

New Poll Shows Gazans Pragmatic Now, But Not Long-Term

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Brief Analysis

A new public opinion poll from Gaza shows some pragmatic, short-term moderation toward the U.S. and Israel over the past year, including opposition to Hamas policies. However, long-term views remain hardline, with few changes during the same period.

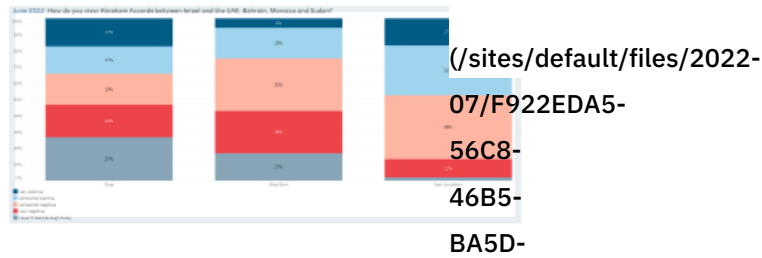
Ties with Israel and Short-Term Steps

With Biden’s call for a “lasting negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinian people” during his visit to Israel, new polling from June signals that a growing number of Gazans are open to certain pragmatic shifts in policy—but not a two-state solution. For instance, while the plurality of Gazans (44%) blame Israel for their economic woes, the presence of Israeli companies in Gaza and the West Bank is becoming more popular. Now, 31% “definitely” support and 35% would “probably” like to see more Israeli companies in the Palestinian territories, a thirteen-point increase since February 2020.

Gazans’ strong support for Palestinian rule over all of Jerusalem is also lessening somewhat. There has been a modest drop in opposition to sharing Jerusalem with Israel over the past three years—from 82% in July 2019 to 74% in June of this year. This trend stands in contrast to that of fewer Gazans supporting outside involvement in the future of Jerusalem. More Gazans (32%) now believe that Saudi Arabia should not have any role in the future of Jerusalem, a 10-point increase since February 2020. A similar decline in support for any involvement from Jordan or Turkey is also visible.

Gazans Want More from U.S., Arab States on Mediating Conflict

With the potential for Israel and Saudi Arabia to take steps towards normalization during Biden’s visit to the region, Gazans’ views on the Abraham Accords are also unexpectedly equivocal. One-third of Gazans view the Abraham Accords at least somewhat positively, while 39% have at least somewhat negative views. The rest—a substantial minority at 27%—say they “haven’t heard enough” to give an opinion on this issue.



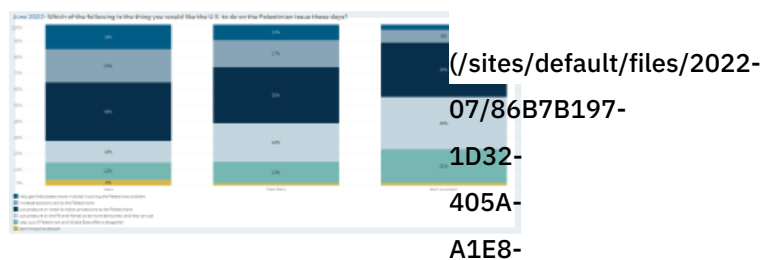
In contrast, 79% of Gazans agree at least “somewhat” with the statement: “Arab governments should take a more active role in Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking, offering incentives to both sides to take more moderate positions.”

Despite the UAE’s (<https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/ungrateful-palestinians-should-be-happy-about-normalisation-uae-ambassador>) claims (<https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/ungrateful-palestinians-should-be-happy-about-normalisation-uae-ambassador>) that the Abraham Accords would help and benefit the Palestinians, Gazans clearly support further Arab engagement to alleviate their situation.

Many Gazans also want more from the Biden administration. About half of Gazans (52%) have negative views of the Biden administration's approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Almost two-thirds of Gazans believe, at least somewhat, that they cannot count on the U.S. and should turn to Russia or China instead.

Nevertheless, 61% of Gazans do agree that it is important to maintain a good relationship with the U.S., and most Gazans would like the U.S. to take a more engaged role in the Palestinian issue. More specifically, a plurality of Gazans (36%) would like the U.S. to increase pressure on Israel to provide more concessions to the Palestinians, a six-point increase from February 2020.

The rest of respondents are split in their views on how the United States should involve itself in the conflict. 21% of Gazans prefer for the U.S. to increase economic aid, 15% want the U.S. to pressure Arab states to get more involved in solving the Palestinian issue, and 14% expect the U.S. to “put pressure on the PA and Hamas to be more democratic and less corrupt.”



Also notable is that Gazans continue to express disapproval of Hamas’ policies towards Israel. About half (53%) agree at least somewhat that “Hamas should stop calling for Israel’s destruction, and instead accept a permanent two-state solution based on the 1967 borders,” a percentage that has held steady over the last three years. 59% of Gazans also agree that Hamas should give up its armed units in favor of PA officers in Gaza. Likewise, nearly two-thirds of Gazans would agree at least somewhat with the need for Hamas to preserve the cease-fire in both Gaza and the West Bank.

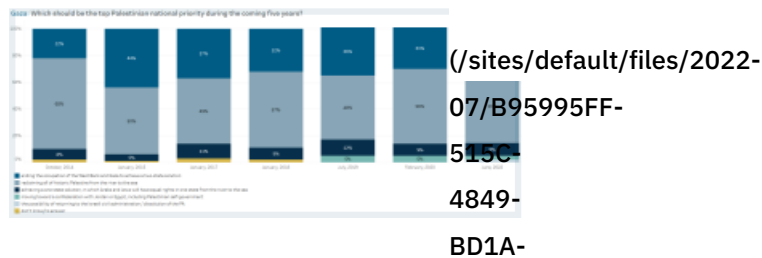
And Gazans are likewise split on their attitudes towards Iran, a major supporter of Hamas. 63% believe that maintaining good relations with Iran is important—the highest percentage within the Palestinian territories. On the other hand, half (55%) of Gazans think that Iran’s meddling in Arab countries “hurts Arabs and does not help the Palestinians.”

Continued Popularity of One State over a Two State Solution

Nevertheless, short term pragmatism does not correlate with a reduction of Gazans' support for maximalism long term. For example, 56% of Gazans disagree at least "somewhat" with the following statement: "We [Gazans] should recognize that we will never defeat Israel and that fighting just makes things worse." On current ties with Israel, two-thirds of Gazans concur at least somewhat that the PA should stop any security cooperation with Israel, in contrast to the increasingly equivocal views of West Bankers.

Regarding immediate Palestinian national goals overall, more Gazans rank "supporting the resistance to end the occupation" (27%) as their top priority versus the second-highest ranked proposal of holding a new national election (23%). The latter option had received plurality support in 2019 and 2020.

Nor have Gazans changed their views about national priorities when it comes to pursuing Palestinian statehood. When asked about the top Palestinian national priority in the next five years, the majority (55%) still rate reclaiming "all of historic Palestine, from the river to the sea" over other options, such as prioritizing a two-state solution. Only about a third (37%) of Gazans say they would accept the "principle of two states for two peoples," even if it was the last step towards ending the occupation. This short-term focus on regaining historic Palestine contrasts with shifts in perspectives in the West Bank, where only 37% of West Bankers now state that this should be the top national priority in the next five years.



A similar percentage of Gazans (58%) likewise continue to assert that the conflict with Israel should not end even if a two-state is achieved and should continue until all of historic Palestine is liberated. An even higher majority (73%) agree at least somewhat with the assertion that any compromise with Israel should be temporary until the restoration of historic Palestine, a number that has remained almost the same over the past three years.

Looking further ahead, Gazans' attitudes toward the conflict remain maximalist. 46% of Gazans believe that the "Palestinians will control almost all of Palestine, because God is on their side," a number that has not changed a great deal in the last three years.

Frustrations with Governance, Desire for Elections, and Economic Struggle

Despite continued support for resistance and maximalist views of a future Palestinian state, Gazans are frustrated with Hamas governance. 84% of Gazans agreed about the importance of internal political and economic reform over foreign policy issues, a 20 percent larger majority than in the West Bank or East Jerusalem. Nearly half of Gazans also express at least somewhat negative views of Hamas due to corruption and desire for elections.

Specifically, Gazans believe that Palestinians should push more against corruption in the PA and Hamas. Most (87%) of Gazans would also like Hamas and the PA to allow free and fair elections, a notable 20-point difference from West Bankers (65%) and East Jerusalemites (66%). Last week's meeting between Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh—[their first meeting since 2016 \(https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220706-palestinian-president-and-hamas-chief-hold-rare-meeting\)](https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220706-palestinian-president-and-hamas-chief-hold-rare-meeting)—in Algeria might further augment Gazans' anticipation of a new national election.

Methodological Note: This analysis is based on a face-to-face survey, conducted June 6-21, 2022, with a true random,

geographical probability sample of 513 Palestinian adult (age 18+) residents of Gaza. The author personally reviewed the questionnaire's translation, sampling procedures and quality controls, assurances of confidentiality, and other fieldwork protocols with the entire Palestinian professional team, based in Beit Sahour on the West Bank. The statistical margin of error for a sample of this size and nature is 6 percent, at the 95% confidence level. Additional methodological details, including full responses to all questions in the survey, are available on request, or on the Washington Institute's new [interactive polling data platform \(/node/17516\)](#). ❖

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