



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **The Palestinian National Dialogue and call for a Referendum Survey #3 - 11 June 2006**

#### **The highlights**

In the aftermath of the Israeli attacks on civilians in the Gaza Strip and President Mahmoud Abbas's official announcement of a date for the referendum, Palestinian public opinion on issues related to the referendum stands as follows:

- ❖ 59% support Abu Mazen's call for a referendum, which is a drop of 17% in support in a one week time-span. Meanwhile, 51% continues to believe that the National Dialogue will succeed.
- ❖ Among the 18% who used to support a referendum, but in the past week changed their minds and now oppose the referendum, 44% oppose the referendum now as a result of the recent Israeli attacks on civilians in the Gaza Strip, 34% because they no longer believe that the referendum will solve anything, while 22% now oppose it because they started having doubts.
- ❖ A decreasing percentage of Palestinians would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement (61% versus 77% last week), and a decreasing percentage support the Prisoners' Agreement (65% versus 76%). When asked to answer the actual question that will be asked in the referendum, the percentage of positive replies shrinks to 59%. (64% in the West Bank and 52% in the Gaza Strip)
- ❖ 56% believe that the referendum is a good mean to solve the crisis. (59% in the West Bank and 50% in the Gaza Strip)
- ❖ Only 24% knows a lot about the Prisoners' Agreement, 59% know a little about it, and 17% know nothing about it.
- ❖ Popular support for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders decreased from 64% to 55% in the past week. Support for a two-state solution in the Gaza Strip dropped to 48%, while in the West Bank it declined to 59%.
- ❖ In the past week factional trust in both Fateh and Hamas has dropped from respectively 43% and 34% to 37% and 33%, while the percentage of those who do not trust any faction has increased from 18% to 25%.
- ❖ Since last week trust in Abu Mazen and Ismael Hanieh has remained quite stable. Currently, 54% most trust Abu Mazen, while 46% most trust Ismael Hanieh. For the first time, Ismael Hanieh (51%) is more trusted in the Gaza Strip than Abu Mazen (49%).
- ❖ 61% believe that the al-Qassam Brigades took the correct decision to end the 16-month old 'hudna'.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT: NEC**  
**HSBC Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Ramallah**  
**Tel: 02-2961436; Fax: 02-2963114**  
**info@neareastconsulting.com**  
**<http://www.neareastconsulting.com>**



## PRESS RELEASE – 11 June 2006

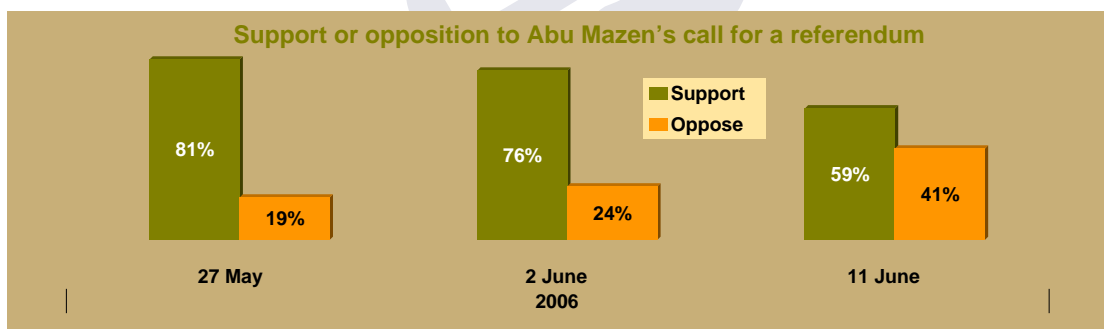
### The Palestinian National Dialogue and call for a Referendum

On 10 June 2006, immediately after the press conference held by President Mahmoud Abbas in which he set the date for the National Referendum on the Prisoners' Agreement for 26 July 2006, Near East Consulting (NEC) began its third phone survey in as many weeks on issues related to the Palestinian National Dialogue, the Prisoners' Agreement, the call for a referendum, and the support or opposition to a two-state solution based on the 1967-borders. Given the decision of Hamas's al-Qassam Brigades to end the end a 16-month old 'hudna' (cease-fire) with Israel in the wake of the assassination of a member of the Hamas-led government, Jamal Abu Samhadana, and six Palestinian civilians picnicking on the beach in the Gaza Strip, the NEC team has also included questions that aim to collect Palestinians' opinions about this decision to end the 'hudna', and the impact of these Israeli strikes on people's support or opposition to the referendum.

The phone survey was completed by Sunday night 11 July 2006, and the results are based on a sample of 810 successful telephone interviews. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.4% and a 95% confidence level. In the period leading up to the actual referendum on 26 July 2006, NEC plans to continue its regular monitoring of issues related to the National Dialogue, the Prisoners' Agreement, and the referendum.

### The Referendum

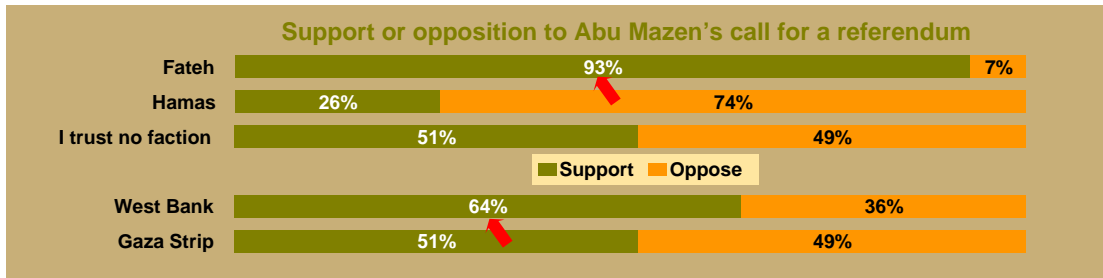
Over the past three weeks there has been a decline in the support for Abu Mazen's call for a referendum. As overviewed below, whereas support for Abu Mazen's call for a referendum was 81% in NEC's 27 May survey, and 76% in NEC's 2 June survey, it now stands at 59%.



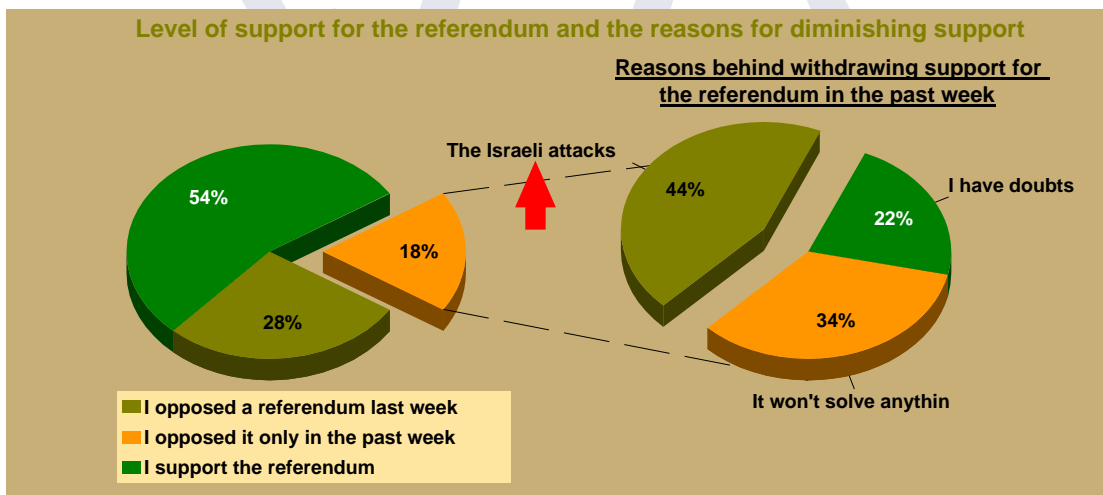
Support for Abu Mazen's call for a referendum varies significantly according to the respondents' factional trust and region of residence. While 93% of Fateh supporters support Abu Mazen's call for a referendum, this is the case for 26% of Hamas



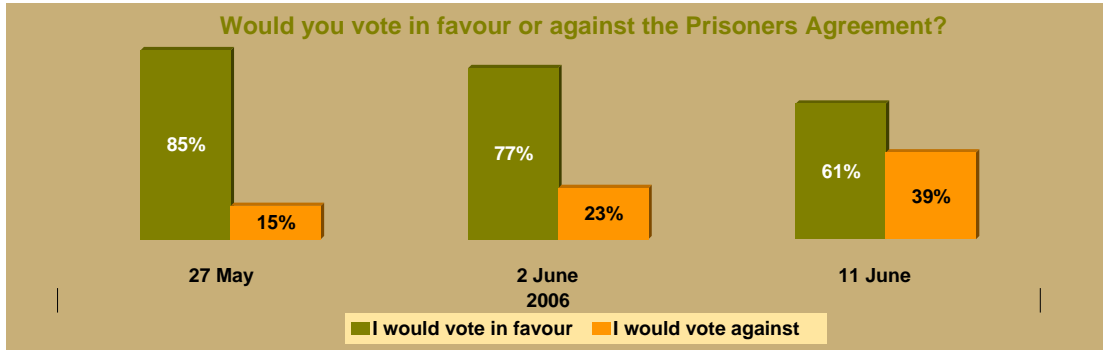
supporters and 51% of those who do not trust any faction. Also, whereas 64% of Westbankers support the call for a referendum, 51% of Gazans expressed such support.



Given the timing of the official press conference in which the date of the referendum was set for 26 June 2006 just one day after 6 members of the same family were killed while picnicking on the beach in the Gaza Strip, and the outrage these killings caused among the Palestinian public, NEC introduced a question to gauge if people withdrew their support for a referendum as a result of these events. The results in the figure below, indicate that 54% support the referendum, 28% were already opposed to the referendum last week, while 18% only began opposing the referendum in the past week. When those 18% were asked about their reasons behind withdrawing their support for the referendum in the past week, 44% withdrew their support because of the Israeli attacks on civilians, 34% withdrew their support because they do not believe that the referendum will solve anything, while 22% specified more generally that they began to have doubts.

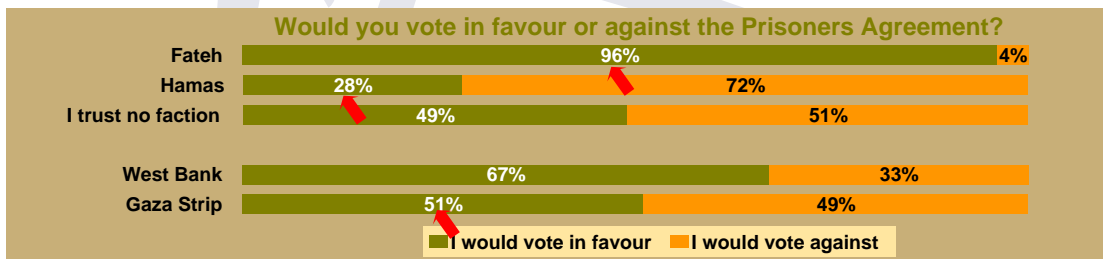


While in the 27 May NEC survey, 85% said that in the event of a referendum they would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement, this percentage dropped to 77% by 2 June, and now stands at 61%.

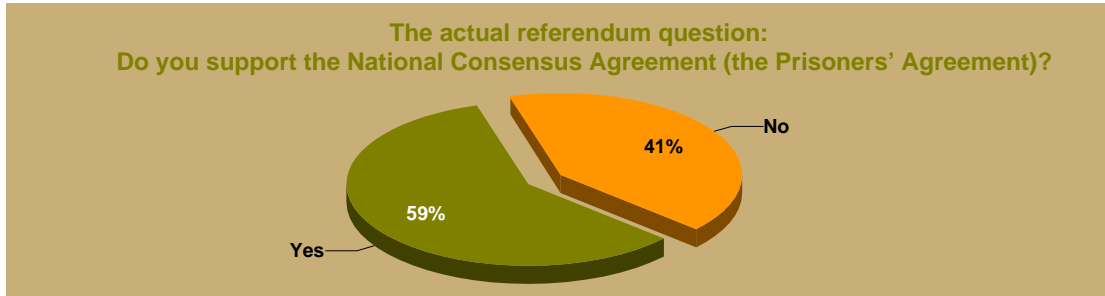


The drop in the percentage of Palestinians intending to vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement can be explained by the smaller percentage of Hamas supporters and those who do not trust any faction that intend to vote in favour of this agreement. While in the 27 May NEC survey, 72% of Hamas supporters and 73% of those who do not trust any faction would vote in favour of the Prisoners Agreement in a referendum, their percentages dropped to respectively 57% and 62% in the 2 June NEC survey, and in the current NEC survey respectively reach 28% and 49%. The percentage of Fateh supporters stating that in the event of a referendum they would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement remained stable in this period of time.

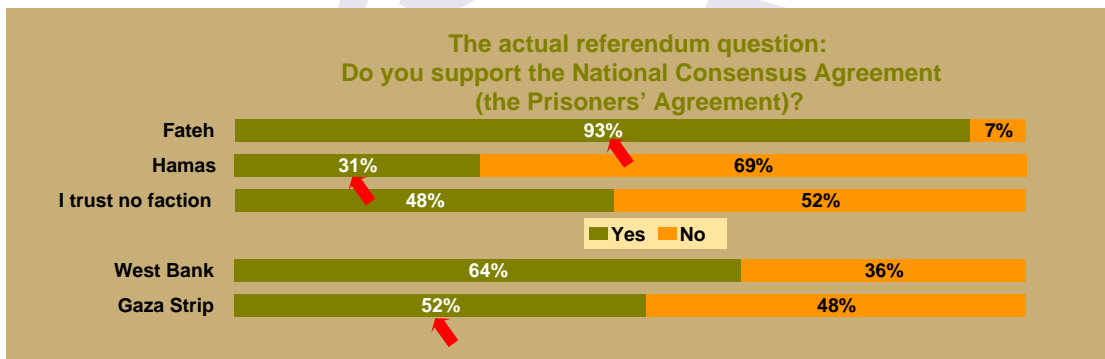
Also, according to region of residence, whereas a relatively equal percentage of Gazans and Westbankers in NEC's survey of last week said that they would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement, in this week's survey a clear gap between the two regions appeared. More specifically, whereas 67% of the Westbankers continue to say that they would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement, about half of the Gazans (49%) would vote against it.



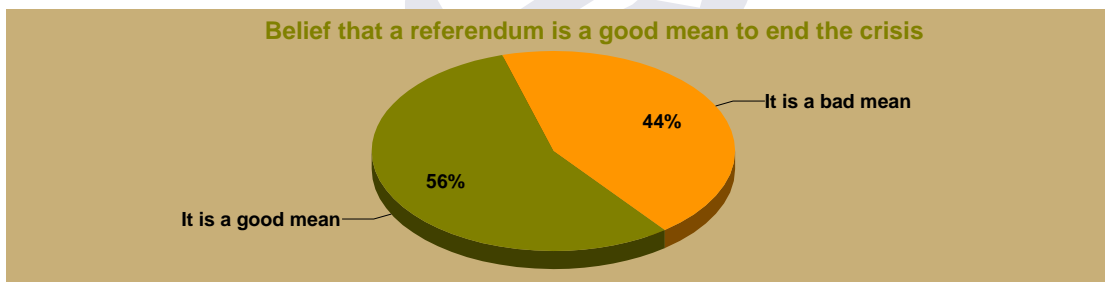
The NEC team also asked the interviewees the exact same question that will be asked on the 26 July 2006 referendum. In general, 59% said that they support the National Consensus Agreement, while 41% said that they oppose the National Consensus Agreement.



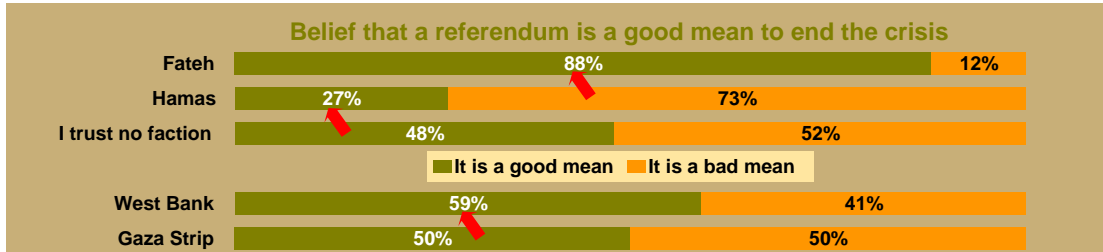
Again, a wide gap appears in the intended answers to the actual question that will be asked in the referendum on 26 July 2006 according to Palestinians' factional trust and region of residence. Whereas 93% of Fateh supporters intend to reply positively to the question that will be asked in the referendum, 48% of those who do not trust any faction and 31% of Hamas supporters intend to follow suit. In addition, while 64% of Westbankers indicated their intention to support the National Consensus Agreement in the referendum, this was the case for 52% of Gazans.



In general, a small majority of 56% believe that the referendum is a good mean to end the crisis, while the remaining 44% believe it is a bad mean.

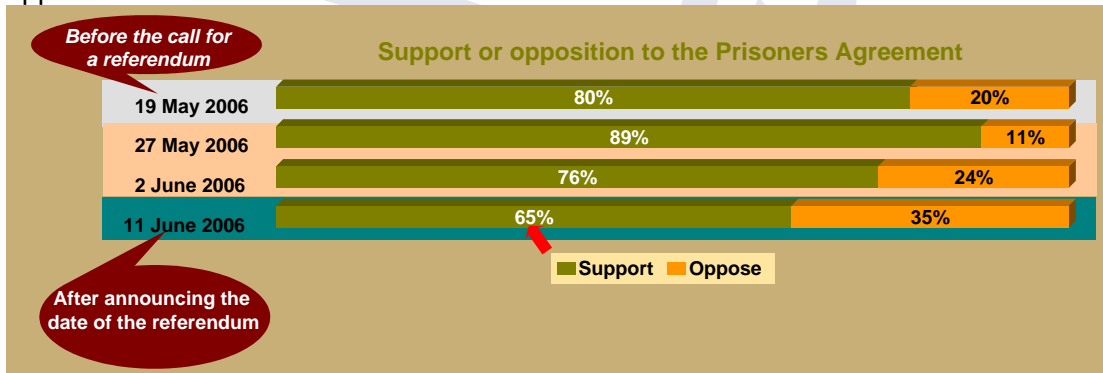


Although 88% of Fateh supporters believe that the referendum is a good mean to end the crisis, less than half (48%) of those who do not trust any faction and 27% of Hamas supporters share this belief. Also, the results indicate that the belief that the referendum is a good mean to end the crisis is more widespread in the West Bank (59%) than in the Gaza Strip (50%).

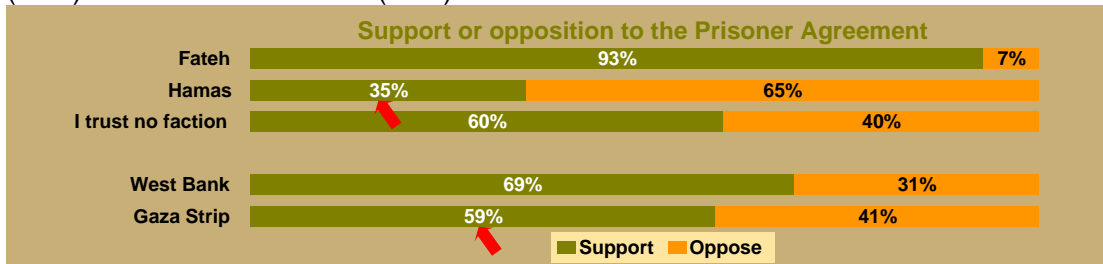


### The Prisoners' Agreement

Whereas before Abu Mazen's call for a referendum, in the NEC 19 May survey 80% supported the Prisoners' Agreement, after Abu Mazen's statement to submit the Prisoners' Agreement to a referendum in case the National Dialogue fails, the percentage of support for the Prisoners' Agreement first increased to 89% in the 27 May NEC survey, and then dropped to 76% in the 2 June NEC survey. In the current NEC survey that was conducted immediately after the official announcement of a referendum on 26 July 2006, support for the Prisoners' Agreement dropped further to 65%, while the opposition to it increased to 35%.

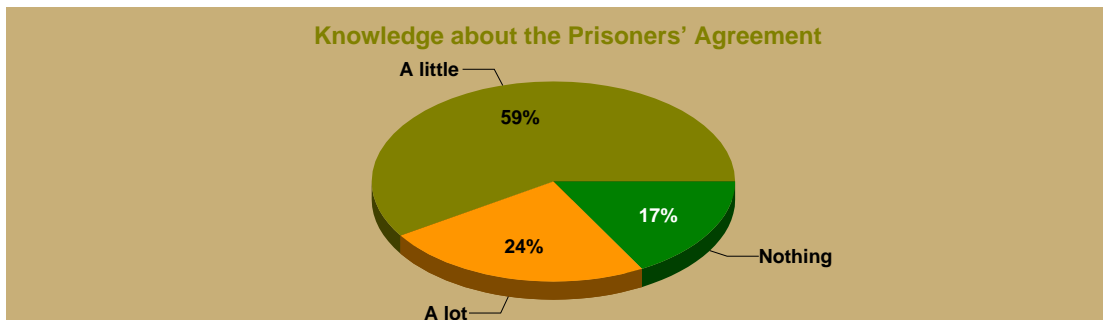


According to factional trust, whereas in NEC's 2 June survey 60% of Hamas supporters, said that they support the Prisoners' Agreement, in the 11 June NEC survey the support for the Prisoners' Agreement dropped to 35% among Hamas supporters. Meanwhile, support for the Prisoners' Agreement stands at 93% among Fateh supporters and reaches 60% among those who do not trust any faction. As also overviewed in the figure below, support for the Prisoners' Agreement is considerably less high in the Gaza Strip (59%) than in the West Bank (69%).

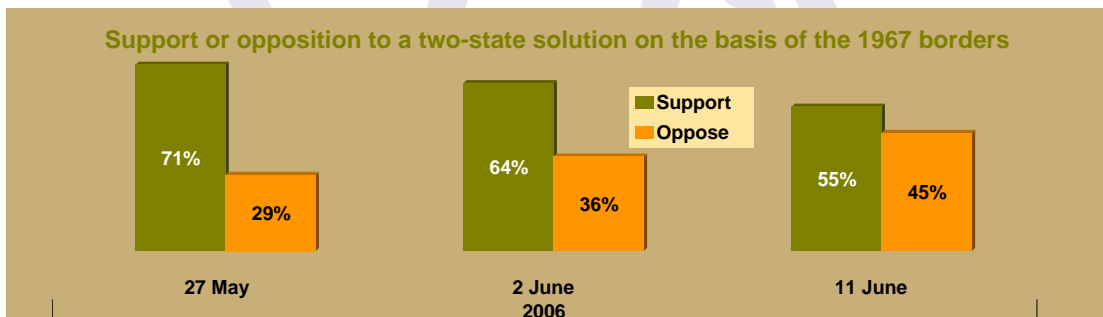




Meanwhile, when respondents were asked about the extent of their knowledge about the Prisoners' Agreement, only 24% indicated that they know a lot about it, 59% of the respondents only know a little about the Prisoners' Agreement, and 17% know nothing about it.

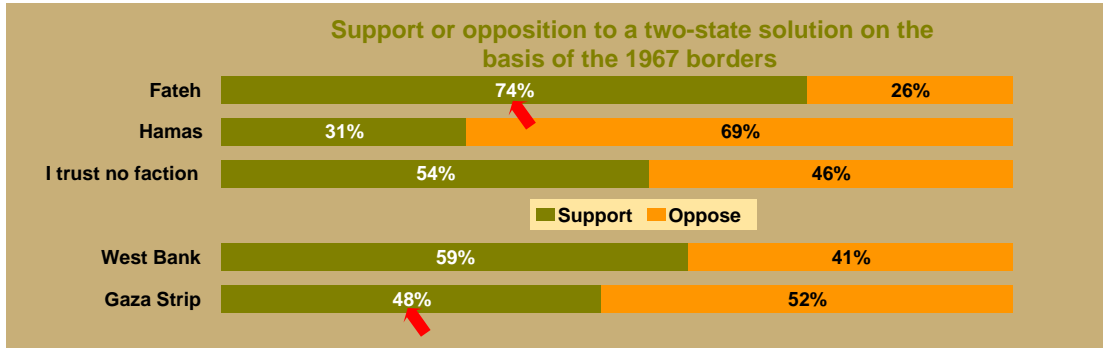


Popular support for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders has also further decreased. Whereas in the 27 May NEC survey, 71% of the Palestinian public supported such a solution, and in the 2 June NEC survey 64% supported a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, the percentage dropped to 55% by 11 June.



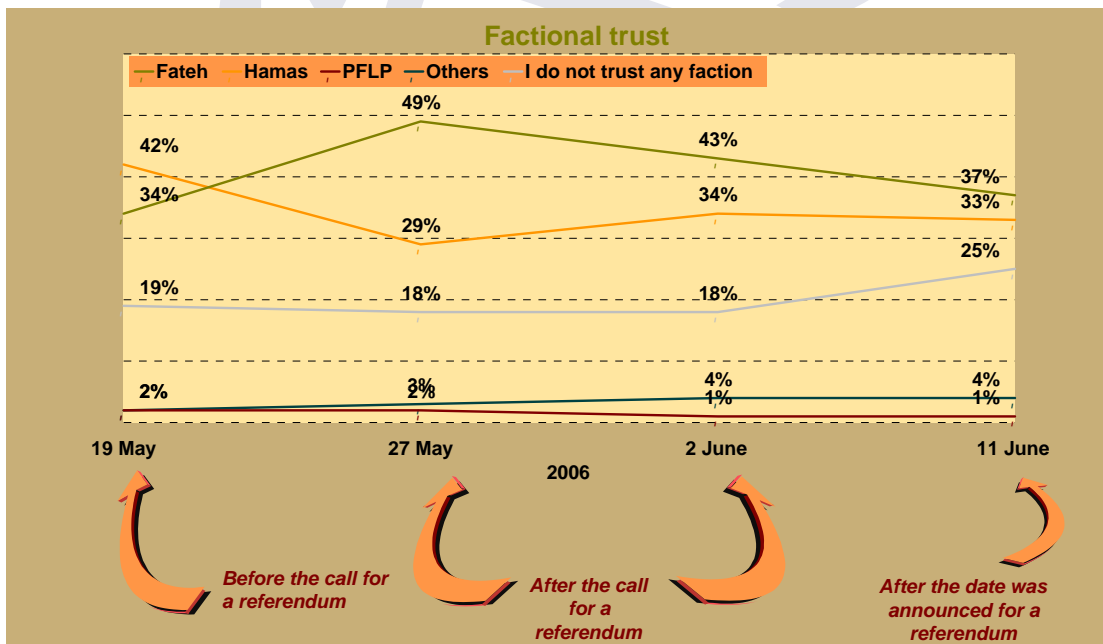
Support for a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders is far less pronounced among Hamas supporters (31%) and those who do not trust any faction (54%) than among Fateh supporters (74%). Even among Fateh supporters support for a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders was considerably higher in the 2 June NEC survey (82%) than in the 11 June NEC survey (74%).

According to region of residence, the results indicate that for the first time less than half of the Gazan population (48%) currently support a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders. Currently, 59% of Westbankers continue to support a two-state solution.



### Factional trust and trust in personalities

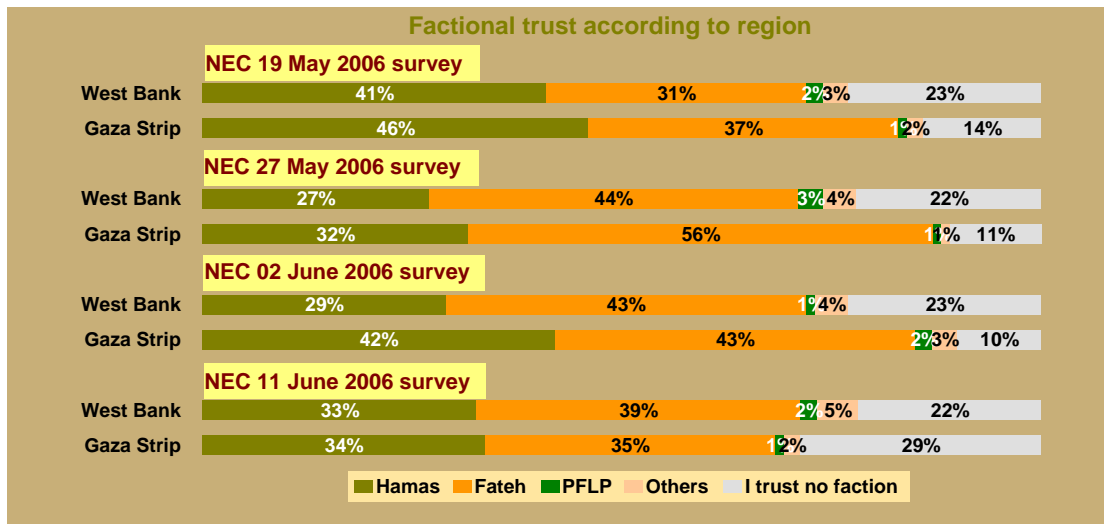
While in the NEC 19 May 2006 survey 42% most trusted Hamas, 34% most trusted Fateh, and 20% did not trust any faction, in the 27 May NEC survey 29% most trust Hamas, 49% most trust Fateh, while 18% do not trust any faction. By the 2 June NEC survey, Hamas seemed to be recovering from the blow it suffered in popular trust immediately after Abu Mazen's surprise call for a referendum in case the Palestinian factions do not reach a common platform in the national dialogue. As such, in the 2 June NEC survey, trust in Fateh decreased to 43% (-6%), trust in Hamas increased to 34% (+5%), while the percentage of those not trusting any faction remained stable at 18%. Now, in the 11 June survey conducted by NEC immediately after the official setting of a date for the referendum, trust in Fateh further dropped to 37% (-6%), trust in Hamas barely dropped to 33% (-1%), while the percentage of those not trusting any faction increased to 25% (+7%).



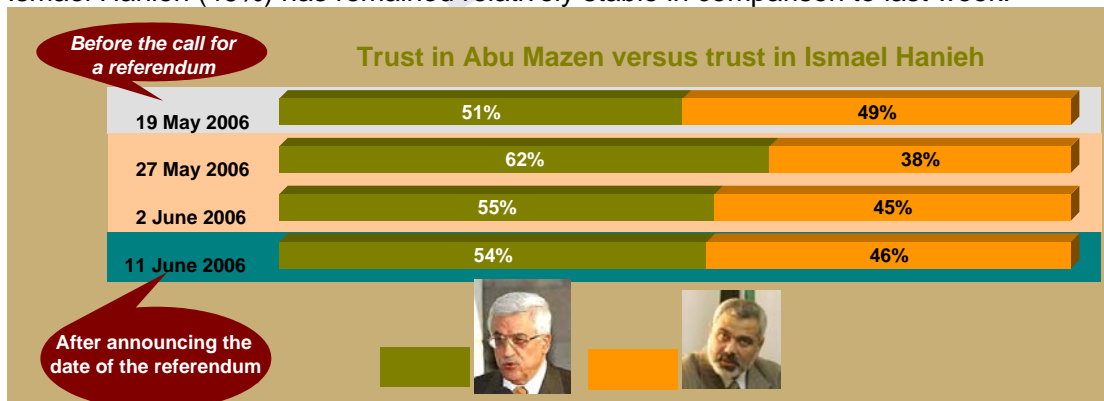


Currently 34% of Gazans and 33% of Westbankers most trust Hamas, while 35% of Gazans and 39% of Westbankers most trust Fateh. While 29% in the Gaza Strip do not trust any faction, this is the case for 22% of respondents in the West Bank.

A comparison of factional trust according to region over the past three weeks indicated that Westbankers more so than Gazans remained stable in their trust of the various factions. In the Gaza Strip, the percentages of trust in Hamas and trust of Fateh seem to be strongly fluctuating according to events. For example, compared to last week in the Gaza Strip trust in both Hamas and Fateh dropped by 8%, while the percentage of those not trusting any factions sharply increased by 19%.



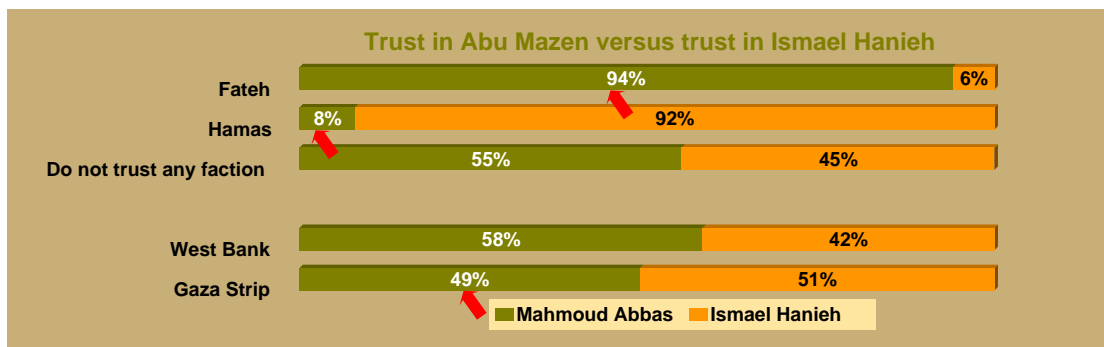
In the 19 May NEC survey, before Abu Mazen's call for a referendum on the Prisoners' Agreement in case the national dialogue fails, trust in Abu Mazen (51%) and Ismael Hanieh (49%) was quite evenly divided. By the 27 May NEC survey, popular trust in Abu Mazen was substantially boosted to 62% by his call for a referendum. By the 2 June NEC survey, Abu Mazen (55%) had again lost some of the popular trust to the benefit of Ismael Hanieh (45%). Now, in the 11 June NEC survey, trust in Abu Mazen (54%) and Ismael Hanieh (46%) has remained relatively stable in comparison to last week.



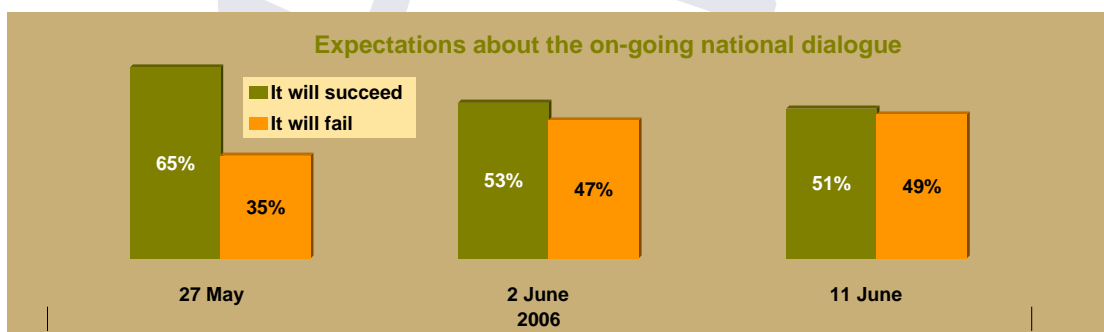


Trust in Abu Mazen versus Ismael Hanieh varies significantly according to Palestinians' factional trust and the region in which they reside. For example, whereas 8% of Hamas supporters most trust Abu Mazen, this is the case for 55% of those who do not trust any faction and for 94% of Fateh supporters. Conversely, whereas 92% of Hamas supporters most trust Ismael Hanieh, this is the case for 45% of those who do not trust any faction and 6% of Fateh supporters.

Although 58% of Westbankers most trust Abu Mazen and 42% of them most trust Ismael Hanieh, for the first time since NEC has included this question in its surveys, in the Gaza Strip trust in Abu Mazen (49%) is slightly lower than trust in Ismael Hanieh (51%).



In general, expectations that the still on-going national dialogue will succeed are fading. While in NEC's 27 May survey 66% of the respondents believed that the national dialogue will succeed, this dropped to 53% in the NEC 2 June survey, and now stands at 51%. Expectations about the on-going national dialogue are similar across all factional lines and also in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

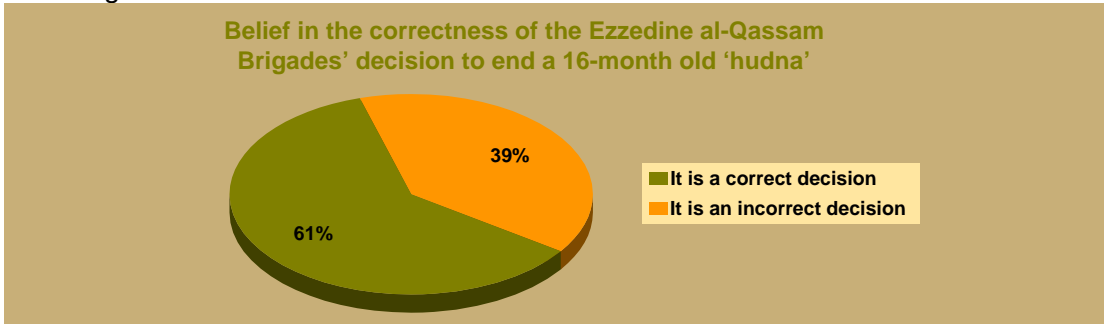


### The hudna

In the aftermath of the assassination of a member of the Hamas-led government, Jamal Abu Samhadana, and six Palestinian civilians picnicking on the beach in the Gaza Strip, the al-Qassam Brigades announced that they will end a 'hudna' that they adhered to since February 2005. As overviewed in the figure below, in general, 61% of Palestinians



believe that this decision of the al-Qassam Brigades is correct while 39% believe that it is not a good decision.



Finally, belief in the correctness of the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades' decision to end the 'hudna' is stronger among Hamas supporters (77%) than among those who do not trust any faction (58%) and those who most trust Fateh (45%).

