



News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

(December 16-22, 2020)

Overview

► Compared with last week, in the **Gaza Strip** the number of active Covid-19 cases increased to **9,574** and the percentage of positive test results is **23.8%**; in Judea and Samaria the number of active Covid-19 cases decreased slightly to **13,379** and the percentage of positive test results is **25.6%**. However, in all probability the full extent of infection is higher than the numbers made public by the ministries of health in Gaza and Ramallah.

► **The lull in the Gaza Strip continues.** In **Judea and Samaria an Israeli civilian was murdered in northern Samaria** (possibly in a terrorist attack). **A shooting attack targeted a police security post** in a gate of the northern Temple Mount. The terrorist was shot and killed. In addition, the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails at vehicles on the roads in Judea and Samaria continued.

► The terrorist who carried out the shooting attack in Jerusalem was **Mahmoud Omar Tareq Kamil**, 17, a high school student from the village of Qabatiya in northern Samaria. Three days of mourning were declared in Qabatiya and participants of a march held near his house shouted slogans praising the shaheeds and condemning the Israeli occupation. The Palestinian Authority (PA), as usual, abstained from a response while Hamas praised the murder and presented it as resistance to normalization.

► **Khalil Shqaqi's Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR)** published the results of its quarterly public opinion poll. Most of the respondents opposed the PA's decision to restore coordination with Israel (although opposition was not strong). Most (58%) expected an improvement in Palestinian-American relations when Joe Biden is sworn in as president. If general elections to the presidency of the PA were held now, 50% would vote for Isma'il Haniyeh and 43% for Mahmoud Abbas. However, if Marwan Barghouti (a Fatah operative imprisoned in Israel) were to run against Haniyeh, he would win by 61% to 37%.

The Spread of Covid-19 – Update¹

The Gaza Strip

On December 22, 2020, the Gaza Strip reported 516 new cases of Covid-19. During the previous 24 hours, 2,163 tests were administered, with **positive results of 23.8%**. **The number of active cases in the Gaza Strip currently stands at 9,574**. There are 312 patients in ICUs, 203 of them in serious condition. The number of **coronavirus-related deaths** rose by 12 to **283**.

►**Dr. Amid Mushtaha**, head of the laboratory department in the ministry of health in Gaza, again warned that **the Gaza Strip will run out of swabs and testing materials in the coming days**. He said the help the ministry of health received from the W.H.O. last week, including materials for 19,500 tests, is almost finished (Palestine Online, December 21, 2020).

Judea and Samaria

During the past 24 hours 1,045 new cases of Covid-19 were detected and 4,079 tests were administered, of which **25.6% had positive results**. The number of **active cases in Judea and Samaria is currently 13,379**. There are 124 patients in ICUs, 33 of them on ventilators. During the past 24 hours there were 17 coronavirus-related deaths and **the number of fatalities stands at 915** (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, December 22, 2020).

►**Dr. Kamal al-Shakhra**, spokesman for the ministry of health in Ramallah, said the preventive measures recently taken by the Palestinian government led to a slight decline in the level of infection, but a wait of two weeks is necessary to evaluate their influence. He said **serious symptoms of the disease were recently seen among middle aged and young people**, not only among the elderly (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Ramallah, December 21, 2020).

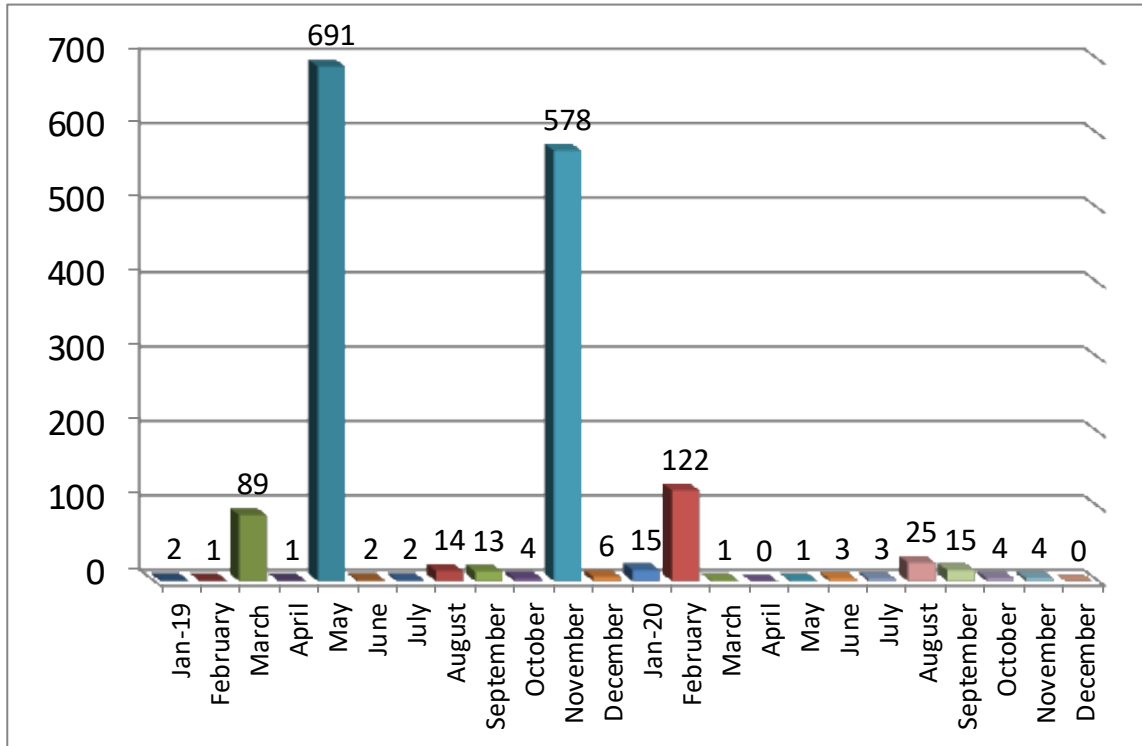
¹ For further information, see the December 21, 2020 bulletin, "The Spread of Covid-19 in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (Updated to December 21, 2020)."

The Gaza Strip

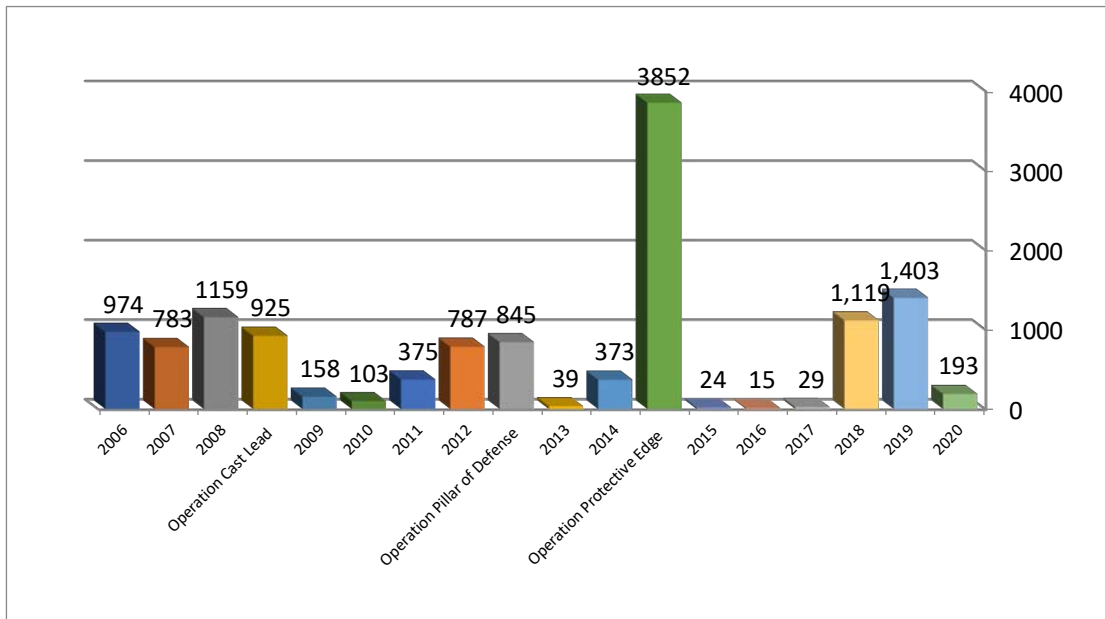
Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israel

► This past week the Gaza Strip was quiet and no rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory.

Monthly Distribution of Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire



Annual Distribution of Rocket Hits



Tank shell fired mistakenly

►On December 14, 2020, during an IDF exercise, a tank mistakenly fired a shell at an abandoned structure in the Gaza Strip. The structure, which may have been used as an observation post, was damaged. The Palestinians claimed a family lived there and had been attending a wedding when the shell was fired. The initial IDF investigation indicated that the shell was fired because of a misunderstanding that the exercise was a real event (Ynet, December 14, 2020).

Judea and Samaria

Israeli civilian murdered

►On December 21, 2020, the body of a woman was found in the Reihan Forest in the Tal Menashe region near the community of Hinanit (northern Samaria, near Jenin). In the early afternoon on December 20, 2020, the woman went for a run in the nature reserve in the forest near her home. When she had not returned by evening the security forces were called in. After several hours of searching her body was found. Her murder may have been the result of a nationalist attack.



A security camera picture of the woman who was murdered (YouTube, December 21, 2020).

►So far no claim of responsibility for the murder has been issued. The picture of the murdered woman was posted to the Palestinian social networks. The responses were mixed, some praising the murder and others condemning it. A Hamas forum user recommended that anyone who wants to carry out an attack and has a knife should not go after soldiers or police because they are protected, but **should chose settlers, male or female, because as the most recent attack showed, it is easy to kill them.**

Shooting attack in Jerusalem

►On the evening of December 21 a shooting attack was carried out targeting a police security post at a gate in the northern Temple Mount (**Bab Huta**). The Palestinian shooter used an improvised submachine gun (Carlo). Police and Border Police fighters at the site pursued him while he continued shooting at them. The terrorist was shot and killed; a Border Police fighter was slightly injured and evacuated from the site for medical care (Israel Police Force for Judea and Samaria spokesman's unit, December 21, 2020).



Right: Security camera documentation of the attack. Left: The weapon used in the shooting attack (Twitter account of the Israel Police Force, December 21, 2020).

►Ali Sumoudi, the al-Quds newspaper correspondent in Jenin, reported that the Kamil family in Qabatiya said its son, **Mahmoud Omar Tareq Kamil**, 17, a high school student, **had carried out the shooting attack**. Bilal Assaf, the mayor of Qabatiya, said the Palestinian liaison [with Israel] contacted him and officially informed him of the death of Mahmoud Kamil. Assaf declared three days of mourning in Qabatiya. A mass march was reportedly held near the house of the Kamil family, where slogans were shouted in praise of the shaheeds and in condemnation of the Israeli "occupation" (al-Quds, December 22, 2020).



Mahmoud Kamil, the teenager who carried out the shooting attack (Facebook page of journalist Ali Sumoudi, December 22, 2020).

► **Hamas issued a notice praising the shooting attack** and sent its congratulations to the residents of Qabatiya and Jenin, who "become shaheeds for the sake of al-Aqsa and its defense." According to Hamas, the shooting attack was a **message to anyone who chose normalization and ignored the rights of the Palestinians** (Hamas Telegram channel, December 21, 2020). **The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)** issued a notice stating that the attack proved that all forms of the "resistance" were "legitimate" actions which expressed the popular Palestinian resistance to the occupation, its terrorism and aggression. They called a "comprehensive resistance" the best way to deal with the growing Zionist terrorism against the Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank (PIJ website, December 22, 2020).



Right: A cartoon posted to the Facebook page of Muhammad Sabaaneh, whose cartoons also appear in al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, the PA's official newspaper. He said that "Mahmoud Kamil normalized his connection with the Zionist enemy...he turned it to a normal relation between the occupation and its hangman...his gun is the only normal thing in this equation" (Facebook page of Muhammad Sabaaneh, December 22, 2020). Left: A cartoon by Alaa al-Laqta dedicated to the Palestinian terrorist shooter (Palinfo Twitter account, December 22, 2020).

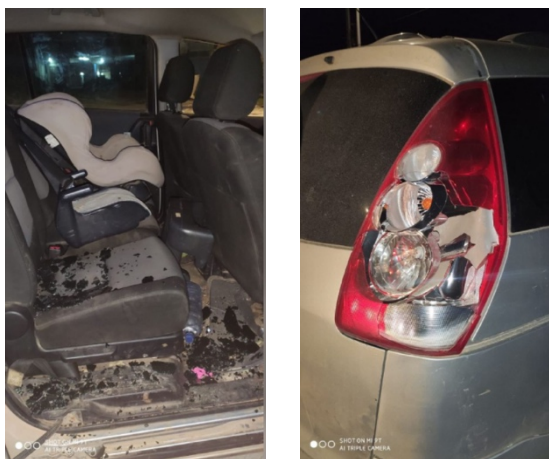
Other events

► In Judea and Samaria Palestinians continued throwing stones, rocks and Molotov cocktails. The more prominent events were the following:²

- ◆ **December 22, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a bus southeast of Bethlehem. No casualties were reported
- ◆ **December 21, 2020:** Five young Israelis from Bat Ayn threw stones at Palestinian vehicles in the Ramallah area. They fled in their vehicle when an Israeli police car chased them. During pursuit their vehicle overturned and one of the Israelis was killed. The other four were injured (Israeli media, December 21, 2020)

² All information and reports are from Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria unless otherwise noted.

- ◆ **December 21, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a bus southeast of Bethlehem. The driver reportedly went into shock; the front windshield of the bus was damaged.
- ◆ **December 21, 2020:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle north of Kiryat Arba. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **December 21, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a vehicle northeast of Hebron. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **December 21, 2020:** Rocks were thrown at a vehicle south of Nablus. No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.

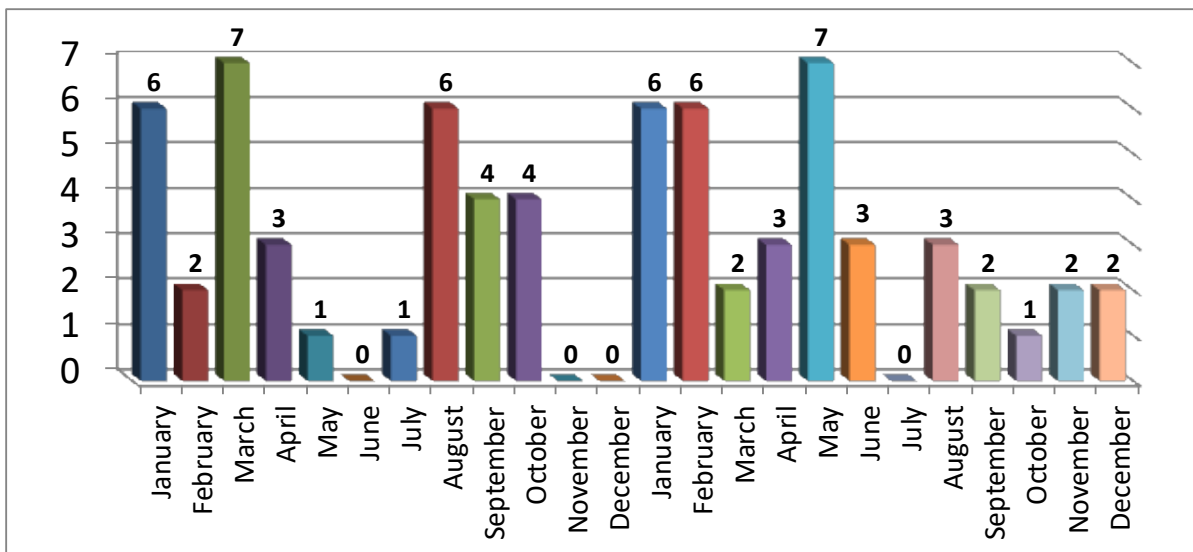


Vehicle damaged by rocks.

- ◆ **December 20, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a bus north of Hebron. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **December 20, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a bus north of Hebron. No casualties were reported; the front windshield was damaged
- ◆ **December 20, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a vehicle north of Hebron. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **December 20, 2020:** Five Molotov cocktails were thrown a vehicles near Hebron. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **December 19, 2020:** A Palestinian threw a Molotov cocktail at an IDF soldier near the entrance of the community of Kedumim, west of Nablus. No casualties were reported. (Rescue Without Borders in Judea and Samaria). A number of hours later the Palestinian was apprehended (Ynet, December 20, 2020).
- ◆ **December 19, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a vehicle southwest of Nablus. Two people were slightly injured; the front windshield of the vehicle was damaged.

- ◆ **December 18, 2020:** Stones were thrown north of Hebron. No casualties or damage were reported.
- ◆ **December 18, 2020:** During a riot in Kafr Qadoum (east of Qalqilya) an IDF UAV landed in an unplanned location, and was retrieved by IDF forces (IDF spokesman, December 18, 2020).
- ◆ **December 17, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a vehicle northwest of Ramallah. No casualties were reported; the vehicle was damaged.
- ◆ **December 17, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a vehicle northwest of Ramallah. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **December 17, 2020:** Stones were thrown at a vehicle northwest of Hebron. No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **December 16, 2020:** A bottle of paint was thrown at a bus north of Hebron. No casualties were reported; the front windshield of the bus was damaged.

Significant terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria since January 2019³



³A significant attack is defined by the ITIC as involving shooting, a vehicular attack, the use of IEDs, or a combination of the above. Stones and Molotov cocktails thrown by Palestinians are not included.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

Chairman of businessmen's association calls for Gaza to be included in PA compensation programs

► **Ali al-Hayek, chairman of the Businessmen's Association in the Gaza Strip, called on Nasr Abu Jaysh, PA minister of labor, to include the workers in the Gaza Strip and the owners of Gazan businesses in the program for aid to those hurt by the Covid-19 crisis.**

He called for workers and employers to be compensated for their losses resulting from the almost complete economic paralysis of the Gaza Strip. He said employees in the private sector and those paid a daily wage were the most affected by the current crisis, because they had no rights, social security or regular salaries like government employees. He added that overall, workers were losing about \$1.6 million a day. He said governmental and international agencies had to take responsibility and compensate the Gaza Strip for its coronavirus-related losses. He said **the Gaza Strip has lost more than \$1 billion since the beginning of the lockdowns** in August 2020 (website of the Businessmen's Association in the Gaza Strip, December 20, 2020).

The Sudanese authorities strip Khaled Mashaal of citizenship

► According to a report, the Sudanese authorities have stripped Khaled Mashaal, former head of the Hamas political bureau, of his Sudanese citizenship (Amad, December 16, 2020). Sudanese, Palestinian and Tunisian sources denied the report, stating that Khaled Mashaal never asked for Sudanese citizenship and had no need for it because he has Jordanian citizenship (Arabi21, December 19, 2020).

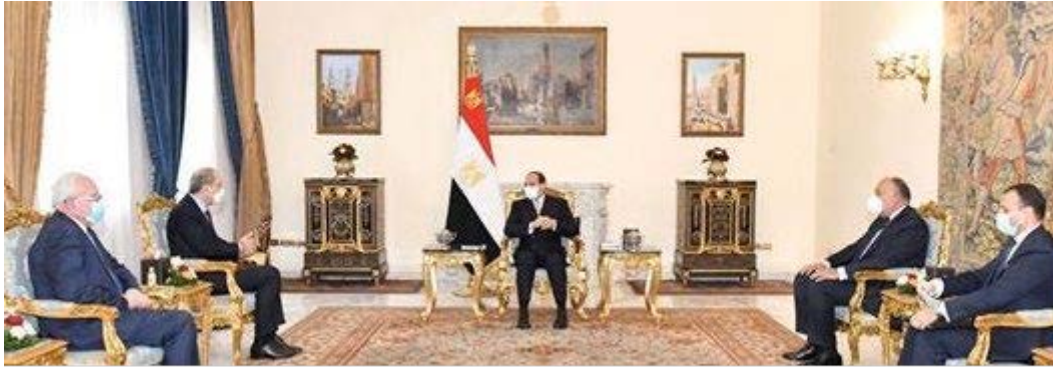
The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Cairo summit meeting

► **Riyad al-Maliki**, Palestinian foreign minister, met in Cairo with Egyptian **President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi**, Egyptian **Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri**, and Jordanian **Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi**. They discussed efforts to speed up the negotiations about the Palestinian cause, cooperation with the United States administration and the internal Palestinian reconciliation. They agreed on the need to continue consultations and coordination.

► At a press conference held after the meeting Riyad al-Maliki thanked the Egyptian president and Jordanian foreign minister for their support of the Palestinian cause. He added that they

had discussed Joe Biden's election to the presidency of the United States, the renewal of coordination between Israel and the Palestinians and the normalization. He also stressed the importance of the internal Palestinian reconciliation and the role in Egypt as mediator (al-Mayadeen, December 19, 2020).



The meeting in Cairo
(Twitter account of Ayman al-Safadi, the Jordanian foreign minister, December 19, 2020).

Palestine elected member ICC's executive office for second time

►Riyad al-Maliki, Palestinian foreign minister announced that Palestine had been unanimously elected, for the second time, to serve as **a member of the executive office of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague**. He said one of the executive office's duties is to promote the universality of the Rome Convention and to urge countries that are not members of the Court to join in order to ensure it performs its role. He said that the presence of Palestine at the forefront of an international stage, including an international legal system, is an expression of its role and adherence to the preservation of the principles of international law. He also said the Court should provide justice for victims and punish criminals in a way that will protect civilians (Wafa, December 18, 2020). He said contacts were being made with states and international institutions to summon Israel to an investigation of its [alleged] ongoing "crimes" against the Palestinian people in east Jerusalem. He said a communiqué had be sent to the UN Secretary General (Wafa, December 21, 2020).

New UN envoy to Middle East

►On December 15, 2020, UN Security Council confirmed Secretary General's suggestion **to appoint Norwegian diplomat Tor Wennesland as the UN envoy to the Middle East, replacing Nikolay Mladenov, who was appointed UN envoy to Libya** (Reuters, December 16, 2020; Le Figaro, December 16, 2020). Tor Wennesland is an expert in Middle East affairs. In the past he filled many diplomatic positions, among them responsibility for the Norwegian

legation in the PA and ambassador to Cairo with responsibilities for Libya. He was an aide to Tony Blair, envoy of the International Quartet to the Middle East and an aide to Terje Rød-Larsen, one of the architects of the Oslo Accords. Tor Wennesland's most recent posting was special Norwegian envoy to the Middle East (Le Figaro, December 16, 2020).



Tor Wennesland

(Twitter account of the Norwegian embassy in the United States, December 16, 2020).

PA public opinion poll

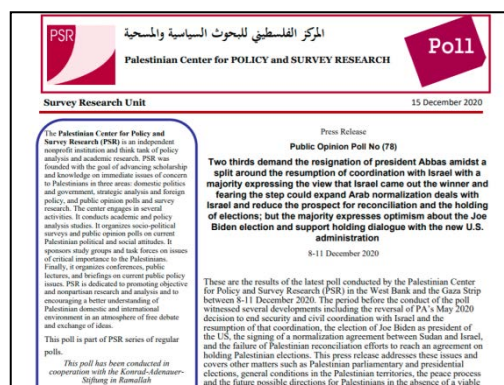
► **The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR)**, headed by Khalil Shqaqi, published the results of a public opinion poll of 1,270 residents of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, held between December 8 and 11, 2020, for the last quarter of year. According to its main findings, **most respondents opposed the PA decision to restore coordination with Israel, but the opposition was not strong and opinions pro and con were divided almost equally.**

► Some of the poll's main findings were the following (PCPSR website, December 15, 2020):

- ◆ **Renewal of coordination with Israel:** A large minority of 44% (54% in the West Bank and 29% in the Gaza Strip) supports, and 53% oppose the decision by the PA leadership to resume civil and security coordination with Israel. A majority of 60% believes the Palestinians have paid a heavier price for stopping civil and security coordination with Israel while only 12% think Israel paid a heavier price. 87% believe that Israel has not abandoned its plan for the annexation of the Jordan Valley and the West Bank settlements.
- ◆ **The peace process with Israel:** Support for the concept of the two-state solution declines to 40% and opposition stands at 59%. A majority of 62% believes that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli

settlements. 75% believe that the chances for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel in the next five years are slim or nonexistent.

- ◆ **Relations with the United States:** A majority of 58% expects an improvement in Palestinian-American relations under Joe Biden, and 36% do not expect an improvement. 68% expect the new US administration to resume economic aid to the PA and 52% expect it to allow the reopening of PLO diplomatic mission in Washington.
- ◆ **If presidential elections were held in the PA, Isma'il Haniyeh would receive 50% of the votes and Mahmoud Abbas would receive 43%** (up from 39% three months ago). If the competition were between Marwan Barghouti (a senior Fatah operative imprisoned in Israel) and Ismail Haniyeh, **Barghouti would receive 61% of the votes** and Haniyeh 37%
- ◆ **Satisfaction with the PA's management of the coronavirus crisis:** 50% of the public is satisfied with the measure taken by the PA to contain the spread of coronavirus pandemic. 50% of the public is willing to take the coronavirus vaccine when it is available.



Results of the PCPSR public opinion poll (PCPSR website, December 15, 2020).