to 37% in August). The increase in the level of trust for Hanieh is also witnessed when comparing his standing with Salam Fayyad.

Figure 21: Personality trusted most



2. Trust in Abu Mazen versus trust in Ismael Hanieh according to faction and region

Naturally, trust in Mahmoud Abbas is articulated more by supporters of Fateh while Hamas supporters indicate their trust to Ismael Hanieh. Most other respondents 'affiliated' with other

factions are more in favor of Abu Mazen, although trust in Hanieh is relatively high among those who do not trust any political or religious faction, as outlined in table 22, below. Again, Hanieh enjoys more support in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. Whereas 39% of Gaza respondents declared their support to Ismael Hanieh, the percentage in the West Bank is 34%

Table 22: Trust in Abu Mazen versus trust in Ismael Hanieh according to faction and region

Trust in Abu Mazen versus trust in Ismael Hanieh.			
		Abu Mazen	Ismael Hanieh
Faction	Hamas	6%	94%
	Fateh	97%	3%
	PFLP	90%	10%
	Others	89%	11%
	I trust no faction	61%	39%
Region	West Bank	66%	34%
	Gaza Strip	61%	39%
	Total	64%	36%

3. Trust in Ismael Hanieh versus trust in Salaam Fayyad according to faction and region

As is the case with Abbas and Hanieh, similar trends are observed when the question of trust pertained to Hanieh and Fayyad. However, the level of trust in Salam Fayyad has slightly dropped in favor of Hanieh over the past month. Still, however, Fayyad is trusted most by the Palestinians, especially among the supporters of the groups who are in agreement with Fateh more so than with Hamas.

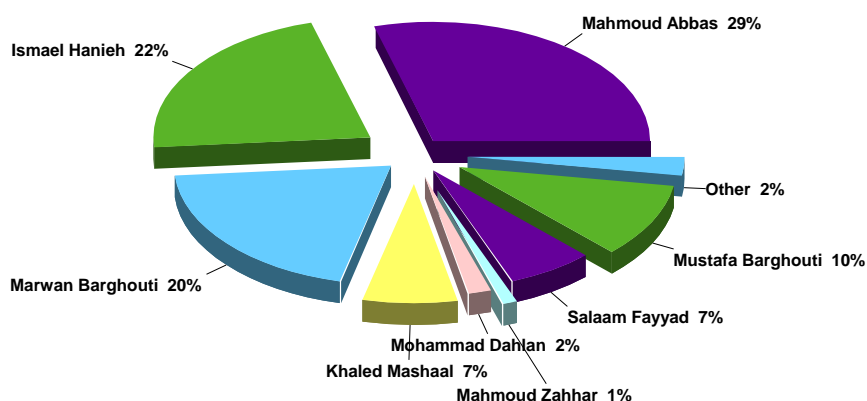
Table 23: Trust in Ismael Hanieh versus trust in Salaam Fayyad according to faction and region

Trust in Ismael Hanieh vs. Trust			
		Ismael Hanieh	Salaam Fayyad
Faction	Hamas	95%	5%
	Fateh	8%	92%
	PFLP	18%	82%
	Others	25%	75%
	I trust no faction	39%	61%
Region	West Bank	38%	62%
	Gaza Strip	43%	57%
	Total	40%	60%

4. Trust in leadership in general

NEC also provided the respondents with a list of leaders from which they can indicate the one they trust most. As illustrated in figure 22, below, the most trusted Palestinian leader among the Palestinian public is Mahmoud Abbas (29%) followed by Ismael Hanieh (22%) and Marwan Barghouti (20%). About 10% of the respondents mentioned Dr. Mustapha Barghouti as the most trusted Palestinian leader. Only 2% mentioned Muhammad Dahlan and 1% mentioned Dr. Mahmoud Zahhar.

Figure 22: Most trusted Palestinian personality



5. Trust in leadership in general according to faction and region of residence

Even when examining the above results according to political affiliation and region of residence, the most trusted two leaders namely Abbas and Hanieh are also the most trusted by their respective groups as well as by respondents in both regions. In addition, support for both Abbas and Hanieh is still stronger in the Gaza Strip than it is the case in the West Bank as outlined in table 24, below.

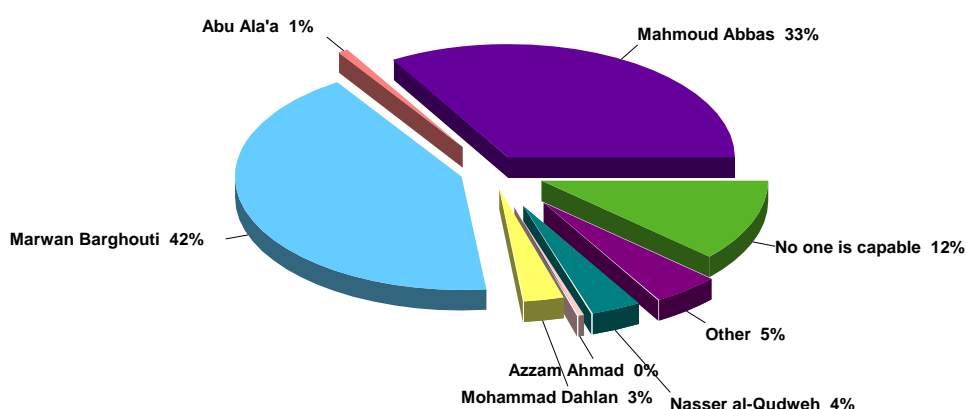
Table 24: Most trusted Palestinian personality according to faction and region

		Most trusted Palestinian personality.								
		Mahmoud Abbas	Ismael Hanieh	Marwan Barghouti	Khaled Mashaal	Mohammad Dahlan	Mahmoud Zahhar	Salaam Fayyad	Mustafa Barghouti	Other
Faction	Hamas	3%	66%	4%	19%	0%	2%	1%	6%	0%
	Fateh	52%	1%	28%	0%	3%	0%	10%	5%	1%
	PFLP	33%	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	27%	20%
	Others	24%	12%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	47%	0%
	None	19%	13%	25%	8%	2%	1%	8%	18%	6%
Region	West Bank	28%	18%	22%	7%	1%	1%	8%	11%	3%
	Gaza Strip	31%	26%	17%	6%	2%	1%	5%	9%	2%
Total		29%	22%	20%	7%	2%	1%	7%	10%	2%

6. Most capable Fateh leader

When asked about the most suitable leader to lead Fateh, the results revealed that the majority of the Palestinian public (42%) believes Marwan Barghouti to be the most suitable person to lead Fateh, followed by 33% who mentioned Mahmoud Abbas. As pointed out in figure 23, most other potential leaders ranked relatively low, in comparison.

Figure 23: The most suitable person to be in charge of Fateh nowadays



7. Most capable Fateh leader according to faction and region

However, the situation changes rather substantively when the results are cross-referenced by factional trust. While the majority of the public thought of Marwan Barghouti as the most suitable person to lead Fateh, the majority of Fateh supporters, (53%) see Abbas as the most suitable leader. Only 35% of Fateh supporters mentioned Marwan Barghouti. As indicated in table 25, below, the high support for Marwan Barghouti is partially attributed to the supporters of Hamas who were more likely to mention Barghouti than Abbas as the most suitable leader to lead Fateh.

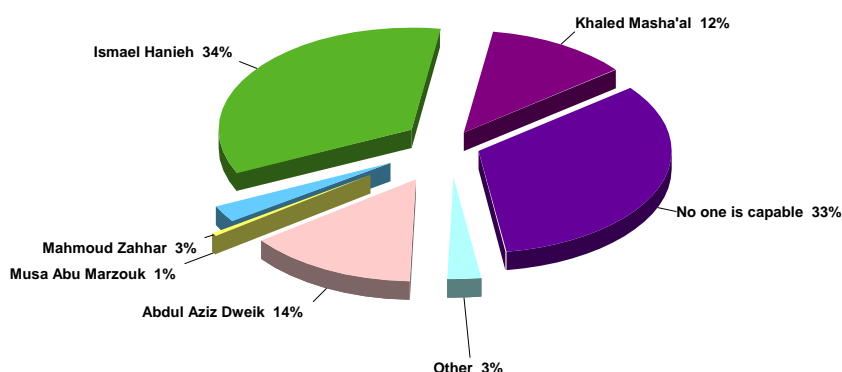
Table 25: The most suitable person to be in charge of Fateh nowadays according to faction and region

		The most suitable person to be in charge of Fateh nowadays.							
		Mahmoud Abbas	Abu Alata	Marwan Barghouti	Mohamma d Dahlan	Azzam Ahmad	Nasser al-Qudweh	Other	No one is capable
Faction	Hamas	17%	1%	58%	0%	0%	5%	3%	16%
	Fateh	53%	1%	35%	5%	1%	3%	1%	1%
	PFLP	29%	0%	52%	5%	0%	0%	14%	0%
	Others	30%	0%	60%	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%
	I trust no faction	21%	0%	39%	2%	0%	4%	10%	23%
Region	West Bank	34%	1%	40%	1%	0%	4%	6%	14%
	Gaza Strip	32%	1%	46%	5%	0%	4%	4%	9%
	Total	33%	1%	42%	3%	0%	4%	5%	12%

8. Most capable Hamas leader

As for the most suitable Hamas leader to lead Hamas, the majority of the Palestinians (34%) selected Ismael Hanieh, followed by 14% who mentioned Abdul Aziz Dweik, the imprisoned leader of the PLC.

Figure 24: The most suitable person to be in charge of Hamas nowadays



9. Most capable Hamas leader according to faction and region

As for Hamas supporters, 62% mentioned Ismael Hanieh while 19% mentioned Khaled Mashal. Support for Dr. Zahhar is very negligible even among Hamas supporters (6%). As indicated in table 26, support for Hanieh is rather consistent among all groups and in both regions. Whereas in the Fateh case Marwan Barghouthi is perceived as a clear contender as for leading Fateh, Hanieh is the only one who enjoys significant support among all spectrums of the Palestinian society as well as among the supporters of Hamas who are clearly behind Hanieh more so than behind any other Hamas leader. In addition, more than one third of respondents so not find any capable leader for Hamas.

Table 26: The most suitable person to be in charge of Hamas nowadays according to faction and region

		The most suitable person to be in charge of Hamas nowadays.						
		Khaled Masha'al	Ismael Hanieh	Mahmoud Zahhar	Musa Abu Marzouk	Abdul Aziz Dweik	Other	No one is capable
Faction	Hamas	19%	62%	6%	1%	9%	2%	1%
	Fateh	8%	22%	2%	1%	14%	2%	51%
	PFLP	10%	33%	5%	0%	14%	0%	38%
	Others	10%	35%	0%	0%	40%	0%	15%
	None	13%	25%	2%	0%	15%	5%	39%
	Total		12%	34%	3%	1%	14%	3%
Region	West Bank	14%	28%	3%	0%	17%	3%	34%
	Gaza Strip	9%	43%	2%	1%	11%	2%	32%
	Total		12%	34%	3%	1%	14%	3%