



Near East Consulting

POB 4, Ramallah, Palestine
T. +970-2-296-1436
info@neareastconsulting.com
<http://www.neareastconsulting.com/>

PRESS RELEASE

**The Palestinian National Dialogue and call for a Referendum
Survey #4 - 24 June 2006**



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

NEC

HSBC Building, 3rd floor, Ramallah

Tel: 02-2961436; Fax: 02-2963114

info@neareastconsulting.com

<http://www.neareastconsulting.com>



PRESS RELEASE – 24 June 2006

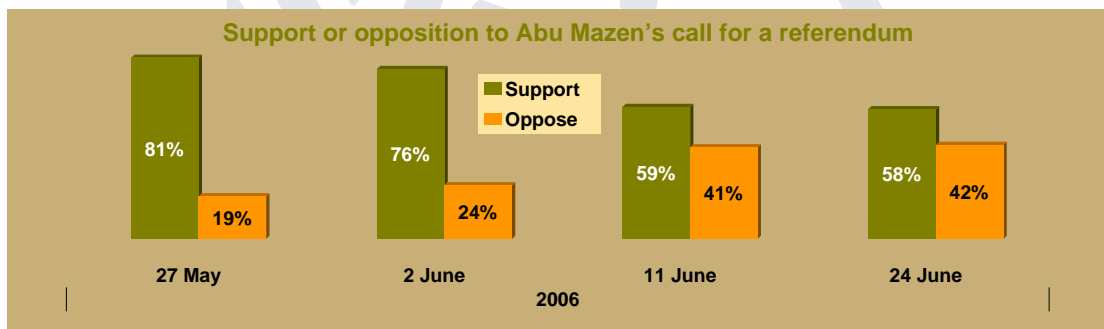
The Palestinian National Dialogue and call for a Referendum

Between 22-24 June 2006, Near East Consulting (NEC) began its fourth 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. The results are based on a sample of 840 successful telephone interviews. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.38% and has a 95% confidence level.

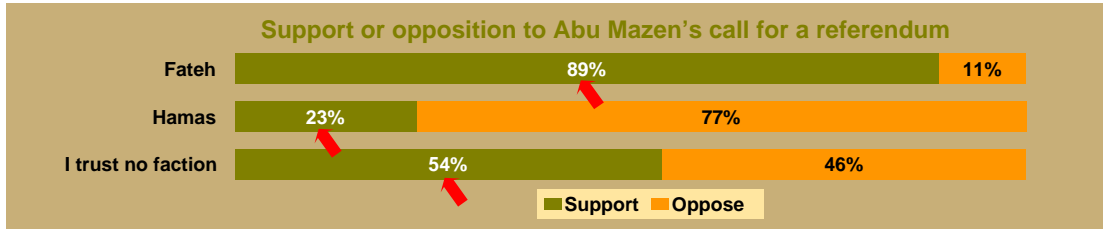
In the period leading up to the actual referendum on 26 July 2006, NEC plans to continue its regular monitoring of issues related to the National Dialogue, the Prisoners' Agreement, and the referendum.

The Referendum

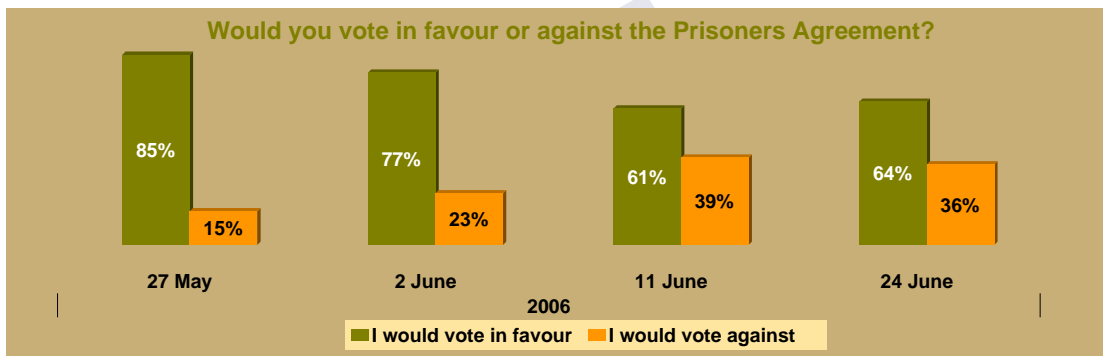
Since President Abu Mazen's call for a referendum about five weeks ago there has been a decline in the support for a referendum. As overviewed below, whereas support for Abu Mazen's call for a referendum was 81% in NEC's 27 May survey, and 76% in NEC's 2 June survey, it decreased to 59% by NEC's 11 June survey, and in the past two weeks it seems to have stabilized at 58%.



Support for Abu Mazen's call for a referendum varies significantly according to the respondents' factional trust. While 89% of Fateh supporters support Abu Mazen's call for a referendum, this is the case for 23% of Hamas supporters and 54% of those who do not trust any faction. It is also worth noting that support for Abu Mazen's call for a referendum nowadays is at the same level in the Gaza Strip as it is in the West Bank. In NEC's 11 June survey, support for the call for a referendum was significantly lower in the Gaza Strip than it was in the West Bank. At that time, barely half of the Gazans (51%) were supportive of Abu Mazen's call for a referendum compared to 64% of West Bank residents.

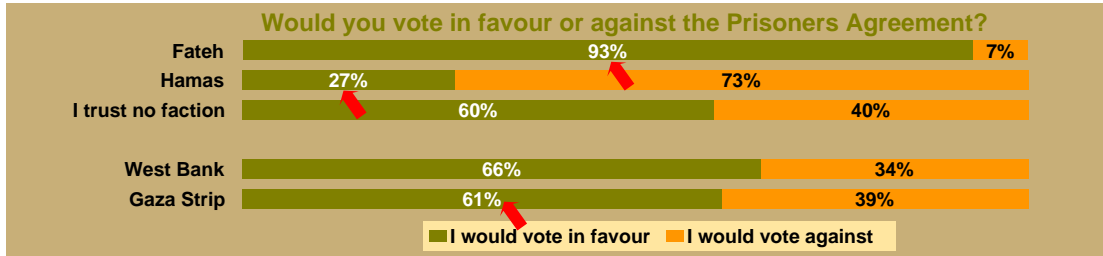


While in the 27 May NEC survey, 85% said that in the event of a referendum they would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement, this percentage dropped to 77% by 2 June, and further decreased to 61% by 11 June. In NEC's current survey the number of Palestinians who would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement has slightly regained support and now stands at 64%.



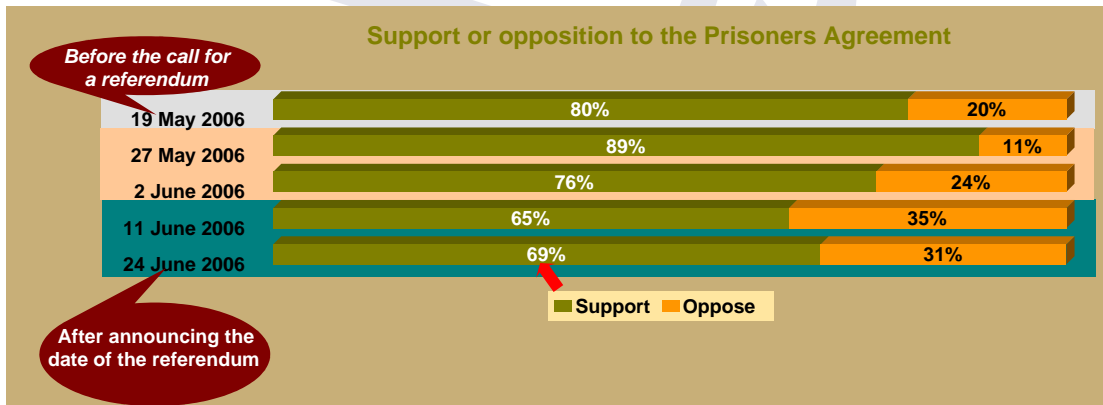
The drop in the percentage of Palestinians intending to vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement can be explained by the smaller percentage of Hamas supporters and those who do not trust any faction that intend to vote in favour of this agreement. While in the 27 May NEC survey, 72% of Hamas supporters and 73% of those who do not trust any faction would vote in favour of the Prisoners Agreement in a referendum, by the 24 June NEC survey their percentages dropped to respectively 27% and 60%. 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, although there remains a gap in the percentages of Palestinians who would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement, this gap is closing since NEC's 11 June survey. More specifically, whereas in NEC survey two weeks ago 67% of the Westbankers and a mere 49% of Gazans said that they would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement, in the 24 June NEC survey 66% of Westbankers continue to say that they would vote in favour of the Prisoners' Agreement, while 61% of Gazans share this opinion.

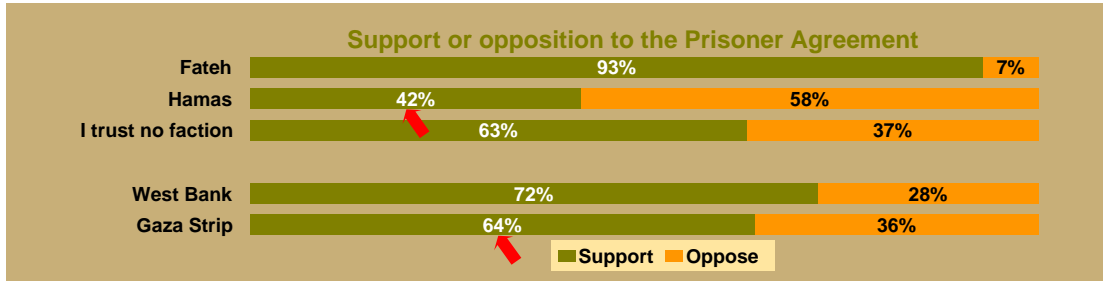


The Prisoners' Agreement

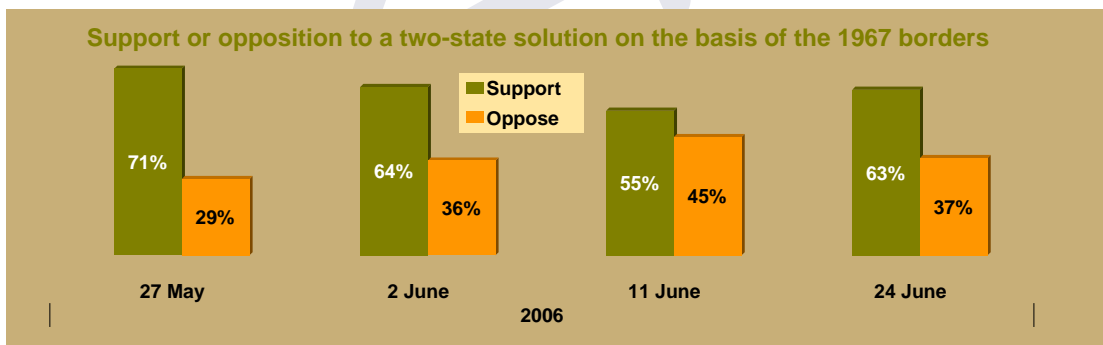
Whereas before Abu Mazen's call for a referendum, in the NEC 19 May survey 80% supported the Prisoners' Agreement, after Abu Mazen's statement to submit the Prisoners' Agreement to a referendum in case the National Dialogue fails, the percentage of support for the Prisoners' Agreement first increased to 89% in the 27 May NEC survey, and then dropped to 76% in the 2 June NEC survey and 65% in the 11 June NEC survey. In the current NEC survey support for the Prisoners' Agreement slightly picked up again to 69%.



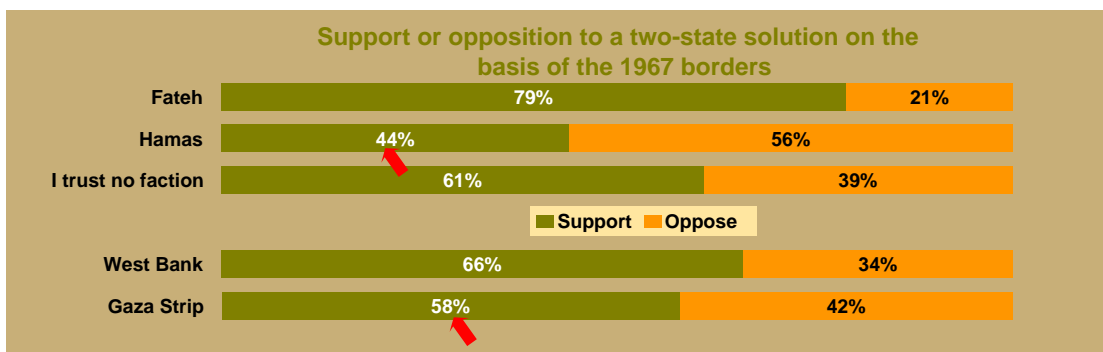
According to factional trust, whereas in NEC's 11 June survey 35% of Hamas supporters, said that they support the Prisoners' Agreement, in the 24 June NEC survey the support for the Prisoners' Agreement increased to 42% among Hamas supporters. Meanwhile, support for the Prisoners' Agreement stands at 93% among Fateh supporters and reaches 63% among those who do not trust any faction. As also overviewed in the figure below, support for the Prisoners' Agreement is considerably lower in the Gaza Strip (64%) than in the West Bank (72%).



Popular support for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders has regained some strength in the past two weeks. 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 had dropped to 55% by 11 June. In NEC's 24 June survey 63% support a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.



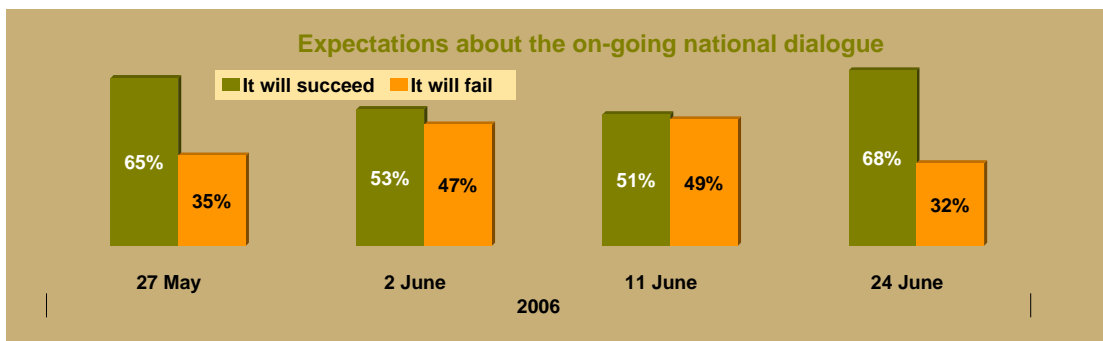
Support for a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders is far less pronounced among Hamas supporters (44%) and those who do not trust any faction (61%) than among Fateh supporters (79%). According to region of residence, the results indicate that support for a two-state solution remains more pronounced in the West Bank (66%) than in the Gaza Strip (58%). However, it is worth remembering that in NEC's 11 June survey, which was carried out the day after Israeli attacks on civilians in the Gaza Strip which caused considerable outrage among Palestinians, less than half of the Gazan population (48%) supported a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.



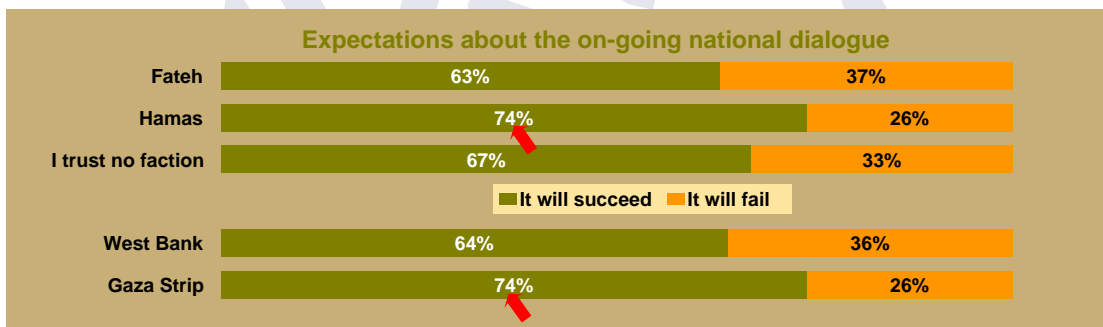


The National Dialogue

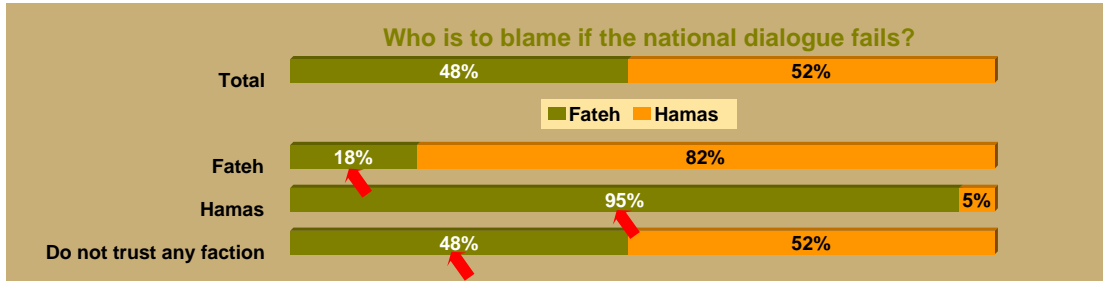
In general, expectations that the still on-going national dialogue will succeed have sharply increased in the past two weeks. While in NEC's 11 June survey a mere 51% of the respondents believed that the national dialogue will succeed, this percentage increased to 68% in NEC's 24 June survey. This sharp increase in the belief that the national dialogue will succeed can be explained by the anticipation and speculation in the media that Fateh and Hamas might agree on a common platform.



As overviewed in the figure below, the expectations that the national dialogue will succeed are considerably more pronounced among Hamas supporters (74%) and Gazans (74%) than among Fateh supporters (63%), those who do not trust any faction (67%), and Westbankers (64%).



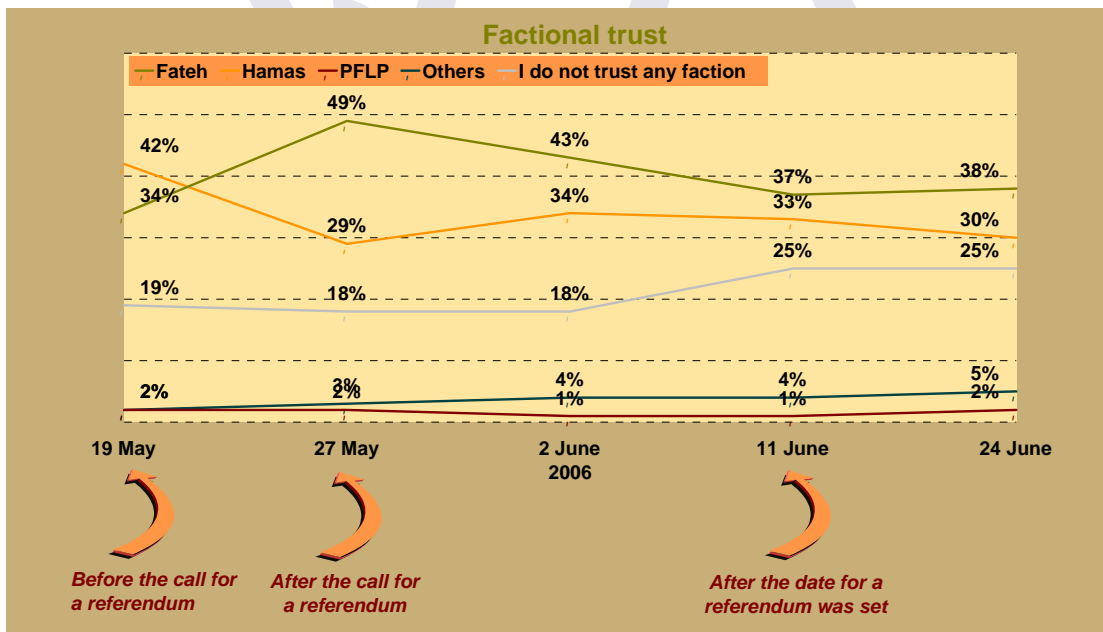
Respondents were also asked who is to blame if the national dialogue fails. The results indicate that both Fateh (48%) and Hamas (52%) would quite equally be blamed in case the national dialogue fails. Not unexpectedly, Fateh supporters would mainly blame Hamas (82%) if the national dialogue fails, while Hamas supporters would mainly blame Fateh (95%) if the dialogue fails. A slightly higher percentage of those who do not trust any faction would put the blame on Hamas (52%) than on Fateh (48%).



Factional trust and trust in personalities

The time-line below, shows the evolution in factional trust over the past five weeks. In comparison with the NEC 11 June survey, trust in Hamas has slightly decreased (-3%) from 33% to 30%, while trust in Fateh has slightly increased by 1% from 37% to 38%. The percentage of Palestinians who do not trust any faction has remained stable in the past two weeks and continues to stand at 25%.

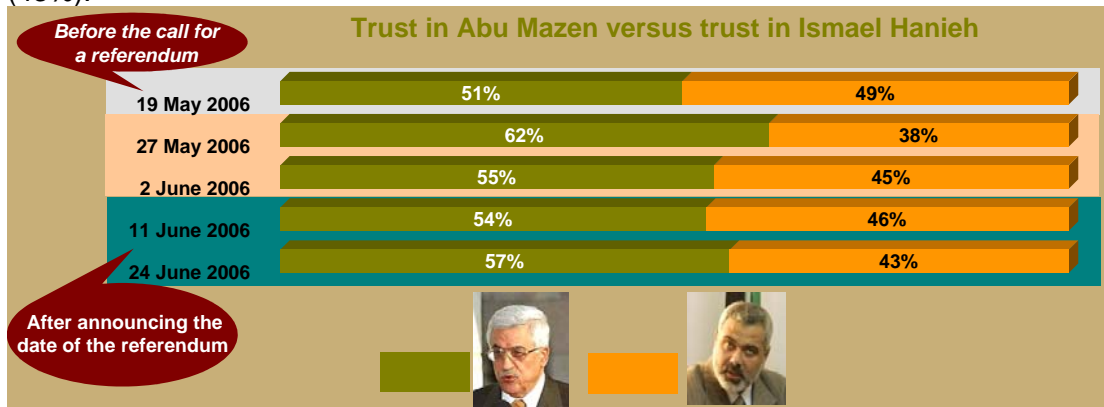
In the 24 June NEC survey, factional trust in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is very similar. For example, 29% of Westbankers and 31% of Gazans most trust Hamas. Also respectively 38% of Westbankers and Gazans most trust Fateh. While 24% of Palestinians in the West Bank do not trust any faction, this is the case for 26% of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.



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

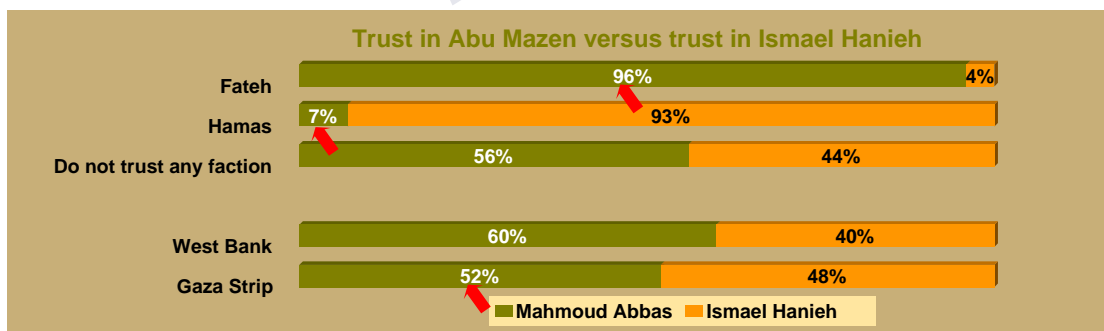


Hanieh (49%) was quite evenly divided. By the 27 May NEC survey, popular trust in Abu Mazen was substantially boosted to 62% by his call for a referendum. By the 2 June NEC survey, Abu Mazen (55%) had again lost some of the popular trust to the benefit of Ismael Hanieh (45%). By the 11 June NEC survey, trust in Abu Mazen (54%) and Ismael Hanieh (46%) had remained relatively stable. Now in the 24 June NEC survey, trust in Abu Mazen has slightly increased to 57% at the expense of trust in Ismael Hanieh (43%).



Trust in Abu Mazen versus Ismael Hanieh varies significantly according to Palestinians' factional trust and the region in which they reside. For example, whereas 7% of Hamas supporters most trust Abu Mazen, this is the case for 56% of those who do not trust any faction and for 96% of Fateh supporters. Conversely, whereas 93% of Hamas supporters most trust Ismael Hanieh, this is the case for 44% of those who do not trust any faction and 4% of Fateh supporters.

According to region of residence, the results indicate that Abu Mazen is clearly more popular in the West Bank (60%) than in the Gaza Strip (52%), while the opposite is the case for Ismael Hanieh. It is probably fair to assume that the popularity of Abu Mazen and Ismael Hanieh in the Gaza Strip is quite evenly divided. While Abu Mazen in this survey has the slight upper-hand over Ismael Hanieh as far a Gazans' trust is concerned, in the 11 June NEC survey Ismael Hanieh (51%) enjoyed slightly more trust than Abu Mazen (49%) in the Gaza Strip.



=====