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PRESS RELEASE

**TWO THIRDS AMONG PALESTINIANS, ISRAELI JEWS AND
ISRAELI ARABS SUPPORT THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF
ISRAEL AS THE STATE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND PALESTINE
AS THE STATE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in Ramallah and the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, conducted a joint survey of Palestinian and Israeli public opinion between September 7 and 21 , 2005.*

The poll was designed to explore one of the most difficult issues in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute: the recognition of the Jewish identity of Israel by Palestinians and Israeli Arabs and the recognition of the Palestinian identity in a Palestinian state by Israelis. In addition the poll examined changes in Israelis and Palestinians' attitudes on a range of issues related to the conflict following the disengagement, both publics' assessments of future developments and Palestinians' attitudes on the forthcoming legislative council elections.

This is the 13th joint poll in an ongoing research project on the opinions of the two publics. The first poll was conducted in July 2000 in the wake of the Camp David summit.

The poll was planned and supervised by Dr. Yaacov Shamir, professor of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University, and Dr. Khalil Shikaki, professor of Political Science and director of PSR. The two surveys included both identical questions as well as specific questions for each public. A representative sample of 1369 Palestinians in 120 locations in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem was interviewed face-to-face with a sampling error of 3%. The interviews were conducted September 7-9. The Israeli data are based on telephone interviews with a representative sample of 499 Israeli Jews and a representative sample of 451 Israeli Arabs. The Israeli sample was properly weighted according to the proportion of the respective sectors in the population to produce the overall Israeli estimates (overall sampling error of 3.9%). The interviews were conducted in Hebrew, Arabic and Russian between September 11 and 19.

The following summary highlights the findings of the joint poll. For further details on the Palestinian survey, contact Dr. Khalil Shikaki at tel. 02-2964933 or email kshikaki@pcpsr.org. On the Israeli survey, contact Dr. Yaacov Shamir at tel. 03-6419429 or email jshamir@mscc.huji.ac.il.

*This joint survey was conducted with the support of the Ford Foundation Cairo office and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Ramallah.

Joint Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Poll, September 2005
Summary of Results

(1) Mutual recognition of identity: Consistent majority support for a mutual recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people and Palestine as the state of the Palestinian people

- 66% of the Israelis and 63% of the Palestinians support a mutual recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people and Palestine as the state of the Palestinian people after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the settlement of all issues in dispute. 29% of the Israelis and 35% of the Palestinians oppose such a step. Among Israeli Jews 67% support and 29% oppose this mutual recognition of identity.
- Even more remarkable is the majority support for this step among Israeli Arabs: 63% support and 34% oppose it. This result indicates that despite their frustration and marginalization as citizens, they are willing to accept the definition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, concurrently with the recognition of a Palestinian identity and a Palestinian state.
- Similar levels of support among Israelis and Palestinians were obtained in December 2004, suggesting that support for this sensitive and disputed issue of national identity has made inroads in both societies.
- 55% of the Israelis and 53% of the Palestinians know that a majority in their society supports a mutual recognition of identity. These levels of awareness indicate that this step has acquired normative legitimacy in both societies. However the two publics seem to be less aware of the support for such a mutual recognition in the other public: 50% of the Israelis believe there is majority support for such recognition among Palestinians; and only 43% among Palestinians believe that most Israelis support it.

(2) Framing the disengagement

- Following the completion of the disengagement, 59% of Israelis report that they have supported it compared to 34% who state they opposed it.
- An overwhelming majority of the Palestinians (84%) but also a slim majority among Israelis (51%) see Sharon's plan to evacuate the Israeli settlements from Gaza as a victory for the Palestinian armed struggle against Israel. 47% among Israelis and 15% among Palestinians don't see it as such. In addition, 60% of the Israelis and 73% of the Palestinians believe that the Palestinian Intifada and armed confrontations have helped Palestinians achieve national and political goals that negotiations could not achieve.
- Yet, surprisingly, this Palestinian assessment of the role of armed struggle in the context of disengagement and the intifada does not lead to increased support for violence against Israelis. To the contrary, 77% indicate support and 22% indicate opposition for maintaining the current ceasefire; support for the suicide attack that took place in Beer Sheva around the end of August did

not exceed 37% while a majority of 56% opposed it. Moreover, 62% oppose and 35% support continued attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip and 60% support and 37% oppose collection of arms from armed factions in Gaza after a full Israeli withdrawal from the Strip.

- Similarly, while 40% of the Palestinians give Hamas most credit for evacuating the Gaza Strip (compared to 32% to Fateh and the PA), it is Fateh, not Hamas that benefits from the greater optimism that prevailed with the Israeli withdrawal: if elections are held today, 47% would vote for Fateh while only 30% would vote for Hamas. Three months ago, 44% said they would vote for Fateh and 33% for Hamas.
- With the Israeli withdrawal, Palestinian priorities are shifting towards economic conditions, fighting corruption, and enforcing law and order. Here too, Fateh seems to gain indirectly from disengagement. Most Palestinians believe Fateh is more able than Hamas to deliver improved economic conditions (priority # 1 for Palestinians today), reach a peace agreement with Israel, and enforce law and order. Hamas, however is perceived as the most able to fight corruption (priority # 2 for Palestinians today).
- Palestinian focus on state building, rather than violence, is also seen in the strong support (73%) for the establishment of a Palestinian state with the 1967 lines as its borders that would start first in the Gaza Strip and gradually extend to the West Bank. 25% oppose such a state.

(3) Conditions in the Gaza strip following the disengagement

- Israel's disengagement from the Gaza strip created mixed expectations for the future among Palestinians. On the optimistic side, 64% of the Palestinians expect economic conditions in the Gaza strip to improve and 57% believe that the peace process with Israel will be enhanced. On the pessimistic side, 57% of the Palestinians fear that the Gaza strip will become a "big prison".
- Indeed Israelis are quite reluctant to relax the closure on the strip. 58% of the Israelis oppose the crossing of Palestinian laborers from the Gaza into Israel compared to 40% who support it. 45% oppose the construction of a railroad to connect the Gaza strip and the West Bank while protecting Israel's security needs, while 49% support it. However, 53% of the Israelis support the opening of the Gaza port for fishing and sailing under the supervision of the Israeli navy while 41% oppose it.
- Only 5% of Israelis think that Israel should bear responsibility for maintaining orderly living conditions in the Gaza strip following the disengagement. 56% think this is the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority, and 38% think it is the responsibility of both.

(4) Impact of the disengagement on attitudes towards settlers and assessments of the future of the settlement project

- The decisive manner in which the disengagement has been carried out seems to have bolstered somewhat Israeli beliefs that Sharon is planning and capable of carrying out further unilateral disengagements in the West Bank. While

52% of the Israelis thought so in June - two months before the disengagement, 56% of the Israeli public believe so now following the completion of the disengagement. As to the future of the settlements in the longer run, 50% of the Israeli public (compared to 58% in June), believe that in the coming years the number of settlements in the West Bank will decrease. 19% expect the number of settlements to increase (18% in June). In contrast, a majority of the Palestinians (52%) fear that the number of settlements will increase in the future and 39% think it will decline compared to 52% and 33% respectively who thought so in June.

- The percent of Israelis supporting the dismantling of most of the settlements in the territories as part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians decreased considerably following the disengagement. While 67% supported such a step in March and 62% supported it in June just before the disengagement, 54% support it now. However Israelis' assessments of the settlements' contribution to Israel's national security did not change following the disengagement. 38% of the Israelis believe that the settlements contribute to Israel's national security (37% in June), while 36% believe they hurt it (39% in June). 21% think that settlements neither contribute nor hurt (19% in June).
- If future evacuation of settlements will take place as part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians, 44% of Israelis believe that Jewish inhabitants of the settlements should be allowed to continue living there under Palestinian rule if they wish to do so, while 53% oppose it. As to the Palestinians, only 26% support allowing settlers wishing to live in the West Bank under Palestinian rule to do so, while 72% oppose it.

(5) Focus on Jerusalem: The barrier and the E-1 plan

In our survey we examined two of the most critical and sensitive areas of contention between Israel and the Palestinians in recent months and in the future: the barrier built by Israel around Jerusalem ("Otef Yerushalaim") and the E-1 development plan in the corridor between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Edumim. On the first issue, Israelis were told that The security fence surrounding Jerusalem, will eventually bring about 200,000 Palestinians under Israeli rule and will separate other 55,000 Palestinians from the city. They were then asked whether the construction of the fence will strengthen or weaken Israel's grip over Jerusalem, whether it increases or decreases the level of security in the Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem and whether they support or oppose the construction of the barrier around Jerusalem.

- 51% believe it will strengthen Israel's hold on Jerusalem while 39% believe it will weaken it and 3% think it will have no impact.
- 73% believe the barrier will increase the level of security in the Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem compared to 17% who believe security will decrease and 6% feel it will have no impact on the level of security.
- 62% of the Israelis support and only 30% oppose the construction of the barrier surrounding Jerusalem.

On the second issue Israelis were informed that the government has begun infrastructure work in the area located between Ma'ale Edumim and Jerusalem with the intention to join together the two municipalities. If this plan comes through it will substantially impair the territorial contiguity between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank. They were then asked if this plan increases or decreases the likelihood for a political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, whether it strengthens or weakens Israel's grip over Jerusalem and the extent to which they support or oppose the plan.

- 22% of the Israelis believe the plan will increase the likelihood of a political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, 57% believe it will decrease the likelihood for a settlement, and 8% think it will have no impact.
- 66% believe the plan will strengthen the grip over Jerusalem in the future, compared to 19% who believe it will weaken Israel's hold on Jerusalem, and 7% who believe it will have no impact.
- 57% of the Israelis support and 28% oppose the plan.

(6) Expectations for future developments and how to proceed from here.

Both publics were asked to assess the coming developments following the successful implementation of the disengagement and the new date set for the parliamentary elections in the Palestinian Authority in January

- 5% of the Israelis and 25% of the Palestinians believe that negotiations between the parties will resume soon enough and armed confrontations will stop. 58% of the Israelis and 60% of the Palestinians believe that negotiations will resume but some armed attacks will continue; and 32% of the Israelis and 11% of the Palestinians believe that armed confrontations will not stop and the two sides will not return to negotiations.
- The poll examined Israeli and Palestinian preferences concerning the next steps that should be taken in the course of the peace process. Both publics seem to differ greatly on the specific route they prefer for that purpose. 69% of the Palestinians prefer immediate return to final status negotiations on all issues in dispute at once and 25% prefer a gradual step by step approach. Among Israelis, 59% prefer a gradual a step by step approach and 33% prefer a final status solution of all issues at once.
- If talks on a comprehensive solution begin, only 37% of the Israelis and 30% of the Palestinians believe it is possible to reach these days a compromise settlement with the current leadership of the other side. 59% among Israelis and 68% among Palestinians believe such a settlement is currently impossible.
- When asked to assess how soon will a political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians be achieved, 36% of the Palestinians and 22% of the Israelis believe a political settlement is not possible ever, 30% of the Israelis and 38% of the Palestinians believe it will be achieved in the next generation or many generation to come, 39% of the Israelis and 20% of the Palestinians think it will be reached in the next decade or the next few years.
- If a compromise settlement is nevertheless reached, 49% of the Palestinians but only 18% of the Israelis believe Abu Mazin is strong enough to convince

his people to accept such as settlement. As to Sharon's ability to deliver a comprehensive settlement, 59% of the Israelis and 53% of the Palestinians believe he is strong enough to do that.

- In the same context, 57% of the Palestinians and 60% of the Israelis support the Quartet's Roadmap plan, compared to 40% among Palestinians and 34% among Israelis who oppose it.
- 47% of the Israelis believe that Israel should negotiate also with the Hamas if it is necessary in order to reach a compromise agreement; 50% oppose it.