



PRESS RELEASE

Palestinian Peace Pulse #4, April 2006

- ❖ In comparison with NEC's March poll, trust in Hamas has slightly increased from 43% to 46%, and trust in Fateh has significantly increased from 25% to 34%. The percentage of Palestinians not trusting any faction that had been increasing since the January PLC elections has nearly halved in one month's time, mainly to the benefit of Fateh.
- ❖ Over the past month, support for a peace agreement with Israel has declined from 76% to 69%. (74% among those trusting Fateh compared to 55% among those trusting Hamas) Support for a peace agreement with Israel is lowest in the Gaza Strip (57%) and in refugee camps (55%).
- ❖ Over the past month, popular support for Hamas maintaining its position on the elimination of Israel has slightly increased from 32% to 35%. 70% of Palestinian peace supporters and 56% of Palestinians who are opposed to a peace agreement with Israel believe that Hamas should change its position on the elimination of Israel. Furthermore, while 19% of Palestinians trusting Fateh believe that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel, this is the case for 50% of those trusting Hamas.
- ❖ The large majority of 87% of the Palestinian public do not believe that Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel. This view is even more widespread among Palestinians opposing a peace agreement with Israel (90%) than among those supporting a peace agreement (85%). Equally, fewer Palestinians who do not trust any existing Palestinian faction (8%) than those trusting Hamas (12%) or Fateh (18%) believe that there is a partner for peace in Israel.

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The Israeli Elections and the Palestinian Peace Pulse

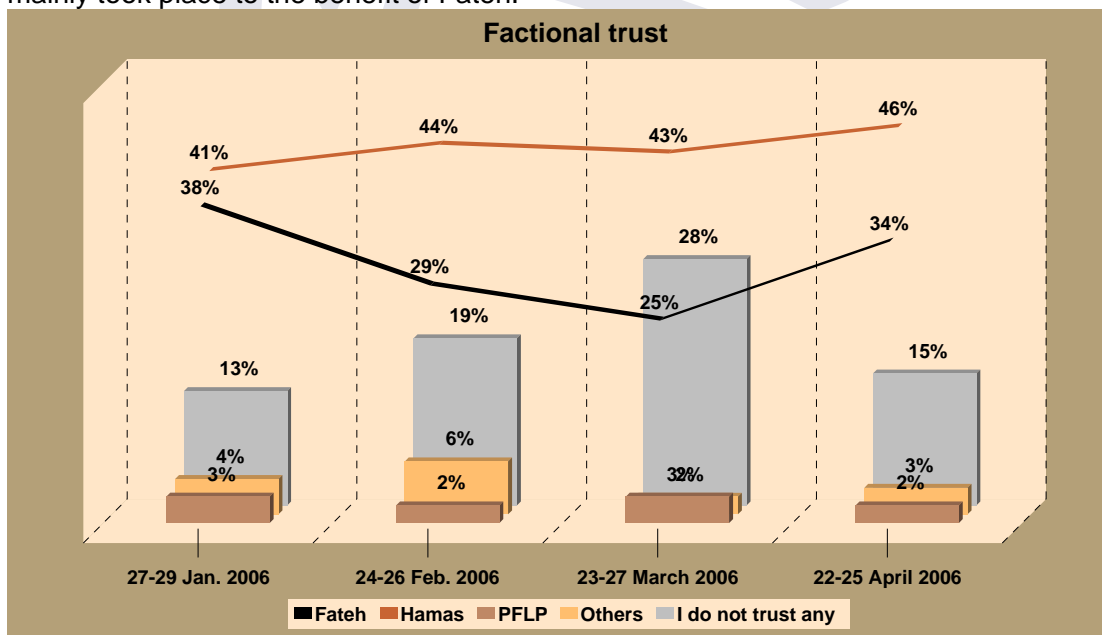
Methodology

During the period 22-25 April, 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 821 were successfully completed. The survey covered a number of issues that fit into NEC's monthly "Palestinian Peace Pulse" with the aim of monitoring Palestinian perceptions over time. These include: factional trust, support for a peace agreement with Israel, and opinions on whether or not Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel. For the first time, the NEC team has included a question in the survey that aims to find out whether Palestinians believe that there is a partner for peace in Israel. From now on, this question will also be monitored over time.

It is worth noting that the margin of error is +/- 3.4% with a 95% confidence level.

Factional trust

When asked which faction they trust most, 46% of those surveyed said Hamas, 34% said Fateh, while another 15% do not trust any faction. As overviewed in the figure below, in the past month, trust in Hamas (+3%), but especially Fateh (+9%) has increased, while in this time-frame the percentage of Palestinians who do not trust any faction has decreased by 13%. Since the Palestinian PLC elections on 25 January 2006, the most obvious trend had been a sharp increase in the number of Palestinians who do not trust any faction at the expense of Fateh as these percentages had more than doubled in a period of two months from 13% to 28%. The dramatic decrease in the percentage of Palestinians not trusting any faction that occurred in the past month, mainly took place to the benefit of Fateh.



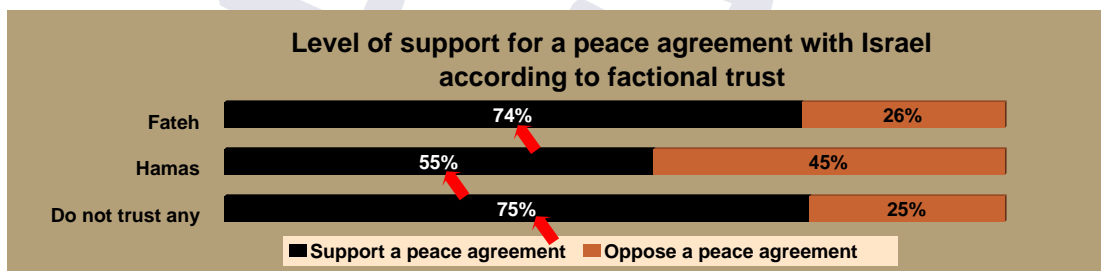


Support for the peace process

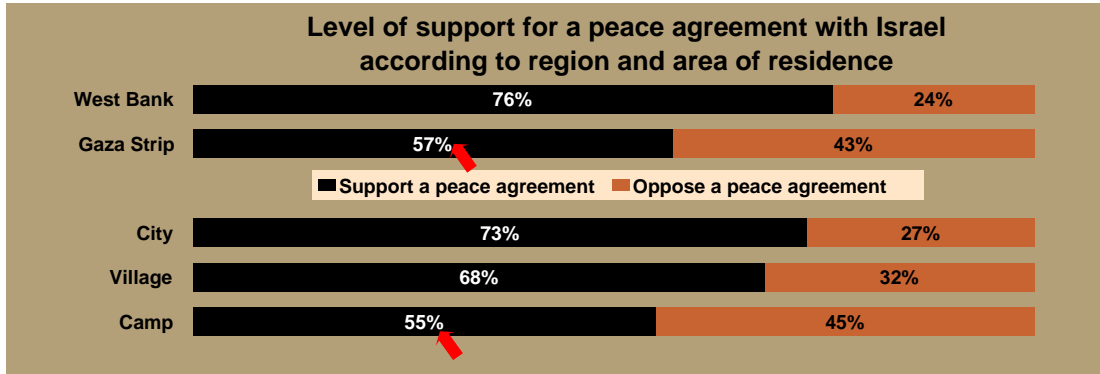
As indicated in the figure below, 69% of the respondents support a peace settlement with Israel. This percentage had been 7% more positive last month, but, in general, there has been a downwards trend in the support among Palestinians for a peace agreement with Israel since the January PLC elections. In the most recent survey, support for a peace agreement with Israel stands at its lowest rate since January 2006.



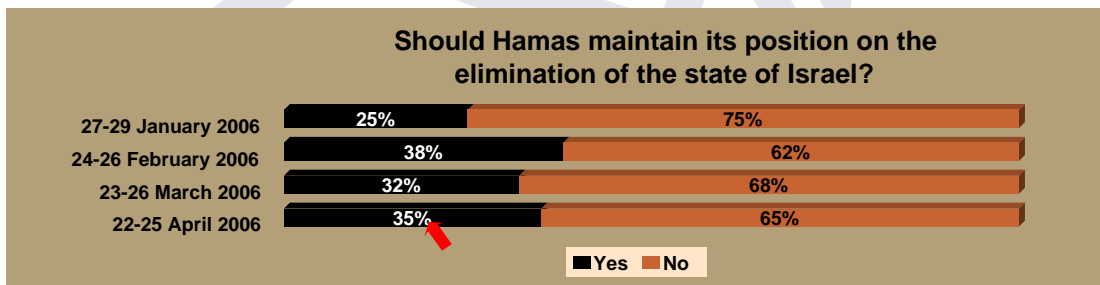
The support for a peace agreement with Israel is significantly higher among those most trusting Fateh (74%) and those not trusting any faction (75%) than among those most trusting Hamas (55%). Still, in comparison to the results of NEC's survey of last month support for a peace agreement with Israel among Fateh supporters dropped by 13%.



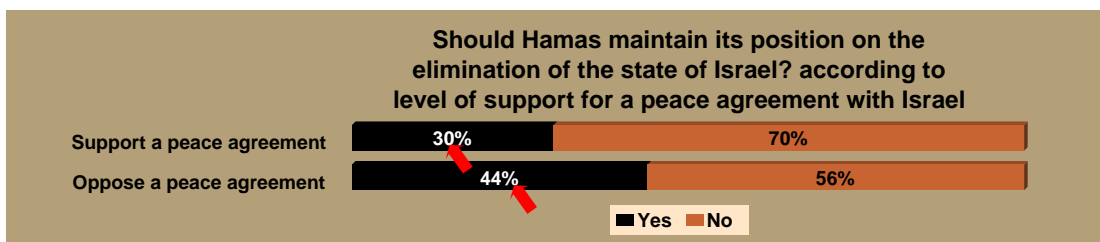
Support for a peace agreement with Israel varies considerably according to the region and area of residence of the respondents. As illustrated in the figure below, support for a peace settlement with Israel is nearly 20% higher in the West Bank (76%) than in the Gaza Strip (57%). Furthermore, support for a peace agreement with Israel is the far lower in refugee camps (55%) than in villages (68%) and cities (73%).



Very much related to Palestinians' opinions about support for a peace agreement with Israel, is their position vis-à-vis the Hamas refusal to recognize the state of Israel. In general, a minority of 35% of the respondents believe that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of the state of Israel. In comparison to the results on the same question in the NEC March poll, the belief that Hamas should change its position on the elimination of the state of Israel has decreased from 68% to 65%. Since the NEC January 2006 poll, belief that Hamas should maintain its position vis-à-vis Israel has increased from 25% in January to 35% now.

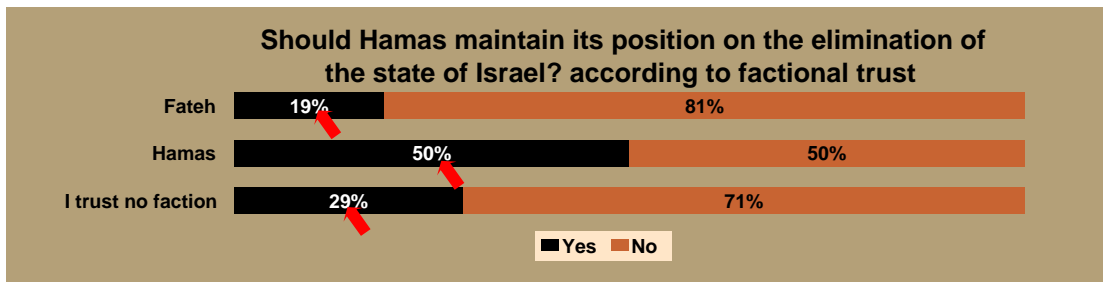


Moreover, a higher percentage of respondents who oppose a peace agreement with Israel (44%) than those who support a peace agreement with Israel (30%) believe that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel. In comparison with last month's poll, it is worth noting that the percentage of respondents opposed to a peace agreement who believe that Hamas should keep its position on the elimination of the state of Israel has decreased considerably (-11%), while the percentage of respondents supporting a peace agreement who believe that Hamas should maintain its position has increased by 6%.

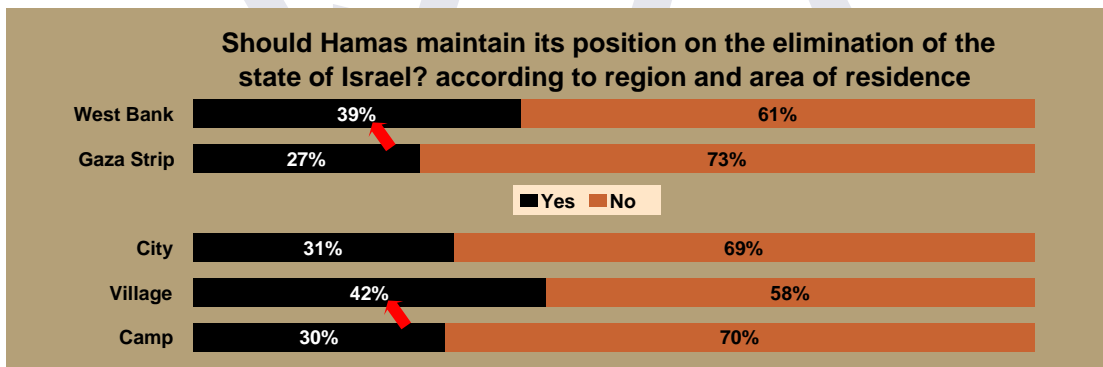




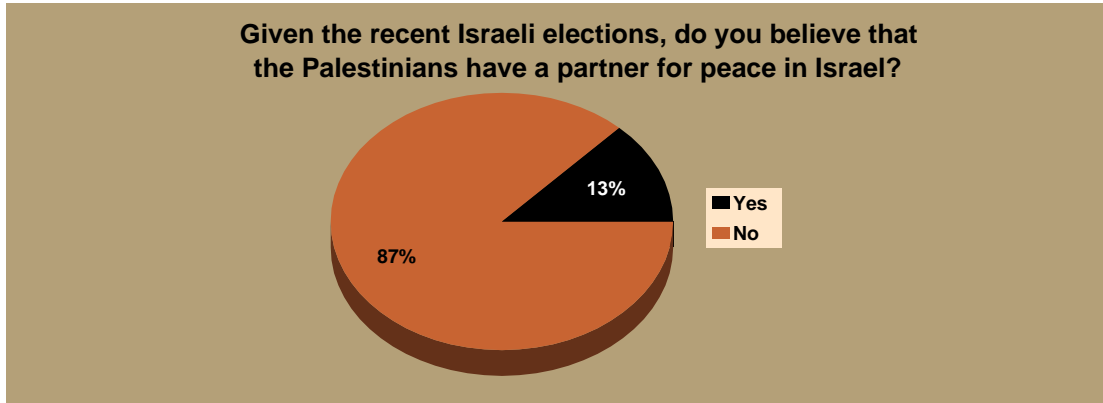
When examining Palestinians' opinions with regard to the Hamas position on the elimination of Israel according to the faction they trust most, it is blatant that a significantly higher percentage of Palestinians trusting Hamas (50%) than those trusting Fateh (19%) or even those not trusting any faction (29%) are of the belief that Hamas should uphold its position concerning the state of Israel.



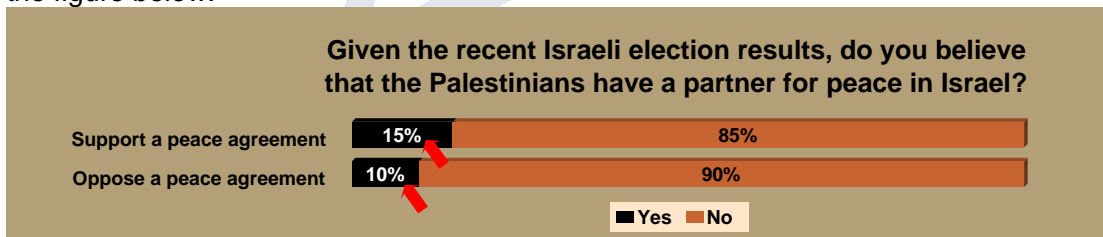
As was the case with support for a peace agreement with Israel, the belief that Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of the state of Israel varies considerably according to the region and area of residence of the respondents. As detailed in the figure below, the belief that Hamas should maintain its position towards Israel is 12% higher in the West Bank (39%) than in the Gaza Strip (27%). Furthermore, the belief that Hamas should maintain its position towards Israel is the far more pronounced in villages (42%) than in refugee camps (30%) and cities (31%).



Given the frequently mentioned argument that since the Hamas victory in the January PLC elections, Israel does no longer have a peace partner on the Palestinian side, the NEC team decided to query the Palestinian public if - in their opinion – since the recent Israeli elections Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel. In general, the large majority of 87% of Palestinians believe that since the recent Israeli elections there is no partner for peace in Israel.



The perception that Palestinians have no partner for peace in Israel is more pronounced among Palestinians who oppose a peace agreement with Israel (90%) than among those who support a peace agreement with Israel (85%). The results are overviewed in the figure below.



Finally, once more, according to factional trust, a higher percentage of Fateh supporters (18%) than Hamas supporters (12%) and those who do not trust any existing Palestinian faction (8%) believe that Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel.

