



Survey Studies Unit

Palestinian Public Opinion on Local and Arab Media Public Opinion Poll # 1 19-21 February 2009

Results of a study conducted by Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies last year under the title "Media Plaything and Bloody Discourse in Palestine" showed that the Palestinian local media contributed to a great extent to reinforcing the current split among Palestinian factions; Palestinian local media is no longer objective in covering the local political events. The dominant feature of Palestinian local media is either purely factional or biased; it tries to favor one side of the dispute to the extent that it lost its objectivity and its proper mission.

Following these results RCHRS, found it necessary to conduct a survey study to be acquainted with Palestinian public opinion regarding local Palestinian and Arab media

Therefore, the Survey Studies Unit at RCHRS, conducted a survey investigating the public opinion towards local Palestinian and Arab media during the period 19-21 February. The sample included 1500 persons and the margin of error was ± 2.5 . It was distributed on 948 persons from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and 552 persons from the Gaza Strip. The percentage of males to females in the sample was 52.4:47.6; the age group mean of the sample was 33 years.

Palestinians and the local media

In its first opinion poll, the Survey Unit of Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies (RCHRS), conducted a survey on how the Palestinian public in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip primarily perceive local media, and also how they perceive the Arab media. The survey revealed the following results:

First: Television is still the main source of information on local politics in the Palestinian territories according to 63% of the survey respondents (71% in the West Bank, and 51% in Gaza Strip). Radio ranked as a second source for information with 20% (including 16% in the West Bank, and 26% in Gaza Strip). The least percent was that obtained by local press with only 7% of the total number of the survey respondents (6% in the West Bank, and 8% in Gaza Strip). Websites ranked third with 8% of the total number of the survey respondents.

The results of the poll show that the West Bank people watch television more than Gaza people who listen more to the radio. This maybe attributed to the constant electricity cut offs in Gaza.

Second: The Palestinian public prefer to obtain information on local politics from Arab media (53%) rather than from local media (37%). However, if we examine the details related to these parentages, we will find that Gaza Strip people rely on local news (60%) more than on Arab news while people in the West Bank prefer to listen to Arab media outlets (65%) rather than to local news.

Preference given to local media in the Gaza Strip may have resulted from the lack of satellite dishes compared to the West Bank where these dishes are widely used. In addition, Palestinian national sentiments in the Strip have been historically stronger in Gaza compared to the West Bank.

Third: Local newspapers

Al-Quds Newspaper ranked first among local newspapers with (47%) of the total number of the survey respondents. Al-Ayam ranked second (19%) and third came al-Hayat al-Jadidah with 15% of the total number of respondents. Al-Risalah newspaper, received only 4%; one of the reasons for this low ratio is that this newspaper is not distributed in the West Bank. Al-Risalah's share was 1% in the West Bank and 9% in the Gaza Strip.

It should be noted here that there is a disparity between the preferences in Gaza and the West Bank with regard to how Palestinian newspapers are perceived. Sixty eight percent in the West Bank and 12% in Gaza Strip prefer to read al-Quds newspaper. While al-Hayat al-Jadidah has ranked first in Gaza (36%), in the West Bank the percent of people reading it was very low and did not exceed (2%). Al-Ayam newspaper obtained a ratio of 10% in the West Bank and 34% in Gaza Strip.

It is clear that the ideological and political rhetoric is not the decisive factor in the preference given to one newspaper over the other, but the nature of the newspaper itself and its selling price.

Fourth: With regard to viewers of Palestinian television in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestine TV received the highest ratio among local TV stations in both the West Bank and Gaza, reaching up to 35%, followed by other local TV stations with a percent of 25, while al-Aqsa has received 20% of the total number of the survey respondents.

It was also clear that TV viewers, more than newspapers' readers, are influenced by the intellectual and political rhetoric of the different stations. Al-Aqsa TV received 20% of the total number of respondents' votes in the West Bank and Gaza, while Palestine TV's ratio was 39% in the West Bank

and 27% in Gaza. The percent of other local TV stations' viewers was high in Gaza reaching up to 44% and low in the West Bank, reaching 14%.

Fifth: With regard to local radio stations, 34% of the respondents preferred independent local radio stations. Palestine Radio obtained 31% of the total number of respondents' votes and al-Aqsa received 13%.

If we examine these details, we find out that the ratio of people who prefer local radio stations in the West Bank was double of that in Gaza Strip (42% compared to 21%). Radio of Palestine received 22% of the total number of respondents' votes in the West Bank and 47% in the Gaza Strip while al-Aqsa radio received 22% in Gaza and only 8% in the West Bank. These results indicate that people in the West Bank prefer more independent media outlets compared to people in the Gaza Strip.

Sixth: Peoples' trust in the Palestinian media outlets

1. Results have revealed the peoples' trust, in general, in the local newspapers is weak. Al-Quds newspaper score was 7 out of 10, al-Ayam and al-Hayat al-Jadidah scores were 6 out of 10 and al-Risalah scored 4 out of 10.
2. Confidence in Palestinian television channels was even lower compared to newspapers. Palestine TV scored 7 out of 10 and al-Aqsa scored least, 5 out of 10. Confidence in Palestine TV was slightly higher in Gaza compared to West Bank.
3. Confidence in local radio stations was the least. Independent local radio stations scored 6 out 10. The Voice of Palestine and al-Aqsa radio scored slightly less. There is a clear disparity between scores achieved by Palestine Radio in the West Bank and in Gaza. In the West Bank the score was less than 5 out of 10 while in Gaza its was more than 7.

Seventh: In more details and with regard to peoples' confidence in the objectivity of local media outlets, results have revealed that 67% of those who view, listen and read local media think that media cover news with objectivity and without being biased to one party or the other. Only 28% of the respondents said that media outlets are not objective in their coverage of news. Respondents in Gaza showed more confidence in local media outlets and the ratio reached 70% compared to 65% in the West Bank.

Eighth: The question related to the extent of Palestinian media outlets' independence and the influence exerted by the authorities in both the West Bank and Gaza has revealed that people do believe that interventions by authorities are practiced.

1. Sixty five percent (74% in the West Bank and 50% in Gaza Strip) of the respondents said that the Palestinian Authority interfere in the media.

If this result is read differently, a big disparity will appear between respondents in Gaza and those in the West Bank regarding PA's intervention in media in the WB. Forty one percent in Gaza and 19% in the West Bank said that PA in the West Bank does not interfere in the media. The percent of those who think that the PA in the West Bank does not interfere in media in Gaza is double the percent in the West Bank.

2. When the sample was asked on the extent to which the deposed government in Gaza interfere with the media, the result was that interventions were much higher in Gaza compared to the West Bank. Seventy six percent (81% in the West Bank and 69% in Gaza Strip) of the respondents said that there are interventions. People in the West Bank also think that " Hamas government " interfere in media more than PA's interference.
3. When the sample was asked about the objectivity of the political parties' media, answers were based, to a large extent, on political affiliations. Thirty five percent of the respondents (27% in the West Bank and 48% in Gaza) said that Fateh media outlets are the most comprehensive outlets, while only 10% said that the left wing media is the most objective media.

It seems that political affiliation plays a big role when it comes to the political parties' media. It was not surprising the results were very similar to those related to the extent of support to Palestinian political movements. This indicates that there is an absence of self-criticism when it comes to personal political affiliation. However, there is a good percent of people reaching up to 34% (43% in the West Bank and 11% in the Gaza Strip) who does not perceive the political parties' media in Palestine as being objective.

A proof of the accuracy of this percent is that 35% (43% in the West Bank and 21% in Gaza Strip) said that the main goal of political parties' media is to mobilize support against parties who adopt a different political rhetoric.

4. When the sample was asked on the role of the Palestinian media in deepening internal divides, a large percent of respondents, almost equal percentages, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, said that the local media contributes to the deepening of internal divides. Seventy five percent (74% in the West Bank and 77% in the Gaza Strip) said that local media deepen internal divides.

It should be noted that respondents in the West Bank and in Gaza gave completely different answers in almost all questions except this question which received similar answers in both the West Bank and Gaza.

Ninth: Palestinians and the Arab media

1. When the sample was asked on the Arab satellite stations that they mostly watch to obtain local political news, al-Jazeera ranked first among the Arab satellite stations (7.78 out of 10). Palestine channel ranked second (6.57 out of 10) and al-Manar ranked third (6.53 out of 10), while al-Arabiya ranked fourth (6.4 out of 10) and al-Aqsa ranked fifth (5.2 out of 10). Results also revealed a disparity between Gaza and West Bank as to how people perceive Arab satellite stations. In the West Bank, al-Jazeera scored 8.4 out of 10 and in Gaza 6.7 out of 10. Al-Manar scored 7.45 out of 10 in the West Bank and 5 out of 10 in Gaza. Al-Arabiya's results were different. In the West Bank it scored 5.6 out of 10 and in Gaza its score was 7.8. Both Palestine and al-Aqsa obtained the same results in the West Bank and in Gaza. The sample gave similar answers with regard to Palestine and al-Aqsa stations and different answers regarding al-Jazeera, al-Manar and al-Arabiya.
2. When the sample was asked about the level of confidence in Arab satellite stations, results didn't differ. There were clear differences between Gaza and West Bank respondents. Al-Jazeera was a trusted source for 93% of the sample in the West Bank and 61% in Gaza. Al-Manar obtained 88% in the West Bank and 68% in Gaza and al-Arabiya obtained 75% in the West Bank and 84% in Gaza.
3. Confidence in the preferred satellite station was based by 53% of the survey respondents on its objectivity and absences of biasness. What was surprising is that 32% of the respondents in Gaza and 19% in the WB said that their confidence is based on the rhetoric of the station – a rhetoric similar to that which the respondents adopt. This indicates that ideological tendencies among people in Gaza is higher than in the WB and that the number of independent people in the WB is higher compared to Gaza.

Tenth: With regard to political programmes mostly viewed by people in the WB and Gaza Strip, results revealed that 46% of the sample prefers news programmes, 22% prefers religious programmes and 14% prefers cultural programmes.

It is noted that the percent of news and cultural programmes' viewers in Gaza is 49.5% and 18.5% consecutively and this percent is higher than in the WB reaching 43.4% and 10.8% consecutively. The percent of people watching religious and entertainment programmes in the WB was 24.1% and 16.8% consecutively, and these percentages are higher than those registered in the Gaza strip, 18.5% and 12.5% consecutively - contrary to expectations.

Main Results

1. What is your main source of local political news?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Radio	19.6	15.8	26.1
TV	63.2	70.6	50.5
Newspapers	6.8	6.0	8.2
Websites of news agencies	8.2	5.1	13.6
Other	0.6	0.6	0.5
I do not follow political news	1.6	1.9	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

2. From which source do you prefer to get local political news?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Local media	37.4	24.4	59.8
Arab media	51.8	65.2	28.8
Israeli media	6.6	5.4	8.7
Foreign media	3.4	4.1	2.2
Other	0.2	0.3	0.00
No opinion/ I don't know	0.6	0.6	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

3. What is your level of trust in the local mass media's publishing of local political news?

TV	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Very high	39.2	32.3	51.1
High	49.8	55.1	40.8
Low	5.2	5.4	4.9
Very low	2.4	3.5	0.5
No opinion/ I don't know	3.4	3.8	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Radio	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Very high	32.0	29.7	35.9
High	52.0	52.8	50.5
Low	7.6	7.6	7.6
Very low	3.0	2.5	3.8
No opinion/ I don't know	5.4	7.3	2.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Newspapers	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Very high	28.2	28.5	27.7
High	46.8	48.1	44.6
Low	7.8	5.1	12.5
Very low	3.2	1.6	6.0
No opinion/ I don't know	14.0	16.8	9.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
News websites	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Very high	24.6	24.4	25.0
High	35.4	34.2	37.5
Low	5.0	5.7	3.8
Very low	4.0	1.3	8.7
No opinion/ I don't know	31.0	34.5	25.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

4. Which of these local newspapers do you prefer to read to get local political news?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Al Hayat Al Jadida	14.8	2.2	36.4
Al Ayyam	18.8	10.1	33.7
Al Quds	47.4	68.0	12.0
Ar Risala	3.8	0.9	8.7
Other	0.2	0.00	0.5
No opinion/ I don't know	15.0	18.7	8.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

5. Which of the following Palestinian TV channels do you prefer to watch to get local political news?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Local TV stations	24.6	13.6	43.5
Al Aqsa TV	20.0	20.6	19.0
Palestine TV	35.2	39.9	27.2
I don't watch any of them	20.2	25.9	10.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

6. Which of the following local websites do you prefer to follow to get local political news?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Fateh electronic agencies	22.4	13.9	37.0
Hamas electronic agencies	13.4	11.1	17.4
Left electronic agencies	0.4	0.3	0.5
Independent electronic agencies	23.6	26.3	19.0
Other	2.0	3.2	0.00
I don't follow electronic agencies	38.2	45.3	26.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

7. Which of the following local radio stations do you prefer to listen to for local political news?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Palestine Radio	31.0	21.5	47.3
Al Aqsa Radio	13.4	8.2	22.3
Independent local radio stations	34.4	42.4	20.7
Other	3.6	3.5	3.8
I don't follow local radio stations	17.6	24.4	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

8. To what extent do you trust the following local newspapers' publication of local political news?

(Ranking from 0 till 10, 0 being the lowest, 10 the highest)

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Al Hayat Al Jadida	5.8643	4.5055	7.8804
Al Ayyam	6.1800	5.2671	7.5543
Al Quds	7.3193	7.3836	7.2174
Ar Risala	3.8299	3.0272	9.9511

9. To what extent do you trust the following local TV channels' broadcasts of local political news?

(Ranking from 0 till 10, 0 being the lowest, 10 the highest)

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Local TV stations	6.1067	5.6429	6.8478
Al Aqsa TV	5.1405	5.0698	5.2568
Palestine TV	6.6040	6.2476	7.2065

10. To what extent do you trust these local radio stations' broadcasts of local political news?

(Ranking from 0 till 10, 0 being the lowest, 10 the highest)

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Palestine Radio	5.6955	4.7025	7.2011
Al Aqsa Radio	4.3573	3.8182	5.1630
Independent local radio stations	6.0939	5.8922	4.4293

11. Do you believe that local mass media covers local political news objectively without bias towards a particular political side?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Yes	36.8	30.4	47.8
Sometimes	30.2	34.8	22.3
No	28.4	31.0	23.9
No opinion/ I don't know	4.6	3.8	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

12. Do you believe that the Palestinian Authority (PA) interferes in local mass media's work of publishing local political news in the West Bank?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Yes	47.2	52.5	38.0
Sometimes	18.0	21.2	12.5
No	27.2	19.0	41.3
No opinion/ I don't know	7.6	7.3	8.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

13. Do you believe that the deposed Hamas government interferes in local mass media's work of publishing local political news in the Gaza Strip?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Yes	61.4	63.0	58.7
Sometimes	15.4	18.0	10.9
No	16.2	11.4	24.5
No opinion/ I don't know	7.0	7.6	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

14. Regarding partisan media, which of the following media do you believe transmits local political news objectively?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Fateh Movement Media	34.6	26.6	48.4
Hamas Movement Media	21.6	20.9	22.8
Left Movements Media	9.6	9.8	9.2
Other	13.4	16.1	8.7
No opinion/ I don't know	20.8	26.6	10.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

15. When partisan media publishes local political news, I believe the reason is to:

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Present its point of view regarding a particular issue	39.8	33.9	50.0
Demonstrate an objective account of the issue	13.2	13.0	13.6
Provoke opposing political sides	35.2	43.4	21.2

No opinion/ I don't know	11.8	9.8	15.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

16. Do you believe that local media has contributed to fuelling the internal Palestinian division?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Yes	75.2	74.4	76.6
No	15.2	18.4	9.8
No opinion/ I don't know	9.6	7.3	13.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

17. Which of the following satellite TV channels do you prefer to watch to get local political news?

(Ranking from 0 till 10, 0 being the lowest, 10 the highest)

	Total	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Al Arabia	6.3971	5.5798	7.7609
Abu Dhabi	5.9416	5.3777	6.7935
Al Jazeera	7.7847	8.4204	6.6940
Al Alam	5.3362	5.1533	5.6087
Al Manar	6.5312	7.4478	5.0437
MBC	5.9809	6.1777	5.6739
Al Hiwar	4.0291	4.0802	3.9565
Nile News	3.7870	3.3321	4.4348
Palestine	6.5688	6.3618	6.9126
Al Aqsa	5.1862	5.2891	5.0217
Al Quds	5.2658	5.2255	5.3261
BBC Arabic	5.1258	4.2342	6.4293

18. To what extent do you trust the following Arab satellite TV channels in broadcasting local political news?

Total%	Very high	High	Low	Very low	No opinion
Al Arabia	44.0	34.4	9.2	7.8	4.6
Al Manar	39.6	40.8	12.8	1.4	5.4
Al Jazeera	59.0	22.2	7.6	8.2	3.0
Abu Dhabi	23.4	57.6	7.2	1.0	10.8
MBC	28.0	50.6	7.2	3.0	11.2
Al Hiwar	13.8	41.4	9.8	5.8	29.2
Al Quds	26.4	36.0	9.4	5.4	22.8
Al Alam	23.4	41.2	9.6	4.0	21.8

West Bank%					
	Very high	High	Low	Very low	No opinion
Al Arabia	34.8	40.2	10.4	10.1	4.4
Al Manar	46.5	41.1	6.6	0.9	4.7
Al Jazeera	71.8	21.2	2.8	2.2	1.9
Abu Dhabi	19.9	56.0	9.2	1.6	13.3
MBC	22.2	53.8	7.9	4.7	11.4
Al Hiwar	9.2	43.4	8.5	4.1	34.8
Al Quds	21.5	38.3	7.6	3.2	29.4
Al Alam	20.9	43.4	8.2	2.5	25.0
Gaza Strip%					
	Very high	High	Low	Very low	No opinion
Al Arabia	59.8	24.5	7.1	3.8	4.9
Al Manar	27.7	40.2	23.4	2.2	6.5
Al Jazeera	37.0	23.9	15.8	18.5	4.9
Abu Dhabi	29.3	60.3	3.8	0.00	6.5
MBC	38.0	45.1	6.0	0.00	10.9
Al Hiwar	21.7	38.0	12.0	8.7	19.6
Al Quds	34.8	32.1	12.5	9.2	11.4
Al Alam	27.7	37.5	12.0	6.5	16.3

19. What are the factors that make you trust specific media channels over others when it comes to receiving local political news?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
Because it is objective and non-biased	52.8	58.9	42.4
Because it represents my beliefs	23.4	18.7	31.5
Because it does not contribute to fuelling the internal division	19.8	16.8	25.0
Other reasons	1.4	1.9	0.5
No opinion/ I don't know	2.6	3.8	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

20. Which programs do you prefer to follow?

	Total%	West Bank%	Gaza Strip%
News	45.6	43.4	49.5
Religious programs	22.0	24.1	18.5
Cultural programs	13.6	10.8	18.5
Films and movies	15.2	16.8	12.5
Other	2.6	4.1	0.00
No opinion/ I don't know	1.0	0.9	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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