



PRESS RELEASE

The Palestinian Political Pulse

- ❖ In comparison with NEC's January poll, trust in Hamas has increased from 41% to 44%, while trust in Fateh has decreased from 38% to 29%.
- ❖ Over the past month, support for a peace agreement with Israel has dropped from 84% to 73%. (80% among those trusting Fateh compared to 66% among those trusting Hamas)
- ❖ 81% believe that international support to the humanitarian conditions of Palestinians is needed (47% highly needed, 34% needed)
- ❖ Over the past month, support for Fateh joining a National Unity government has increased from 72% to 84%.
- ❖ 30% believe that combating corruption is the most important priority for the Hamas-led government, 22% believe that it is improving internal security, while 19% believe that it is to solve the unemployment and poverty problem. In comparison with last month's poll, fighting corruption has lost importance as a priority, while improving internal security and finding a solution to unemployment and poverty have gained importance.
- ❖ Over the past month, the belief that Hamas should change its position on the elimination of the state of Israel has decreased from 75% to 62%. (68% among those supporting a peace agreement and 46% among those opposing a peace agreement)
- ❖ 69% believe that a Hamas-led government will be able to compensate for a potential halt in assistance by the EU and the US with assistance from other sources such as Iran.
- ❖ Even in case of a potential halt in EU and US assistance to the PA, 49% believe that the new Hamas-led government will be more effective than the previous government, 16% said that it will be as effective as the previous government, while 35% said that it will be less effective than the previous government.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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The results will be available in detail and with cross-tabulations by Tuesday 28th of February 2006 at 17:00 hours on the following site:

<http://www.neareastconsulting.com>



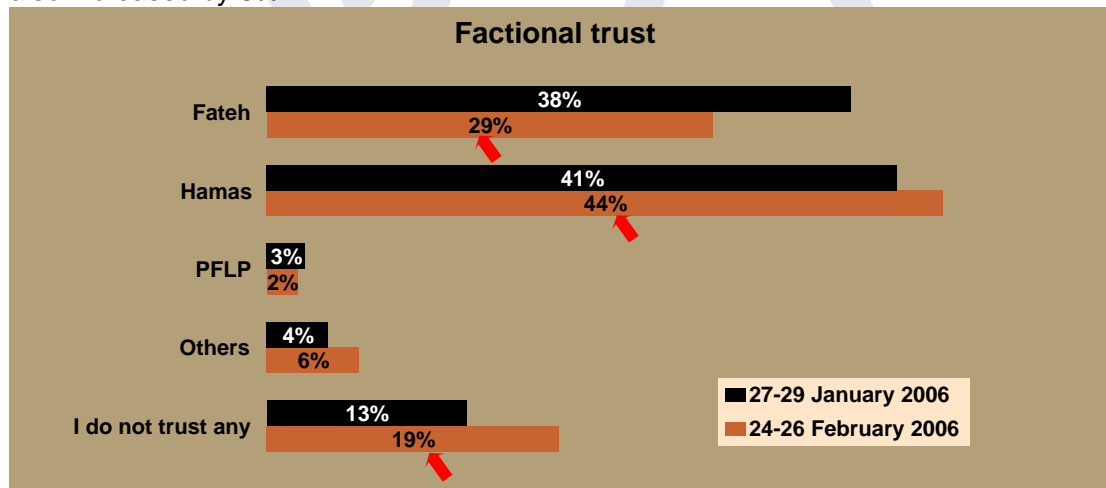
The Palestinian Political Pulse

Methodology

During the period 24-26 February, 2006, Near East Consulting (NEC) conducted a phone survey of over 1,200 randomly selected Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem of which 709 were successfully completed. The survey covered a number of issues related to factional trust, support for the peace process, level of support for a National Unity government, need for international support, and the perceived priorities of a new government controlled by Hamas. It is worth noting that 60% of households in the Palestinian territories have phone connectivity. Previous surveys conducted by the researchers at NEC do not show much difference in the political attitudes between households who own phone lines and those who do not. Finally, the margin of error is +/- 3.6% with a 95% confidence level.

Factional trust

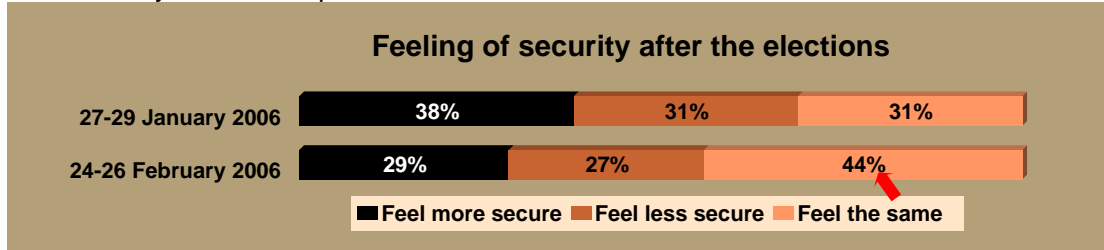
When asked which faction they trust most, 44% of those surveyed said Hamas, 29% said Fateh, while 19% do not trust any faction. As overviewed in the figure below, in the past month, trust in Hamas has slightly increased (+3%), trust in Fateh has significantly decreased (-9%), while the percentage of Palestinians who do not trust any faction has also increased by 6%.



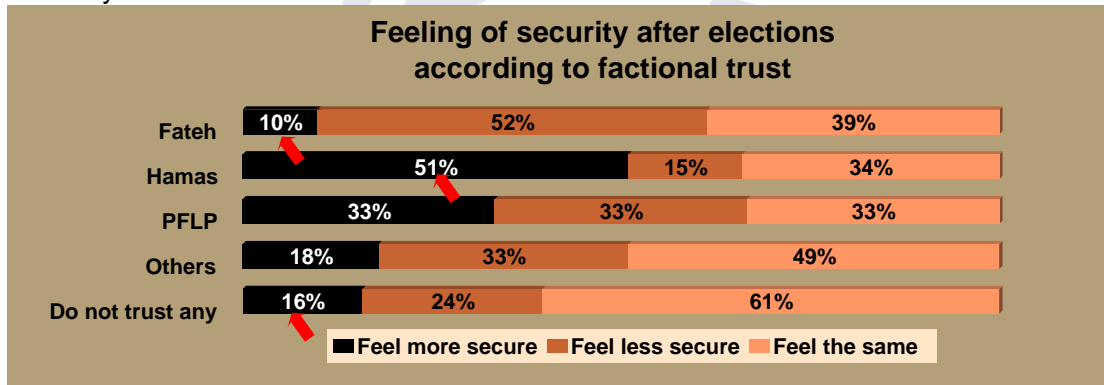
In general, 29% of the respondents feel more secure since the January PLC elections, 27% feel less secure, while the feeling of security for 44% of respondents remained the same since the elections. In comparison with the results to the same question asked immediately after the parliamentary elections in January 2006, the percentage of respondents stating that they feel more secure (-9%) has decreased more than the percentage of respondents who feel less secure (-4%) since the elections, while the



percentage who do not feel any different since the elections in terms of security has increased by 13% in the past month.

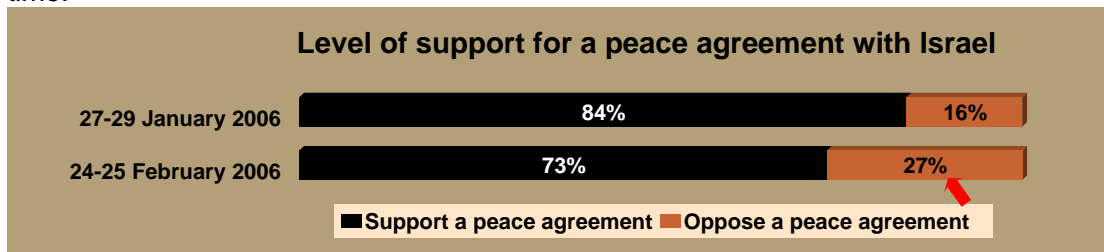


Palestinians' feeling of security varies considerably depending on which faction they trust most. For example, whereas 51% of those who most trust Hamas feel more secure since the PLC elections, only 10% of the ones who most trust Fateh and 16% of those who do not trust any faction feel more secure since the elections. To the opposite, of the respondents most trusting Fateh 52% feel less secure since the elections, while this is the case for a mere 15% of those trusting Hamas most and 24% of those who do not trust any faction.



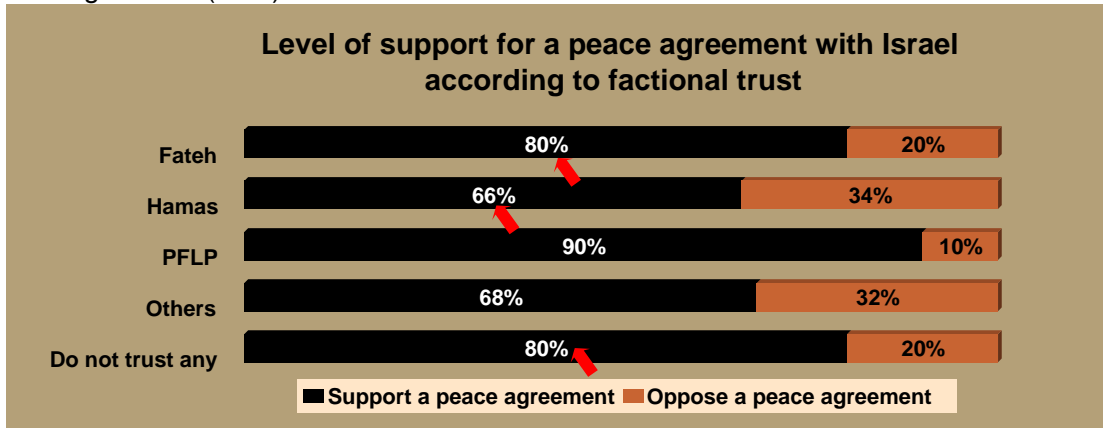
Support for the peace process

As indicated in the figure, 73% of the respondents support a peace settlement with Israel. Support for a peace agreement with Israel dropped by 11% in less than a month's time.



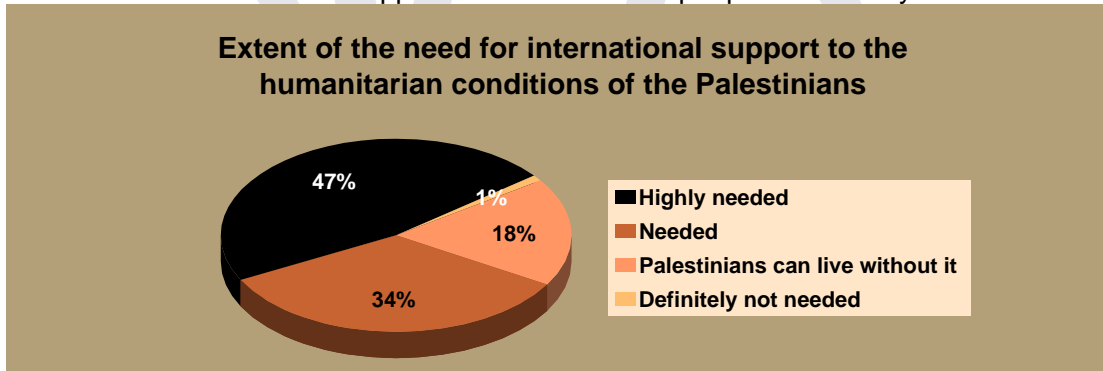


The support for a peace agreement with Israel is significantly higher among those most trusting Fateh (80%) and those not trusting any faction (80%) than among those most trusting Hamas (66%).



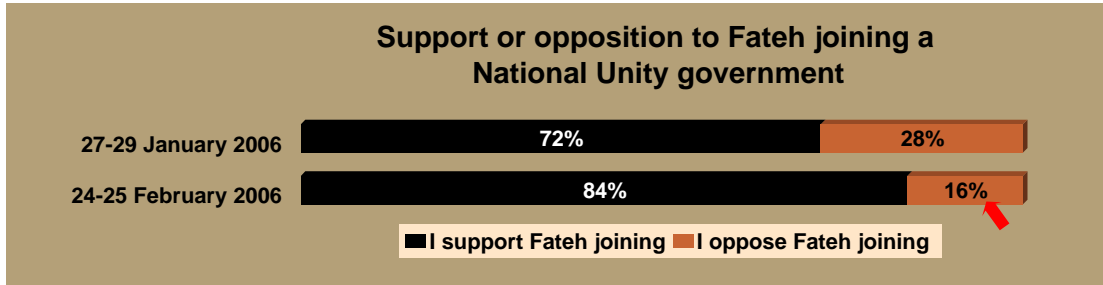
Need for international support to the humanitarian conditions

The large majority of Palestinians believe that international support to the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people is needed. More concretely, 47% believe that this support is highly needed, while 34% believe that it is needed. Furthermore, 18% feel that Palestinians can live without international support to the humanitarian conditions, while a mere 1% believe that such support to the Palestinian people is definitely not needed.

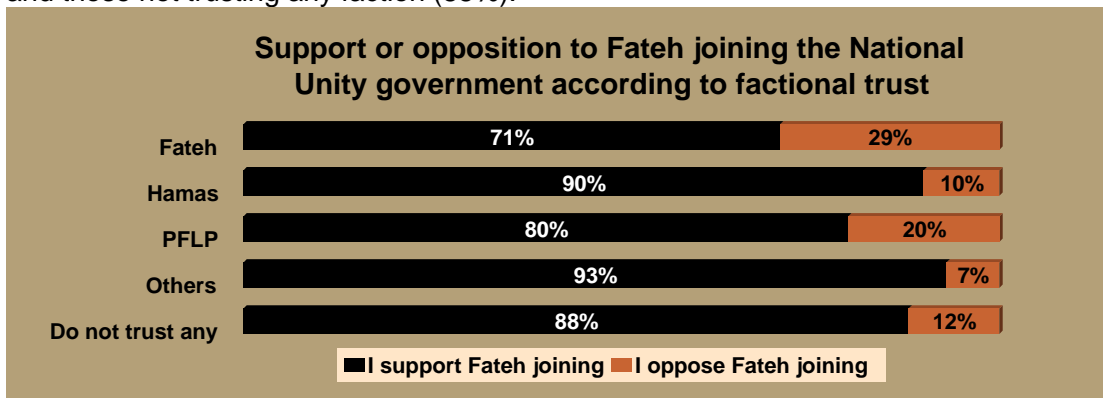


A National Unity government

On the issue of Fateh joining a National Unity government, 84% believe that Fateh should do so. Since last month, Palestinians' support of Fateh joining a National Unity government has increased by 12%.

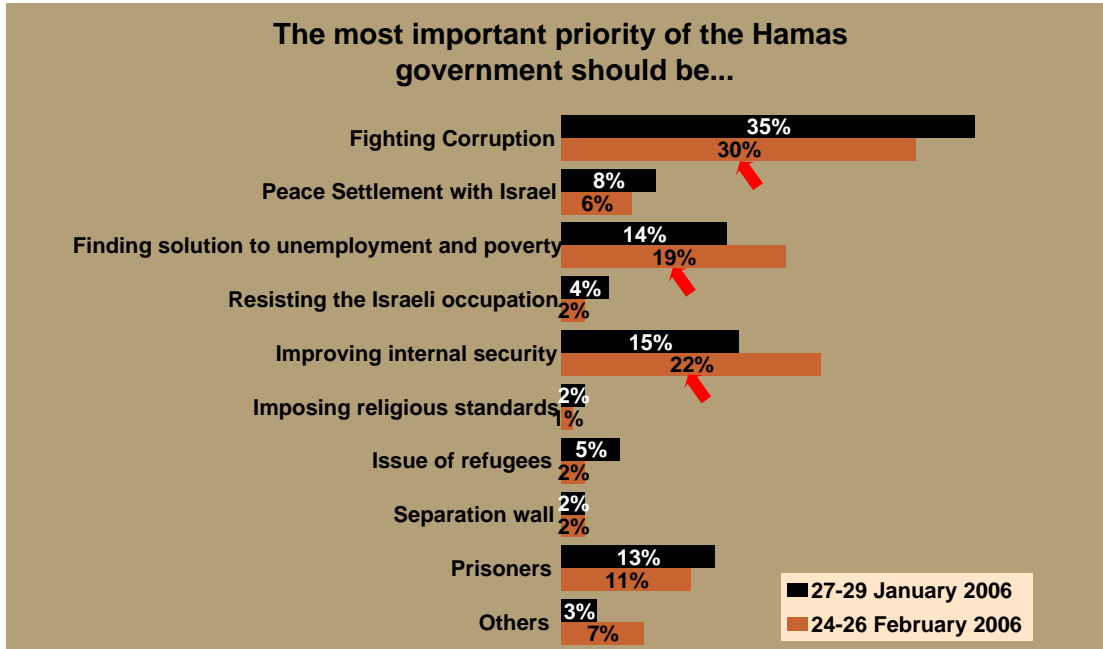


Still, support for Fateh joining a National Unity government remains considerably lower among those most trusting Fateh (71%) than among those most trusting Hamas (90%) and those not trusting any faction (88%).

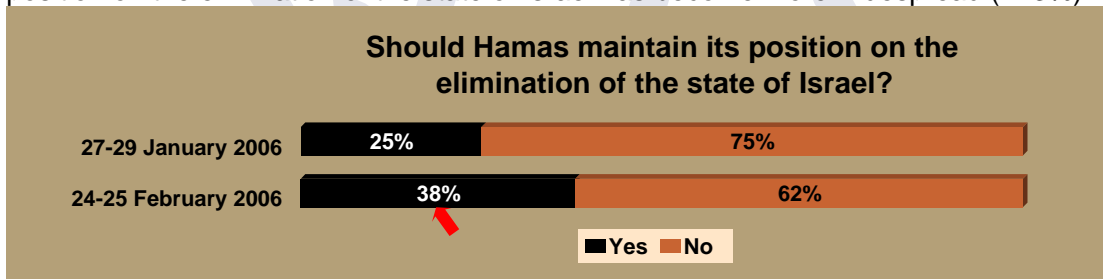


Perceptions on a new government under Hamas

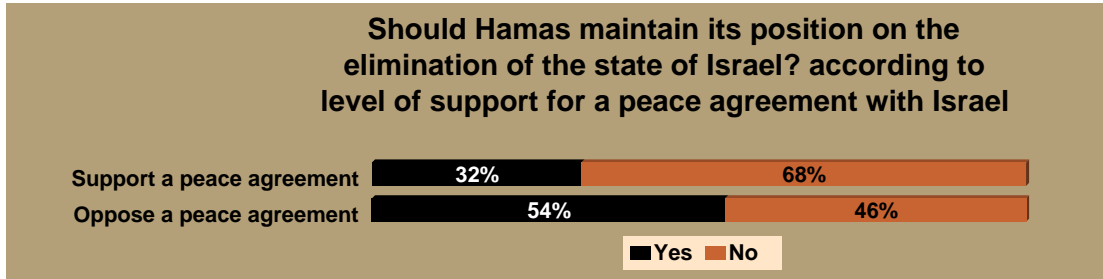
In general, 30% of the respondents continue to believe that combating corruption should be the most important priority for the Hamas government. A relatively high percentage (22%) said that ending the chaos in security should be the most important priority of the Hamas government, while another 19% said that the priority should be to solve the unemployment and poverty problem. A mere 1% of the respondents said that it should be the priority of the Hamas government to implement Islamic law. Also noteworthy is that nearly twice as many respondents believe that the prisoner issue (11%) should be the new government's most important priority rather than a peace settlement with Israel (6%). Finally, in comparison with last month's poll, fighting corruption has lost importance as a priority of the new government (-5%), while improving internal security (+7%) and finding a solution to unemployment and poverty (+5%) have gained importance.



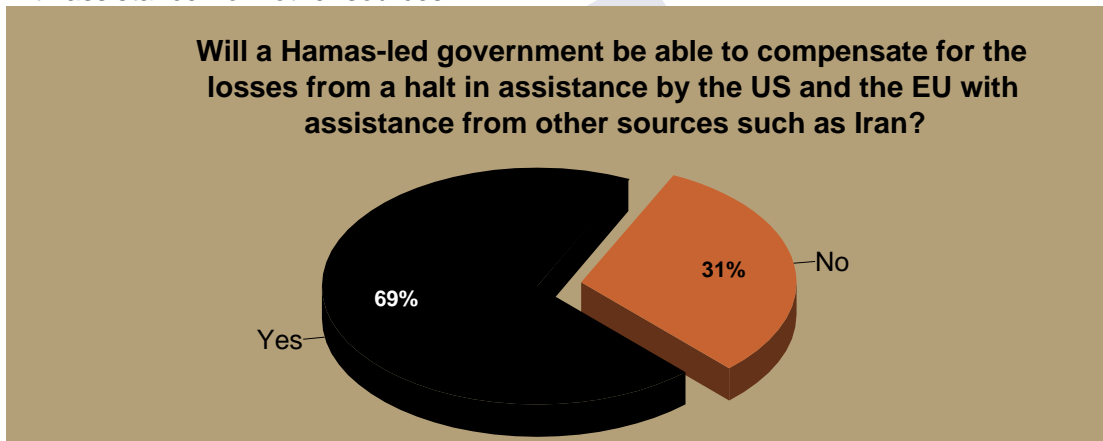
In general, a minority of 38% of the respondents believe that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of the state of Israel. However, in comparison to the results on the same question in the NEC January poll, the belief that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of the state of Israel has become more widespread (+13%).



Moreover, a higher percentage of respondents who oppose a peace agreement with Israel (54%) than those who support a peace agreement with Israel (32%) believe that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel. In comparison with last month's poll, it is important to mention that the percentage of respondents opposed to a peace agreement who believe that Hamas should keep its position on the elimination of the state of Israel has practically remained the same (-1%), while the percentage of respondents supporting a peace agreement who believe that Hamas should maintain its position has increased considerably by 14%.



Interviewees were also queried about the ability of a Hamas-led government to compensate for the losses from a potential halt in assistance by the EU and the US with assistance from other sources such as Iran. A significant majority of 69% believe that a Hamas-led government will be able to compensate for this potential halt in assistance with assistance from other sources.



As for the effectiveness of a Hamas-led government in comparison with that of the previous government in case the US and the EU halt assistance to the PA as long as Hamas does not change its stance on the elimination of the state of Israel, 49% believe that the new government will be more effective than the previous one, 35% think that it will be as effective as the previous one, while 35% feel that it will be less effective than the previous one.

