



In a recent, study for Near East Consulting on the Palestinian elections and regional changes:

The majority will participate in the upcoming elections and supports the holding of presidential and legislative elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and 40% of the Palestinians favor the nomination for new personalities. The majority do not think that the experience of Tunisia and Egypt will occur in the Palestinian territories.

Ramallah – The West Bank: The results of the monthly survey conducted by Near East Consulting show that more than 85% of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are in favor of holding presidential and legislative elections in the coming months. The results also showed that approximately 67% of the respondents do not support the position of Hamas to boycott the elections.

The survey carried out between the fifteen and seventeen of February on a random sample of 873 Palestinians over the age of 18 from both sexes, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem. The margin of errors is +/-3.3% and the confidence level is 95%.

The desire by the Palestinian public for Hamas's participation in the elections may be due to the need for change in the Palestinian political system. The results show that about 71% of the surveyed respondents (the percentage is higher in the Gaza Strip than it is in the West Bank) want to see change in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. This aspiration, however, is not necessarily linked to the recent dramatic changes in the Arab world in general and the Tunisian and Egyptian fronts, in particular, because the majority of the surveyed Palestinians do not believe that what happened there will be repeated in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip. In fact, the likelihood of a perceived change in the Gaza Strip was significantly higher than in the West Bank. Whereas 25% of the respondents believe that the Egyptian and Tunisian experience is likely to happen in the West Bank, the percentage reached 42% for the Gaza Strip.

When asked about their willingness to participate in the upcoming elections, 82% of the respondents said that they would participate (85% in the West Bank compared to 79% in the Gaza Strip). Moreover, the majority of the respondents expressed their belief that the elections will be fair (62% believe that the elections will be fair, about 25% had reservations about their integrity, and 13% questioned the fairness or integrity of these elections).

In addition, the majority of the respondents said that the determinant of their voting preference is going to be the merits of the candidates and their independence and not based on party affiliation. Whereas 29% of the respondents said that their preference would be based on the candidate's affiliation to Fateh, 3% said it is going to be based on the religiosity of the candidate, 15% on the level of the candidate's independence, 33%



said that their vote would depend on the qualities and merits of the individual candidate. In addition, the majority of the respondents preferred a new figure to take over the role of the president. When asked about the person that they would prefer to be the next president, 31% expressed their preference for a new name while 25% mentioned Marwan Barghouti, 11% mentioned Salam Fayyad. Although President Mahmoud Abbas's name was not listed, still, 6% insisted on naming him as the next president.

With regard to the level of support for cabinet reshuffle, the results showed that 75% support such change (75% in the West Bank and 73% in Gaza Strip).

As for factional affiliation, the percentage of those who trust Fateh reached 37% versus 9% for Hamas and 36% for those who do not trust any faction.

Regarding the economic condition of the respondents, the level of poverty remained almost the same as in December 2010. While the proportion of people living below the poverty line was 47% in late 2010, the percentage reached 50% in February 2011. The results also showed that the unemployment rate reaches 21% of the workforce while 16% are working part-time.
