



Government Change and Security Sector Governance: Palestinian Public Perceptions

Summary Report (Geneva, 3 August 2006)

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Introduction

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the Graduate Institute for Development Studies (IUED) in Geneva conducted a survey in May 2006 to find out how the Palestinian public views security sector governance in the Palestinian Territories.¹ The survey, which involved 1,800 Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, followed up on a similar survey carried out by DCAF and IUED in July 2005.²

The July 2005 survey was the first attempt to understand how Palestinians view and judge Palestinian security sector³ governance. It measured the trust that the Palestinian public placed in various security forces, both official and unofficial. It examined how Palestinians evaluated the Palestinian National Authority's performance in delivering security, controlling armed groups, and implementing reforms. And finally, the report also provided an overview of public opinion on the needs of security sector reform. The report concluded that the public was in general dissatisfied with the performance of the security sector, had little confidence in its governance, doubted its legitimacy and demanded urgent reforms, such as a substantial reduction in corruption and nepotism, enhanced respect for human rights and better political control over armed groups.

Over the last 12 months, the region has witnessed some major changes which have had a direct impact on security sector governance. In late summer 2005, Israel withdrew its settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank. In a surprise victory, Hamas won a majority of seats in the Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006 and found itself suddenly in a position where it had to form a new government. Western donor countries responded swiftly by boycotting the new Hamas government and cutting off much of their financial support to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). As a result, the PNA faced serious difficulties in paying the salaries of its employees. By the end of the first half of 2006, tensions between Palestinian factions had risen to a new high. Hostilities between armed Palestinian factions in Gaza and Israel had existed for months and eventually intensified in June when Israel resumed military operations in Gaza and redeployed its troops in the Gaza strip.

¹ The present report is part of a larger initiative undertaken by the Graduate Institute for Development Studies in Geneva (IUED), the Palestinian Public Perceptions Reports. Published annually, these reports assess changes in the living conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories. This year, IUED publishes its tenth report. The project is supported by a group of donors, including the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DCAF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), UNICEF. The reports and results of the surveys can be accessed at www.uedpolls.org.

² See DCAF/IUED, *Palestinian Public Perceptions of Security Sector Governance, Summary Report*, Geneva, 14 October 2005. Available at www.dcaf.ch/mena/documents.

³ The security sector usually includes the armed forces, police and gendarmerie, internal and external intelligence services, and judicial and penal institutions. It also includes the elected and duly appointed civil authorities responsible for control and oversight, namely the executive and parliament. For a detailed description of the Palestinian security sector see Roland Friedrich, "The Palestinian Predicament - Security Governance in the Absence of Statehood", in Arnold Luethold and Rami Khoury (eds.), *Challenges to Security Governance in the Middle East*, DCAF 2006; and Roland Friedrich, *Security Sector Reform in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, PASSIA, Jerusalem 2004.

The present report examines if and to what extent changes in the political and socioeconomic environment have affected Palestinian public perceptions of security sector governance. It also explores whether the change of government has altered the way Palestinians perceive their security needs. Considering that the new Hamas government was sworn in on 29 March 2006 and thus had just assumed its functions when the survey was conducted, the report does not provide information on how the public views the performance of the current government. Instead it shows what the public thinks of the situation that Hamas inherited when it took over the government. In this sense, the report provides essentially a baseline assessment for a new government. Only a comparison with future assessments will eventually allow for conclusions to be drawn on the new government's performance.

For easy comparison with the results of the last report, this survey used identical or similar questions wherever possible. However, new questions have been added where this seemed necessary for a better and more differentiated understanding of public views.

In this study, 'security sector' is the public sector that comprises all security forces and relevant civilian bodies that manage and oversee them, including the judiciary. 'Security sector governance' very generally refers to how this sector is run. It looks at the people, institutions, mechanisms and practices that affect the functioning of the security sector and its capacity to deliver security in the broadest possible sense to the people. A successful security sector would deliver security effectively to the greatest number of people at affordable costs, in a fully transparent and accountable fashion. How well this is done is, however, a matter of public perception.

Understanding how the public views the security sector and its work is therefore important for good governance. Studies of public perception of security sector governance are a crucial tool not only for assessing the quality of governance, but also for evaluating the future direction of reforms. By giving the people a voice in the discussion of their own future security, public perception studies are a step towards greater inclusiveness in the management and oversight of security issues. They also help to establish public accountability of the security sector and to involve civil society in its governance. This is in itself an important element of any security sector reform (SSR)⁴ agenda, because the security sector often tends to resist public input and oversight.

As many other governments in the Middle East would be reluctant to authorise such a perceptions study, the Palestinian National Authority deserves credit for having made this research possible. The present summary report contains some key findings of the survey. A detailed report will be published in fall 2006.

⁴ Security sector reform (SSR) refers to a systemic transformation of the security sector so that the various institutions can play an effective, efficient and democratically accountable role in providing internal and external security to the citizens.



The Palestinian Security Sector

Throughout the first half of 2006, tension between Hamas and Fatah led to violent clashes between militants of both movements, including assassinations, bomb attacks and street battles, particularly in Gaza. The struggle between Hamas and Fatah also played out in the security sector which witnessed some major changes.

After the January 2006 elections, the PNA Presidency took various steps to remove the security organisations from the control of the Hamas government. The National Security Forces were separated from what was, until then, called the Ministry of Interior and National Security and were put under the authority of the President. The President also ensured control over the Internal Security Forces through the appointment of new commanders and created a new border security agency. The Presidential Guard, which had long been affiliated with the Presidential Security/Force 17, was expanded and put under the direct authority of the President.

The Hamas government on its part reacted by creating a new Gaza security force ('Special Backup Force to the Police') composed of members of its military wing and affiliated factions. The official mission of the 'Backup Force' is to support the existing security organisations in enforcing law and order in Gaza. The Presidency opposed this move, but nevertheless Fatah set up new militias in Gaza and the West Bank and recruited additional personnel for the Preventive Security.

These developments and the absence of reliable data make it difficult to give accurate numbers of PNA security personnel. Most estimates put the current strength of the PNA security forces at some 75,000 as of May 2006. The personnel figures below mostly reflect the number of security personnel on the payroll as of September 2005, the date of the last reliable figures.

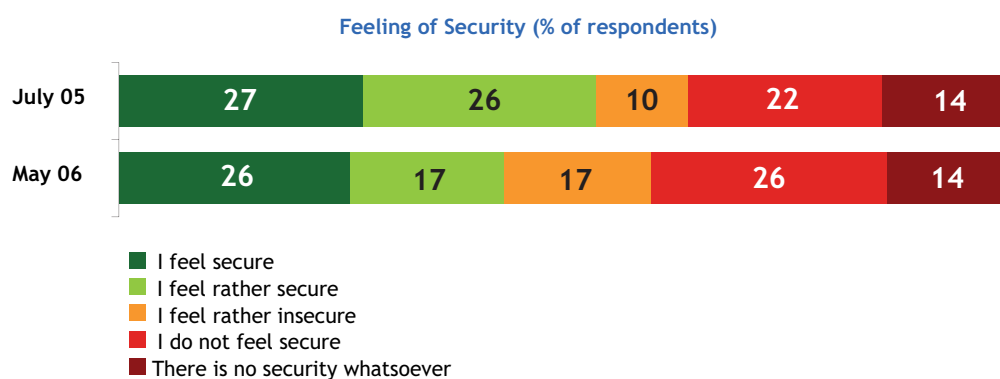
An Overview of Palestinian Security Forces		
PNA Security Forces		personnel
Internal Security Forces	Civil Police (law enforcement)	18,500
	Preventive Security (internal intelligence)	5,500
	Civil Defence (emergency and rescue services)	950
	Special Backup Force to the Police	ca. 3,000
National Security Forces (PNA 'proto-armed forces')		17,000
<i>including:</i>	National Security Forces	11,000
	Naval Police	900
	Military Intelligence	600

PNA Security Forces		personnel
General Intelligence (external intelligence)	Military Police	2,000
	Presidential Security/Force 17	2,500
	Presidential Guard (protection of PNA President)	c. 3,500
		4,200
Non-Statutory Forces		personnel
Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades (military wing of Hamas)		2,000-4,000
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Fateh-affiliated militias)		c. 3000
Al-Quds Battalions (military wing of Islamic Jihad)		c. 500
Nasser Salah ad-Din Squads (military wing of the Popular Resistance Committee)		c. 300
Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa Battalions (military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP))		c. 300
Civil Management and Oversight		
Executive Management	President	
	Prime Minister	
	Minister of Interior	
	National Security Council (practically defunct)	
Legislative Oversight	Palestinian Legislative Council	
	• Interior and Security Committee	
	• Committee for the Oversight of Human Rights and Public Freedoms	
	• Budget and Financial Affairs Committee	
	• Legal Committee	
Judiciary		
PNA Judiciary	Regular Courts (Magistrate Courts and Courts of First Instance), Supreme Court (combining Constitutional Court, Court of Appeal, Administrative Court), Sharia Courts, Military Courts	
Non-official justice system	Clan-based customary law	

Key findings

Palestinians feel less secure

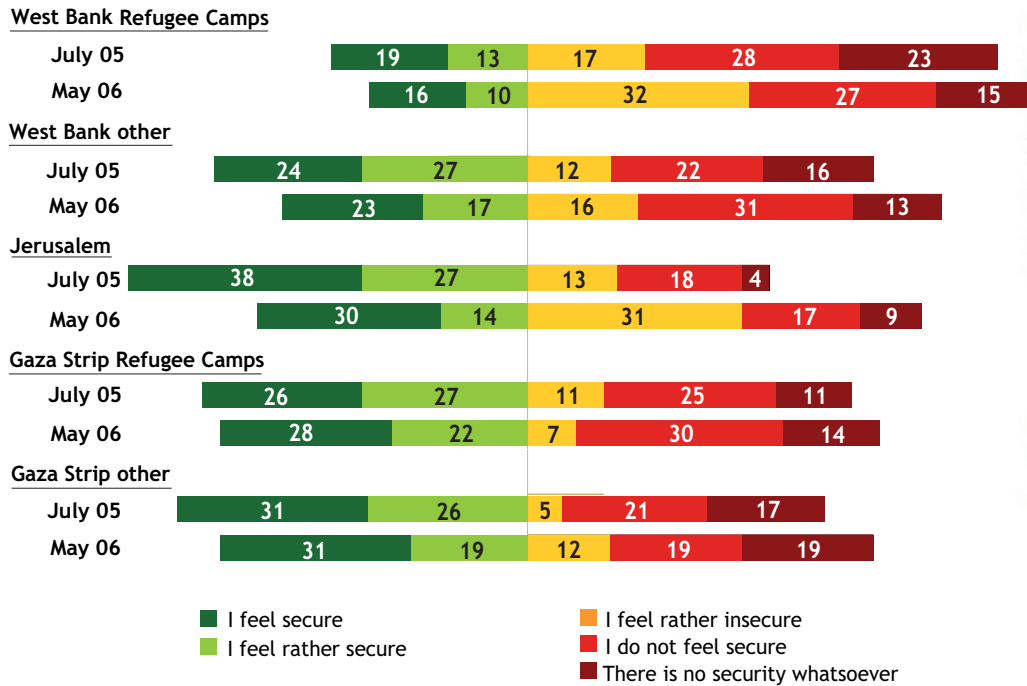
Compared to July 2005, Palestinians living in the Palestinian Territories felt less secure. More than half of the respondents (57 percent) said that they felt insecure, an increase of 11 percent.



Feelings of insecurity increased significantly in Jerusalem where only 44 percent of the respondents felt secure, compared to 65 percent a year ago. This increase is very likely linked to the growing physical and economic separation of the city from its hinterland in the West Bank. In Gaza, too, perceived insecurity increased: more than 50 percent of all respondents from the Gaza Strip said that they felt insecure, whereas in July 2005 perceived insecurity had remained under the 50 percent threshold. However, in comparison to the severe deterioration of the security situation in Gaza over the last 12 months, this increase is relatively low: four percent in the camps and seven percent outside.

Respondents in the West Bank continued to feel less secure than those in Gaza. There, insecurity increased from 68 to 74 percent in the camps and from 50 to 60 percent in areas outside the camps. This is possibly related to the socioeconomic deterioration of the last months and the increase in internal tensions. Whereas in Gaza the population had to adjust some time ago to economic hardship and heightened tension, many West Bank residents may feel the impact of these developments more strongly, given that until now they had enjoyed a relatively higher degree of economic and political stability.

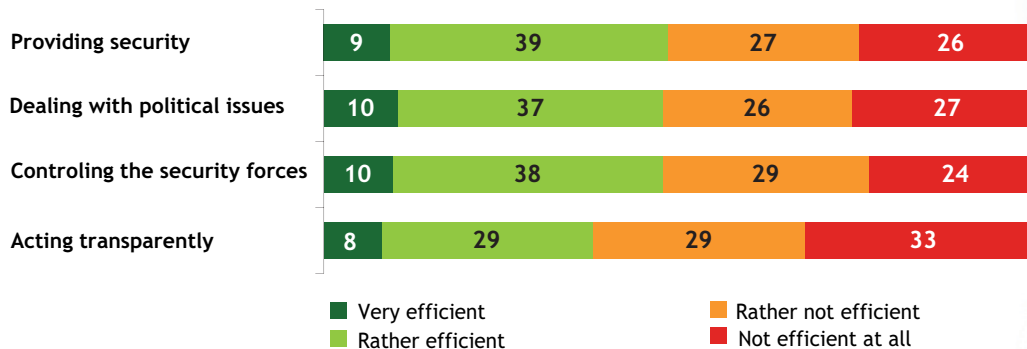
Feeling of Security by Place of Residence (% of respondents)



Palestinians expect more security from the Hamas government

Almost half of the respondents felt that the previous PNA government failed in providing safety and security to the population. Fifty-three percent said that the government was ineffective in delivering security to the people. The same percentage said that the government failed to control the PNA security organisations. An even higher percentage – 62 percent – thought that the previous government did not act in a transparent manner.

Efficiency of Previous Government – May 2006 (% of respondents)

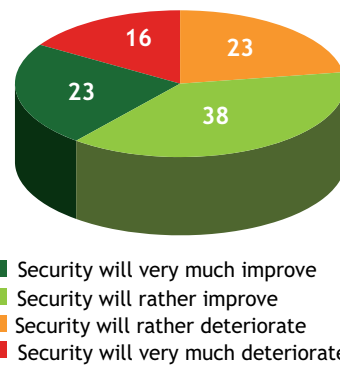




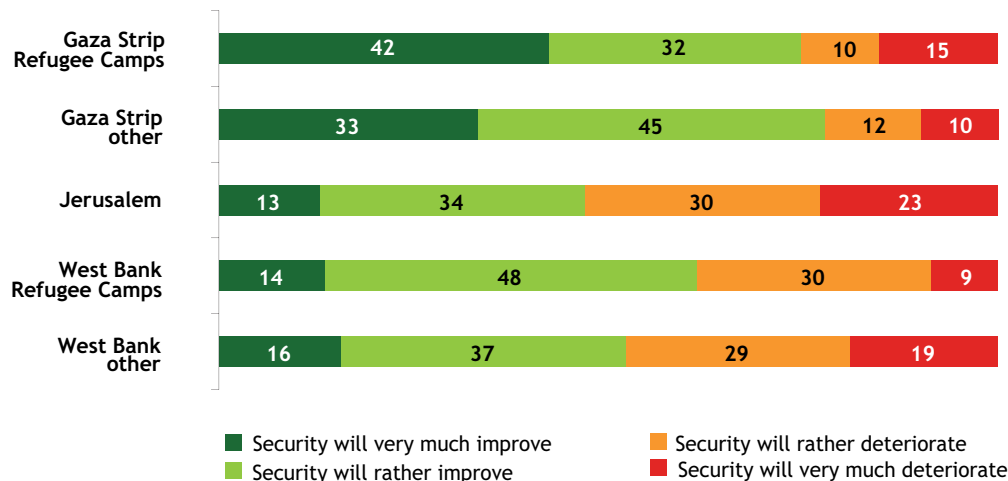
In contrast to the negative assessment of past performance, Palestinians were rather confident in the new government’s ability to provide safety and security. Sixty-one percent of all respondents expected the security situation to improve under a Hamas-led government. Almost a quarter of all respondents (23 percent) expected security would very much improve. In areas where political support for Hamas was generally high, positive expectations were significantly higher.

In Gaza, Hamas’s stronghold, 74 percent of respondents living in camps and 78 percent of those living outside the camps felt that security would improve. But also in the West Bank, more than half of all respondents counted on an improvement of the security situation under Hamas. Unlike in Gaza, camp residents in the West Bank were more optimistic than residents outside the camps: 63 percent of camp residents expected security to improve, compared to 53 percent among those outside the camps. Only in Jerusalem did a majority (53 percent) expect a deterioration of the security situation.

Expectations of Evolution of the Security Situation – May 2006 (% of respondents)



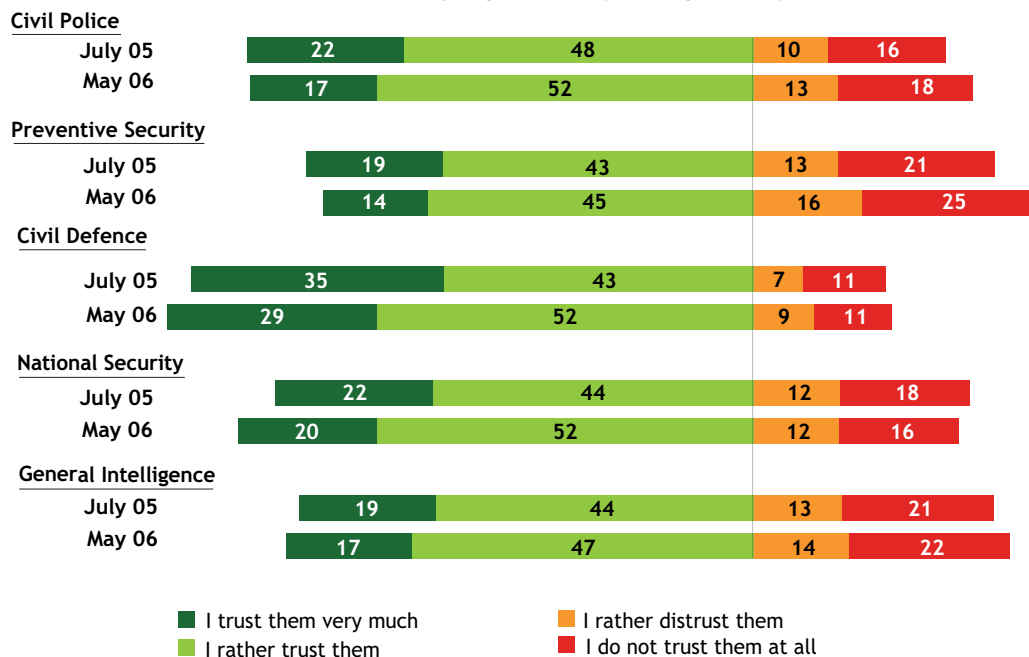
Expectations of Evolution of the Security Situation by Place of Residence – May 2006 (% of respondents)



The PNA security organisations still enjoy some trust, but scepticism is growing

A majority of Palestinians still thought that the Palestinian security organisations could be trusted. However, in comparison to July 2005, public trust had diminished. Roughly five percent more respondents expressed distrust in all organisations, except for the National Security Forces, for which trust slightly increased. And, compared to 2005, a significantly smaller segment of respondents was prepared to trust the security organisations “very much”. Intelligence agencies continued to be comparatively less trusted than other security organisations: in May 2006, 25 percent of all respondents said that they did not trust the Preventive Security at all, compared to 21 percent last year; also for the General Intelligence, the survey showed slightly reduced trust. Rather surprisingly, the Civil Police was no exception – trust in the Civil Police dropped by five percent, despite the fact that it had undergone an internationally assisted reform process over the previous 12 months.

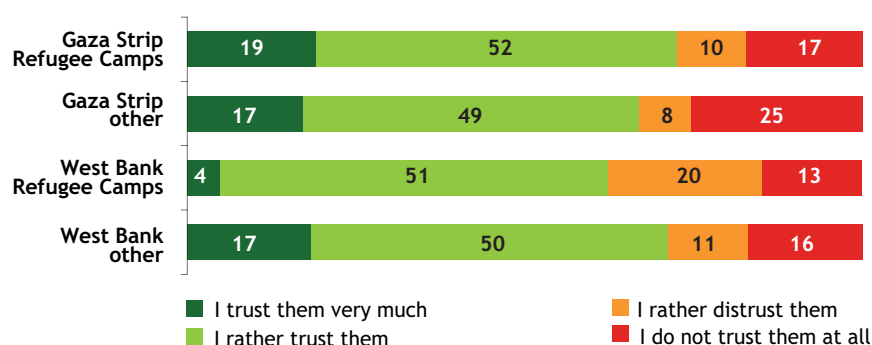
Trust in PNA Security Organisations (% of respondents)



The level of trust in the security organisations varied with educational level and, though to a lesser extent, the socioeconomic level of respondents: the higher the level of education and income, the lower the level of trust. The only exception to this was in regards to the Civil Defence, for which none of the two surveys could find a link between the level of trust and the level of education or income. Due the apolitical nature of its mission (emergency and rescue services, fire fighting etc.), the Civil Defence has been comparatively less involved in domestic politics. This could possibly explain why in both surveys the Civil Defence scored higher trust levels than other organisations.

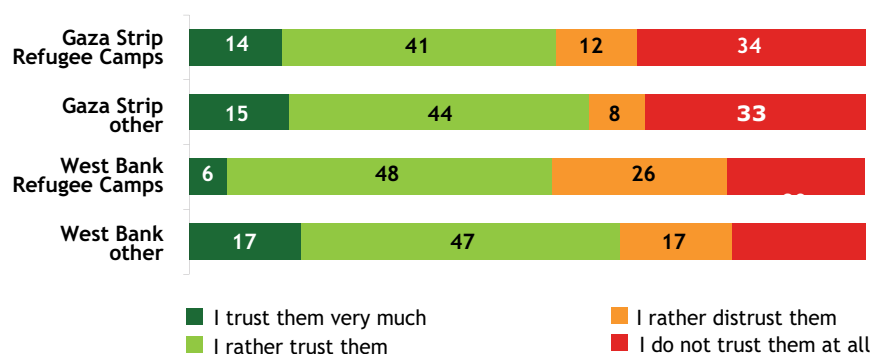
In Gaza, the PNA security organisations obtained relatively similar trust levels inside and outside the refugee camps, whereas in the West Bank they were trusted more by people living outside the refugee camps. Comparing both regions, Palestinians seemed to be more polarised in Gaza than in the West Bank: 33 percent of the Gaza respondents said they had no trust at all in the Preventive Security, as opposed to 20 percent in the West Bank; and 26 percent of Gaza respondents said the same of the General Intelligence, compared to 20 percent in the West Bank. Interestingly, 25 percent of Gaza respondents placed high trust in the National Security Forces, as opposed to 19 percent in the West Bank.

Trust in Civil Police by Place of Residence – May 2006 (% of valid responses*)



The reduced trust in the Civil Police indicates that, in the eyes of the public, recent reform and rehabilitation efforts had not been successful. In the search for an explanation, three assumptions need to be considered: (1) the reform process did not produce tangible outcomes; (2) it produced outcomes, but not those valued by the public; (3) it produced the expected outcomes, but the public is unaware of them, because these had not been properly communicated.

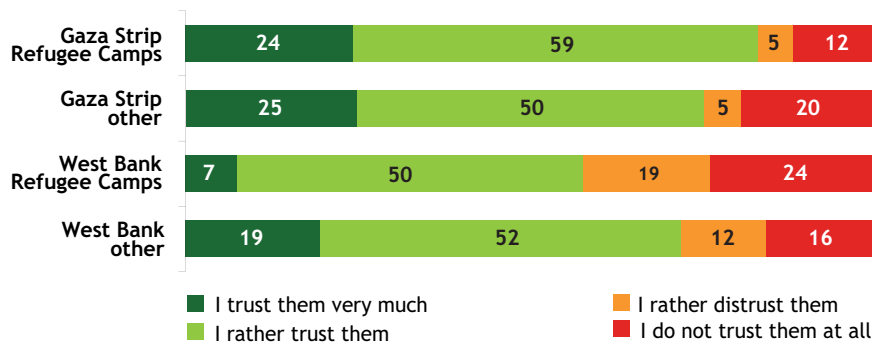
Trust in Preventive Security by Place of Residence – May 2006 (% of respondents)



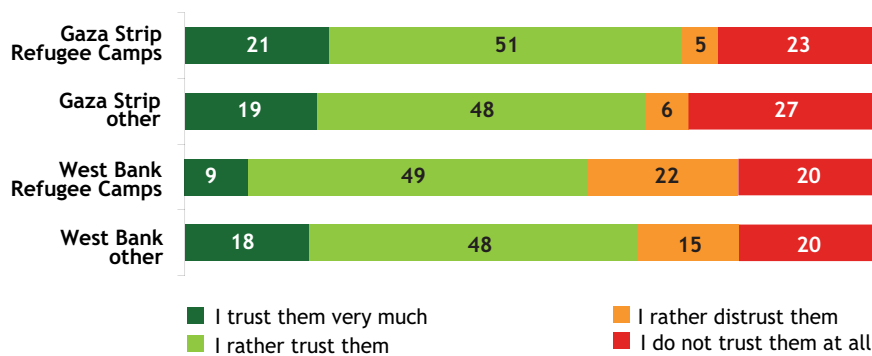
* Some respondents chose not to answer this question. However, the percentages in the section were calculated based on the total number of interviews conducted rather than the number of responses.

The lower trust in the PNA's intelligence organisations seemed to be related to the infighting between Hamas and Fatah that have marked the post-election phase. Both the Preventive Security and the General Intelligence, especially in Gaza, had a direct involvement in this political struggle. This may have adversely affected their public image. In contrast, the National Security Forces, which managed to stay largely away from the power struggle, may have been rewarded by the public with slightly higher trust. This apolitical attitude would also help explain why the National Security Forces enjoyed comparatively high trust in Gaza.

Trust in National Security Forces by Place of Residence – May 2006 (% of respondents)



Trust in General Intelligence by Place of Residence – May 2006 (% of respondents)

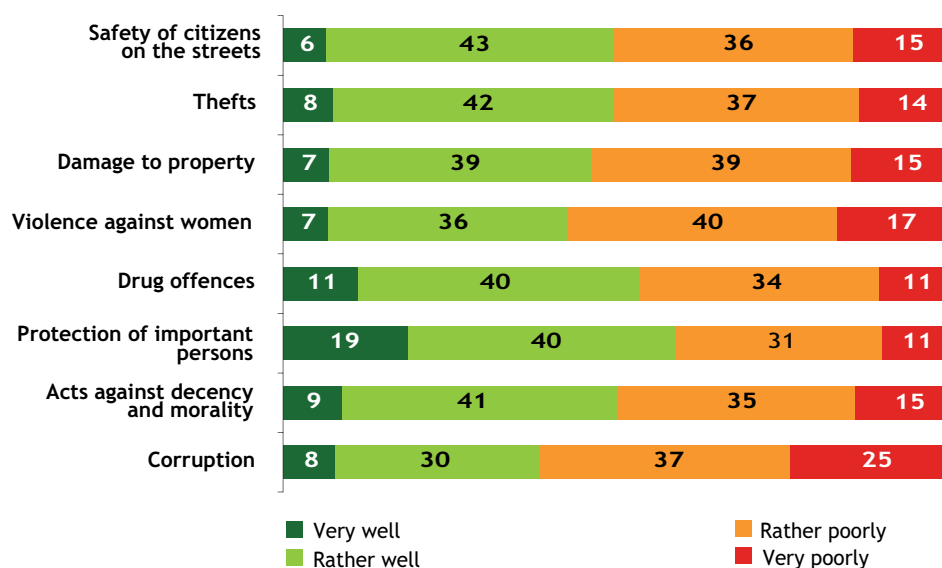


Overall, this survey found that trust levels in the various security organisations correlated strongly with the findings in the last survey. It also indicates that public trust in PNA-controlled security organisations was falling.

Law-enforcement could do better

A majority of Palestinians expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of security forces in several areas of law enforcement. Asked to rate performance in eight areas of law enforcement, a majority of Palestinians expressed dissatisfaction with the authorities' performance in six of them. Respondents were most unhappy with the performance in fighting corruption (62 percent), in preventing violence against women (57 percent) and in preventing damage to property (54 percent). This shows that a much higher percentage of Palestinians than normally thought expected the government to take action in preventing violence against women. Only in regards to protection of important persons and combating drug offences did more than half of the respondents state that they were satisfied with the work of the security forces.

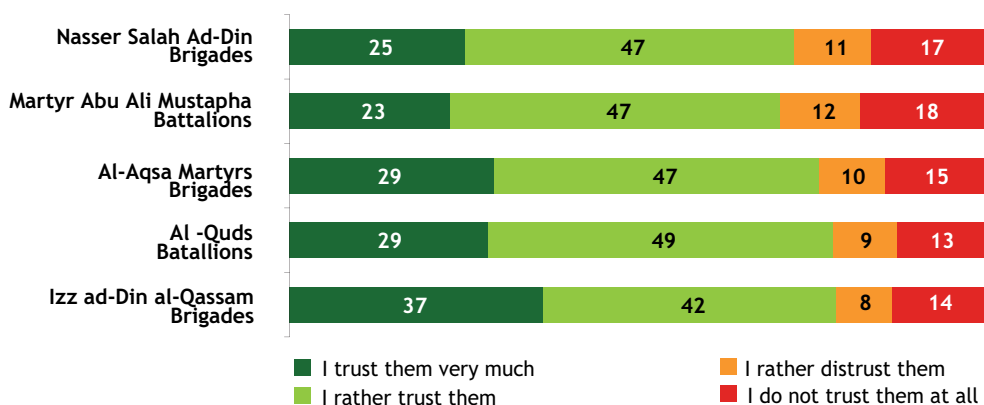
Performance in Law Enforcement – May 2006 (% of respondents)



Trust in armed factions remains high

More than 70 percent of the respondents trusted non-statutory forces very much or to some extent. The most trustworthy groups for them were the military wings of Hamas (Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades) and Islamic Jihad (Al-Quds Battalions): respectively, 79 percent and 78 percent of respondents thought these groups would help increase the personal safety of Palestinians.

Trust in Armed Groups – May 2006 (% of respondents)



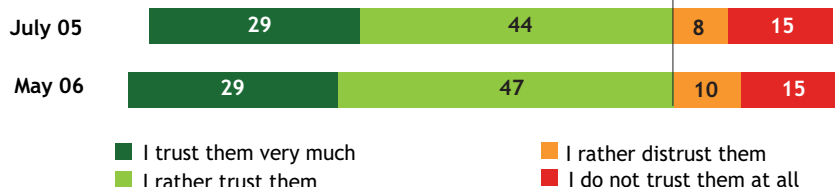
Compared to July 2005, trust in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades remained stable, whereas trust in the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas) had risen from 73 to 78 percent. This may be related partly to the reputation that Hamas’ military wing earned as a resistance movement, partly to its capability to impose a higher degree of discipline than the Al-Aqsa Brigades. In Gaza, respondents generally placed higher trust in all armed factions than those in the West Bank.

Trust in Armed Groups (% of respondents)

Al-Qassem Brigades



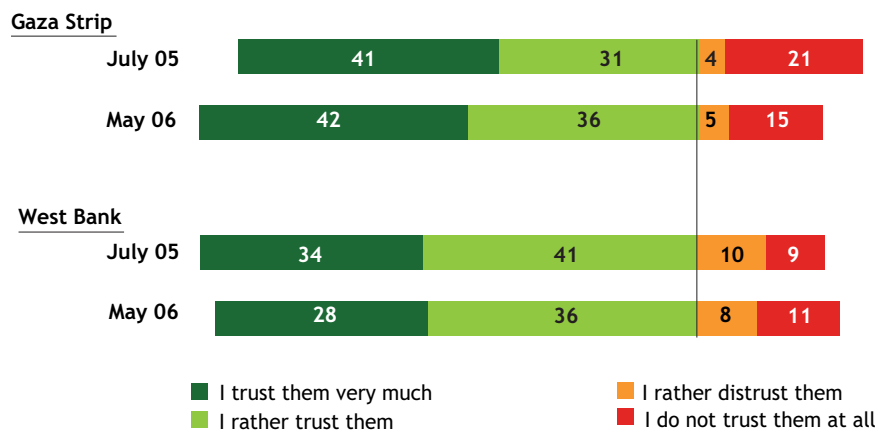
Al-Aqsa Brigades



Support for the Al-Qassam Brigades is particularly strong in Gaza. Forty-two percent in Gaza reported having high trust in this group, compared to 28 percent in the West Bank. Overall trust for Hamas’ military wing rose from 71 percent in July 2005 to 78 percent in May 2006. In the West Bank, however, overall trust in Al-Qassam Brigades decreased from 75 to 68 percent.

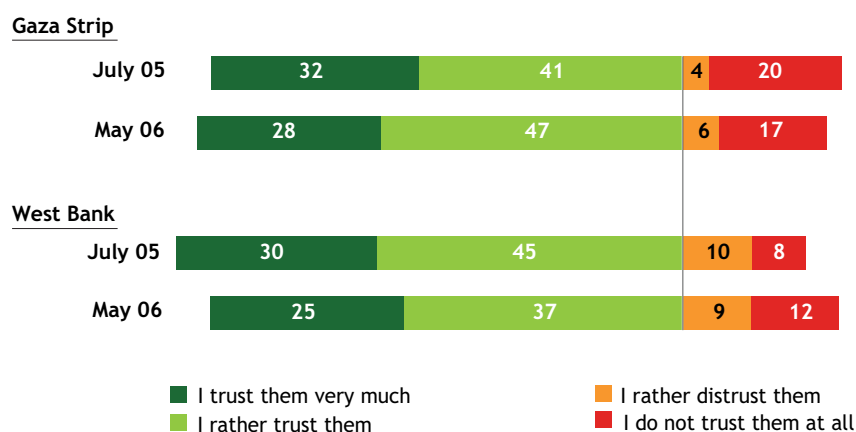


Trust in Al-Qassem Brigades by Place of Residence (% of valid responses*)



The Al-Qqsa Brigades received similar trust levels in the West Bank and Gaza. In Gaza, overall trust in the group had risen slightly from 73 to 75 present, whereas in the West Bank it had fallen from 75 to 63 percent. In Gaza, higher trust in armed factions could indicate a growing identification with armed groups. Palestinian infighting and the confrontation with Israel may have contributed to such an attitude. The loss of trust in the Al-Qassam Brigades in the West Bank, an area where Fatah has been traditionally stronger than Hamas, might also illustrate the growing polarisation between supporters of Hamas and Fatah.

Trust in Al-Aqsa Brigades by Place of Residence (% of valid responses*)



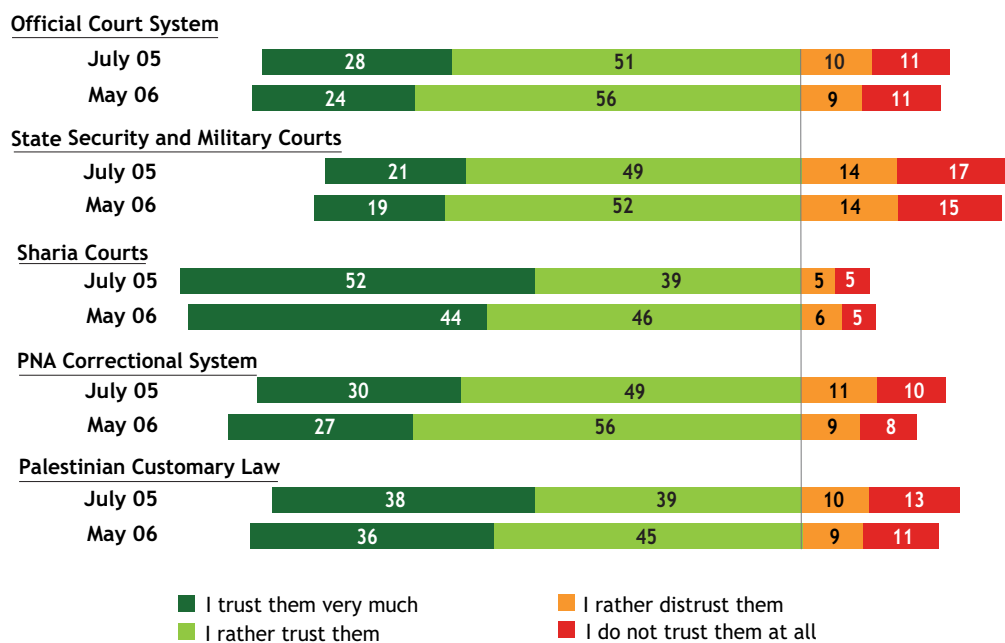
Trust in armed groups varied with level of income and education. Persons with higher incomes and more education trust non-statutory forces less than people below the poverty line and with low levels of education.

* Some respondents chose not to answer this question. However, the percentages in the section were calculated based on the total number of interviews conducted rather than the number of responses.

Trust in Sharia courts and customary law institutions remains high

Institutions that guarantee the rule of law, especially the courts and the correctional system, are important for a functioning security sector. Asked about their trust in judicial institutions, a majority of respondents said they trusted most the Sharia courts: 90 percent trusted these courts to some degree.

Trust in the Judiciary (% of respondents)



However, the number of respondents with high trust in the Sharia courts dropped from 52 percent in 2005 to 44 percent in 2006. This might reflect a fear that, following the electoral victory of Hamas, Islamic institutions might gain too much influence. The fact that high trust in Sharia Courts dropped from 55 percent to 43 percent among West Bank residents outside the refugee camps – areas which are traditionally Fatah-dominated – seems to support such an interpretation.

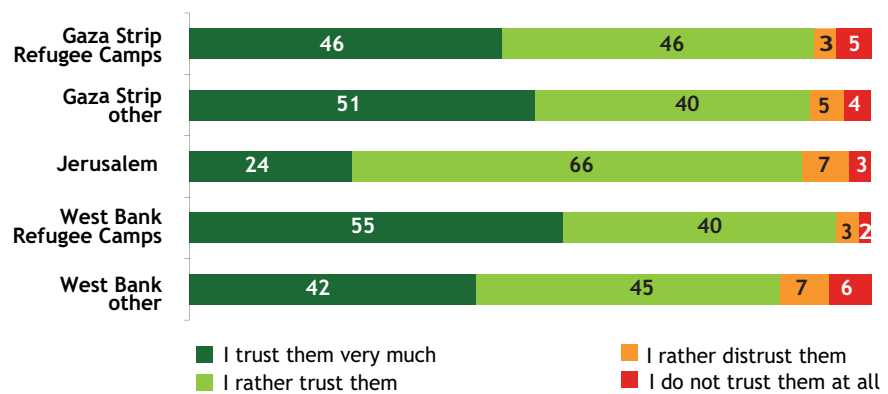
The PNA correctional system ranked second in terms of overall trust with 83 percent. Customary law institutions saw an increase in overall trust from 77 percent in 2005 to 81 percent in May 2006.

A majority expressed trust in the official court system,⁵ but in general Palestinians reported having higher trust in Sharia courts and customary law institutions. This raises

⁵ The official judiciary – often described as the weakest institutional link in the PNA – continues to suffer from grave problems: the PNA legal system is still an amalgamation of laws of various origins (Ottoman, British, Egyptian and Jordanian); there is a lack of personnel, funding and adequate infrastructure; the Executive interferes with the Courts; and court orders are not implemented.

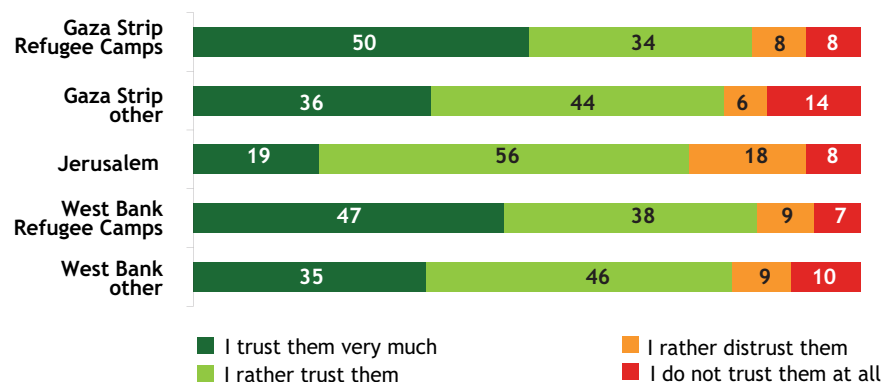
questions as to the impact of reform efforts that were undertaken to strengthen the judiciary. Three factors may help explain the comparatively higher trust in Sharia courts and customary law institutions: they offer easy access as they are present in all areas; they appeal to the population with the conservative values they represent; and they deal essentially with civil matters.

Trust in Sharia Courts by Place of Residence – May 06 (% of respondents)



The place of residence continues to be the key factor for explaining the overall high trust in Sharia courts. Around half of the Gaza and West Bank respondents had high trust in these courts, compared to only 24 percent in Jerusalem. The lower results there could be a consequence of better access to regular Israeli courts. This interpretation is supported by the observation that education, age and income had no influence on the trust in Sharia courts.

Trust in Customary Law by Place of Residence – May 06 (% of respondents)

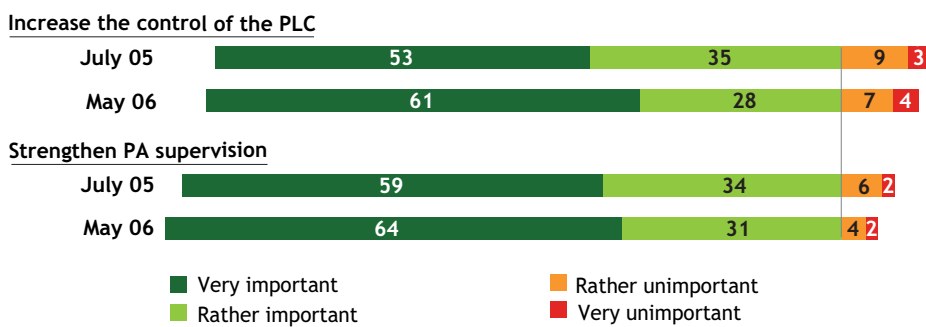


The availability or absence of satisfactory alternatives might also explain the significant variations in the trust levels in customary law between the regions. Only 19 percent of Jerusalem respondents had high trust in clan-based law, compared to between 35 and 50 percent in the West Bank and Gaza.

Strong demand for more accountability and oversight

Respondents strongly called for increased civil-democratic oversight of the PNA security organisations. Ninety-five percent demanded more executive supervision by the PNA, and 89 percent demanded increased oversight by the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC).

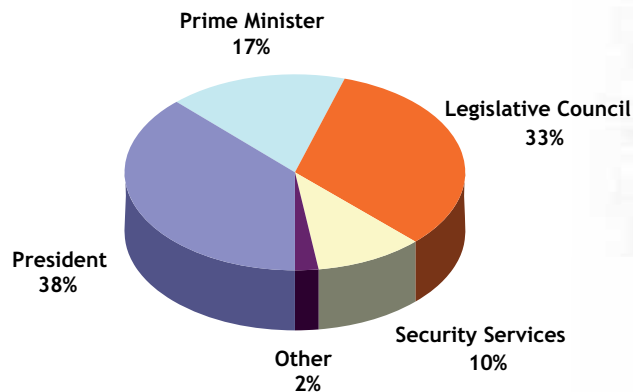
Strengthening Oversight of the Security Sector (% of respondents)



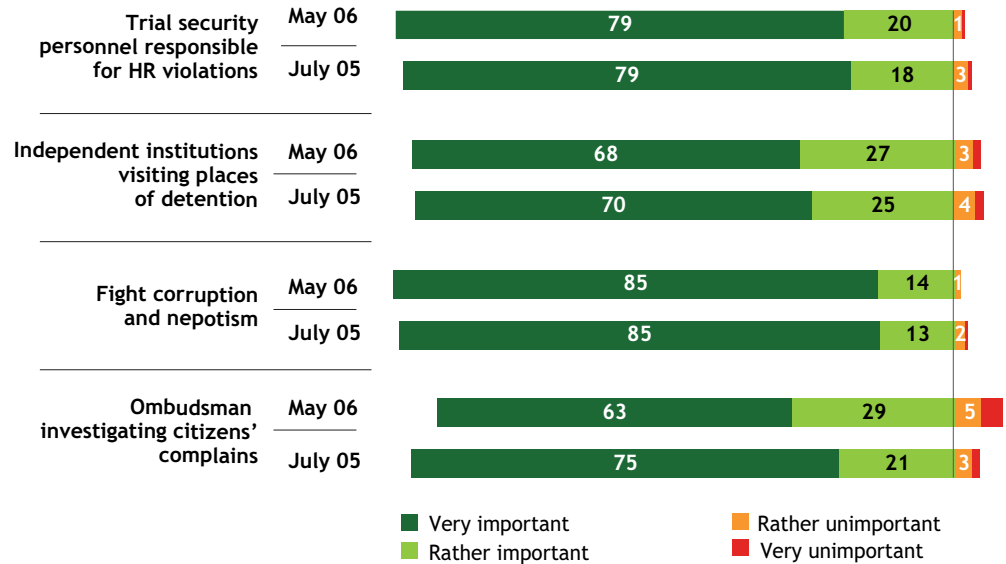
When asked to name the institution that should make key decisions in Palestinian security affairs, a majority opted for the PNA President (35 percent), 30 percent for the PLC, and 16 percent for the Prime Minister. Only 9 percent wanted to see the security forces responsible for security decisionmaking. This clearly demonstrates a popular will to strengthen democratic oversight of the security forces. Considering that the Prime Minister is legally accountable to the PLC, the survey results reveal a preference for a parliamentary system (46 percent), rather than a presidential system (35 percent).

Further evidence of strong popular support for democratic oversight is provided in the following: when asked to rate the importance of four proposed reform measures to improve accountability, between 63 and 85 percent said all of them were “very important”. As in 2005, fighting corruption and nepotism was on top of the list of priorities. Eighty-five percent of the respondents considered measures to this effect as “very important” and another 14 percent as “important”. Seventy-eight percent considered it “very important” that security personnel implicated in human rights-violations be brought to justice.

Who should make key decisions in security affairs? – May 2006 (% of respondents)



Measures to Strengthen Accountability (% of respondents)



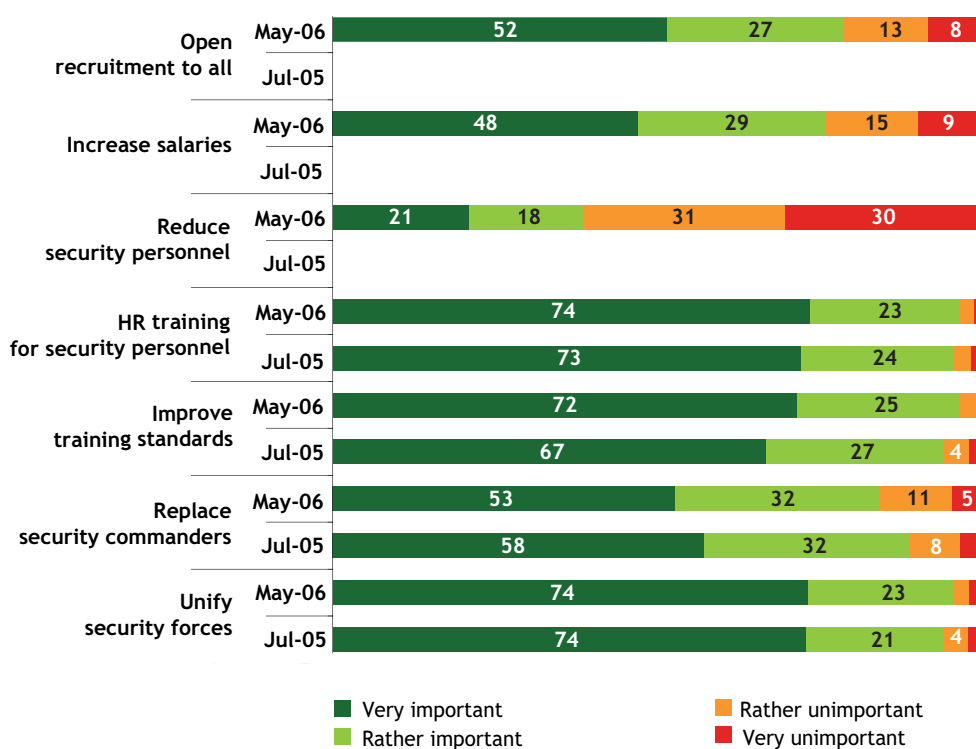
Such continued widespread support for in-depth reform suggests that the security sector reform measures taken by the PNA over the last ten months have not met the expectations of the Palestinian people. It also shows that the security sector continues to be in a crisis of confidence and legitimacy.

Palestinians want more efficient security forces

Palestinians demanded better performing and more professional security forces. Ninety-two percent of respondents attached importance to the unification of the security forces, the improvement of training standards and human rights training for security personnel. Compared to July 2005, support for these three measures increased by eight percent in average; this is a further indication that past efforts of reforming the PNA security forces have not been successful in the eyes of the population. The increase of salaries for security personnel and impartial recruitment into the forces were also seen as important, but of a lower priority than the unification of services or the improvement of training.

A majority of 61 percent of the respondents considered a reduction of security personnel unimportant. This is not surprising, given that employment in the security forces provides income for more than 70,000 people and their dependents. The overall rejection of downsizing might also reflect the fact that the PNA security forces are seen as an important element in the Palestinian state-building process and a symbol of national identity.

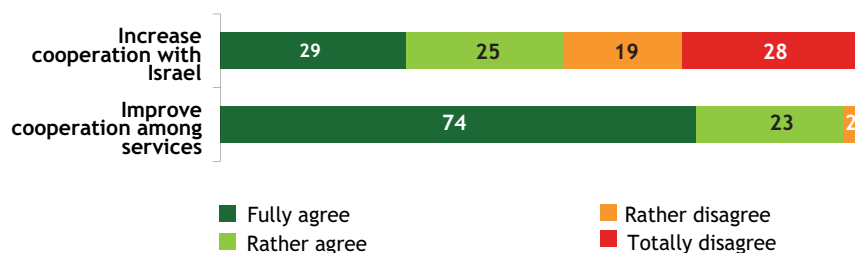
Reform of the PNA Security Forces (% of respondents)



More security cooperation needed

Ninety-seven percent of all respondents attached importance to greater inter-service cooperation among the PNA forces, and 54 percent to increased security cooperation with Israel. Cooperation with Israel in matters related to security was much more controversial, as more than a quarter of Palestinians (27 percent) were totally opposed to it.

Improving Cooperation among PNA security forces – May 06 (% of respondents)

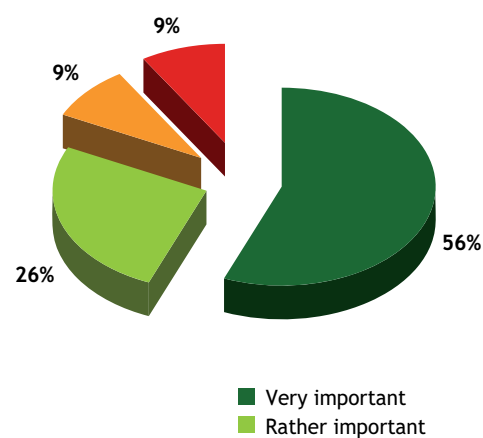




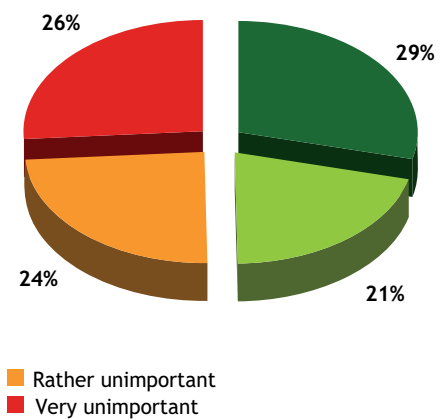
Dissolving armed groups has become less popular

Demobilizing militias was seen as much less important than a year ago, when 82 percent supported the disbanding of armed groups. In May 2006, only 50 percent attached importance to the dissolving of armed groups.

Dissolving armed groups – June 2005
(% of respondents)



Dissolving armed groups – May 2006
(% of respondents)

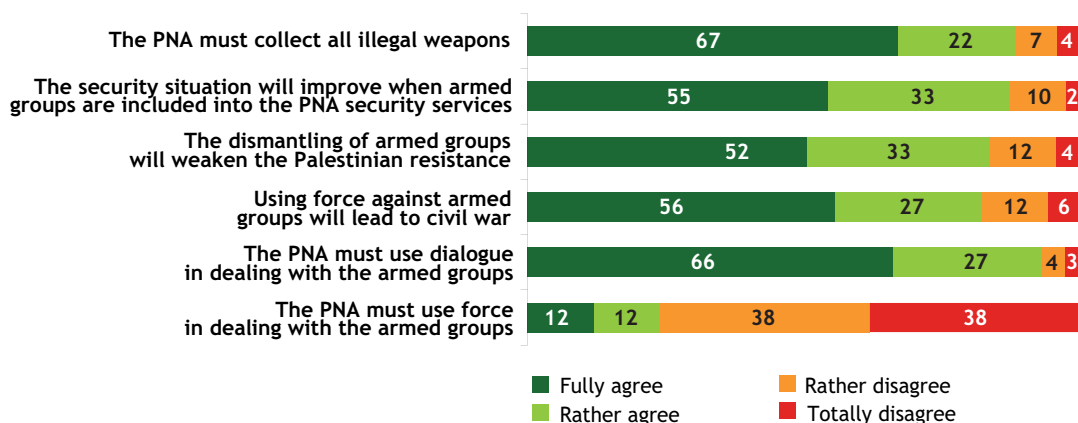


Two factors may have influenced this change in attitude: on one side, growing tensions among factions may have fuelled fears that the situation could get out of control and result in internal armed conflict. This may have strengthened reliance on militias, particularly among supporters of Hamas, as the official security organisations are dominated by Fatah. On the other side, the popular perception that militias had forced Israel to withdraw its troops from Gaza may also have contributed to this result. This could help explain why in Gaza 62 percent considered disarmament unimportant, compared to 28 percent last year.

The PNA must not use force in dealing with militias

The survey included a set of questions on how the PNA should deal with armed groups. Answers to these questions largely confirm the trust Palestinians placed in non-statutory forces. A majority of 86 percent favoured dialogue and consensus over the use of force. Seventy-six percent of the respondents rejected the use of force against the militias, and 77 percent anticipated that forceful action against the militias would lead to civil war. Palestinians saw militias as an instrument of resistance against the occupation: 77 percent of the respondents feared that dismantling militias would weaken the resistance. But, at the same time, they also expressed fears that unaccountable armed groups could have a negative impact on their security: 88 percent of the respondents expected the security situation in the Palestinian territories to improve if members of the militias were integrated into the PNA security organisations, and 89 percent favoured the collection of all illegal weapons.

Armed Groups – May 2006 (% of respondents)

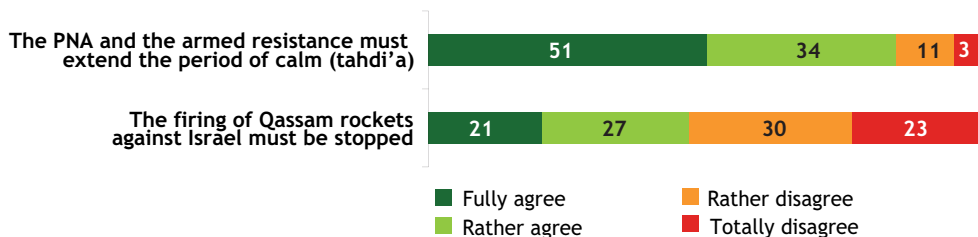


Palestinians want hostilities to stop, but also support action against Israel

Palestinians seemed to be uncertain about the wider security policy their society should follow. On the one hand, a majority of 85 percent of the respondents wanted the PNA and the armed groups to further extend the ceasefire arrangement (tahdi'a) on which all military factions had agreed in March 2005, and which had led to a significant drop in Palestinian violence against Israel. On the other hand, a majority of Palestinians (53 percent) supported the firing of rockets against Israeli targets. In Gaza, more respondents felt strongly on this issue: 35 percent of respondents in the Gaza camps and 28 percent outside the camps were totally opposed to ending the launching of Qassam rockets.

This apparent contradiction may find its resolution in the explanation that Palestinians in general prefer a de-escalation of conflict with Israel, but support the activities of armed groups when these are perceived as retaliation against Israeli military operations.

Dealing with Peace and Security – May 06 (% of respondents)

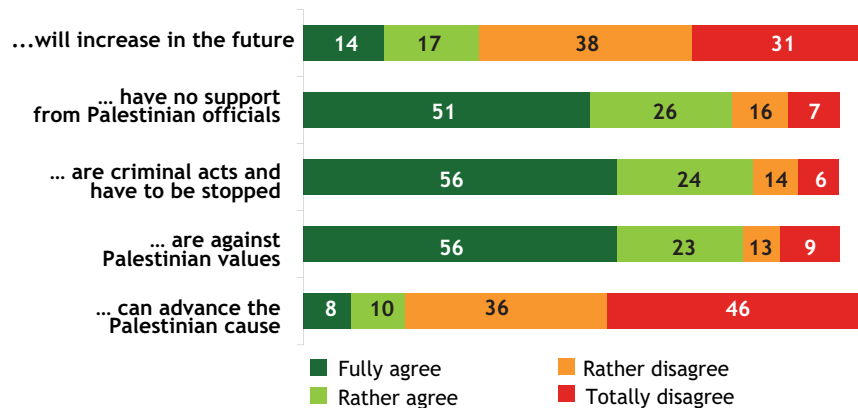




Palestinians oppose kidnappings

Over the last nine months, Palestinian militants kidnapped some 15 international workers in Gaza and the West Bank. The survey showed that the Palestinian public overwhelmingly rejected such acts: 80 percent considered kidnappings of foreigners criminals acts that need to be stopped and 79 percent said that kidnappings were against Palestinian values. A majority of 82 percent expressed the conviction that kidnappings would not help advance the Palestinian cause.

Kidnappings of Foreigners – May 2006
(% of respondents)



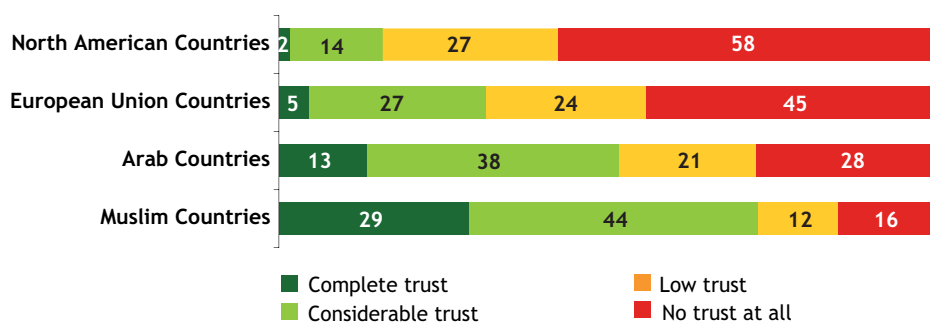
Low trust in American and European donors

A majority of Palestinians felt that, in order to improve their performance, the PNA security forces needed more resources. Between 95 and 98 percent of the respondents saw a need to receive donor support for training, funding, and equipping of forces. However, Palestinians expressed low trust in the Western donor community and their advice and assistance. Only 16 percent of the respondents trusted advice and assistance for security sector reform coming from the US and Canada, and less than one-third (31 percent) trusted the countries of the European Union. Palestinians expressed greater trust in support from Muslim countries (73 percent) than from the Arab world (51 percent).

Palestinians had the highest trust in advice and assistance from Muslim countries (73 percent). This confirms the general trend in the occupied Palestinian territories towards the reassertion of Islamic identity in the face of occupation and economic deprivation. Overall trust in Arab countries is considerably lower.



Trust in Advice and Assistance from Countries – May 2006 (% of respondents)



Conclusions

A growing majority of Palestinians in Gaza, Jerusalem and the West Bank feel insecure and blame not only the Israeli occupation and military activities for this, but also, the governance of the Palestinian security sector. Dissatisfied in many respects with the past performance of the Palestinian National Authority under Fatah, they were, a few weeks after the new government had been sworn in, confident that their security situation would improve under Hamas.

An overwhelming majority of Palestinians call for comprehensive security sector reform, which would deliver them non-partisan security forces that function in a transparent and effective manner, and would be accountable to the elected authorities and to the judiciary. If the Palestinian authorities seek to implement security sector reform, they would enjoy vast public support – in the range of 90 percent and above – for a whole set of policy options. These include at the force level unification of security forces, non-partisan recruitment, training, salary increases, greater Palestinian interagency cooperation, and replacement of commanders. At the executive and legislative level, the public gives equally strong support to measures that guarantee control and oversight by the ministries concerned and by parliament. The public also demands that the judiciary bring security officials to account for their acts, without interference from the executive. There is almost unanimous support for an ombudsman to investigate citizens' complaints and for prison inspections by independent third parties.

However, in the view of the Palestinian public, the conditions are not or are no longer met for downsizing the forces or disbanding the militias. As, in the longer run, the government will not succeed in establishing accountability without asserting the monopoly of power and will be unable to afford the costs of reform without managing redundancy in its forces, it will need to progressively build up trust in the official institutions before contemplating options that risk to further antagonizing the society.

In the public perception, security sector reform, in order to be successful, needs to diminish corruption, reduce nepotism, provide safety and security, guarantee respect for human rights in general, and more particularly, prevent violence against women.



Trust in official institutions will grow to the extent that the government is capable of meeting these expectations. In absence of tangible results, trust in official institutions will continue to erode. This would further strengthen non-state actors, increase the fragmentation of authority and, perhaps lastingly, undermine nation-building. Irrespective of which faction leads the government, the challenge will remain the building of a Palestinian-owned and -led vision of security sector reform and the design and implementation of the requisite strategies.



Western policies, instead of accelerating and bolstering Palestinian security sector reform, have practically brought it to a stand-still. In some cases, donor states reversed reforms they had instigated earlier. The Palestinian public, displeased with the highly politicised use some donors have made of security sector reform assistance, have grown reluctant to accept assistance from the US and the European Union. With the loss of credibility, donor states also risk to lose the capability to promote the structural reforms that could help them to protect past development investments and to orient Palestinian security policy durably towards peace and stability. Because comprehensive security sector reform is a delicate political and cultural development process, assistance to it in a Palestinian context will only get broad acceptance if it is depoliticised. Without a fresh approach to security sector reform, Western donors may push Palestinians to accept advice from countries that have already been identified as candidates themselves for reform.



The challenges of Palestinian security sector governance highlight overlapping problems of development and security and emphasise the need for integrated development and security policies. It can be hoped that EU member states and the wider donor community will reexamine their current policies towards Palestinians and give serious consideration to adopting new policy responses not only to Hamas, but to Palestinian security and development in general.

