

Attitudes among Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel Regarding Participation in Protests against the Levin Plan for Judicial Reform *

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Position paper

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Mada Al-Carmel Center’s February 2023 position paper focused on the positions of the Palestinian community in Israel, as represented by official institutions and political parties, regarding the current protests in the country over Israeli Minister of Justice Yariv Levin’s plan to alter the face of the judicial authority in Israel.

The positions of Palestinian Arab political parties and national institutions—such as the High Follow-up Committee—writers, and journalists revealed contradictory opinions about the protests. There are political parties that call for and support Palestinian participation in the protests, while others oppose it. Besides, the Follow-up Committee, for example, endorsed the protest movement but did not urge Arab citizens to join it. Our study of the diverse opinions expressed found that participation and non-participation did not become a serious or divisive issue inside Palestinian society, and that calls for participation in protests, as well as actual participation, have been rather modest and have not convinced Palestinians to get involved.

For further analysis of these varied Palestinian positions, the current paper addresses the results of a public opinion poll that Mada al-Karmel conducted, and that covered, among other things, Palestinian society’s positions on the protests and demonstrations. The poll was conducted at the end of February 2023, based on a sample composed of 508 individuals who were asked two specific questions: First, “In your opinion, should Palestinians in Israel participate in the current protest movement against the government’s proposed reforms to the judiciary?” Second, “How willing are you to participate personally in the protests against the government’s proposed reforms to the judiciary?”

What follows are the participants’ answers to these two questions and an analysis of how the results reflect their personal attributes.

I. Supporting Participation in the Protests Without the Desire to be Personally Involved

Table 1: Should Palestinians participate?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	289	57%
No	136	27%
We should have our own protests in Palestinian towns	63	12%
Don’t know	20	4%
Totals	508	100%

As Table 1 shows, 57 percent of participants said that they support the call for Arab participation in the protests, while 27 percent said that they do not, and 12 percent wanted Palestinians to have their own protests in Palestinian towns.

Table 2: Are you willing to participate personally?

	Number	Percentage
1-Not at all	270	53%
2-	13	3%
3-	24	5%
4-	32	6%
5-	39	8%
6-	16	3%
7- Fully ready	114	22%
Totals	508	100%

Table 2 shows that while a majority of Palestinian citizens support the protests, a slight majority (53 percent) will not participate personally, and that only 30 percent will participate, with different degrees of commitment. These results show that on the individual level, there are clear divisions and differences regarding participating in protests against the Levin plan.

It is clear that Palestinians are aware of how dangerous the Levin plan is to the judiciary, but that they do not want to participate individually and do not support protests in Palestinian towns alone. There are many reasons for these attitudes, including physical distance between protest venues and Palestinian towns, previous experiences with police repression, feelings of alienation from the environment that has spawned the demonstrations and its slogans, and political apathy.

II. Participation According to Voting in the Last Elections

The poll showed the same split between supporting the protests and personally participating in them among supporters of political parties. Sixty-five percent of the United Arab List (RA'AM), 56 percent of the Coalition of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and the Arab Movement for Renewal (HADASH-TA'AL), and 60 percent of the Nationalist Democratic Assembly (BALAD) voters support Palestinian participation in the protests. However, only 30 percent of RA'AM, 30 percent of HADASH-TA'AL, and 13 percent of BALAD voters said that they would participate personally.

Table 3: Should Palestinians participate? (Party affiliation)

	United Arab List RA'AM	HADASH-TA'AL	BALAD (TAJAMMU')	Jewish and Zionist Parties
Yes	65%	56%	60%	52%
No	19%	23%	25%	27%
We should have our own protests in Palestinian towns	13%	17%	15%	12%
Don't Know	2%	4%	0%	9%
Totals	87	77	66	37

Table 4: Are you willing to participate personally? (Party affiliation)

	United Arab List RA'AM	HADASH-TA'AL	BALAD (TAJAMMU')	Jewish and Zionist Parties
1- Not at all	47%	41%	53%	53%
2-	3%	2%	1%	2%

3-	5%	4%	6%	3%
4-	7%	4%	12%	3%
5-	3%	15%	9%	9%
6-	6%	4%	5%	4%
7- Fully ready	30%	30%	13%	27%
Totals	87	77	66	37

III. Position Relative to Education Level

The survey showed some correlation between education level and support for taking part in the protests. Table 5 shows that support for participating in the protests was higher among those with lower education levels, a bit lower than that among those with a master's degree or higher, and even lower among those with some post-secondary education or with a bachelor's degree. The reason for this discrepancy could be that those with higher education are more knowledgeable about the debate around judicial and political reform and its repercussions and hold the belief that the dispute concerns Zionist political trends and does not address the demands and needs of Palestinians. Or those with higher education may be convinced that the reforms will have economic repercussions that will personally affect them.

Table 5: Should Palestinians participate? (Education level)

	Elementary	Middle School	Secondary	Post-secondary	BA	MA/higher
Yes	67%	64%	58%	52%	50%	60%
No	20%	27%	26%	22%	33%	26%

We should have our own protests in Palestinian towns	11%	4%	12%	23%	14%	9%
Don't Know	2%	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%
Totals	32	44	209	52	107	64

Table 6 shows low percentages of those willing to participate personally in the protests, no matter their level of education, with the exception of those with a master's degree or above, who are the least willing to personally participate.

Table 6: Are you willing to participate personally in protests against judicial overhaul by the current government? (Education level)

	Elementary	Middle School	Secondary	Post-secondary	BA	MA/higher
1- Not at all	54%	52%	55%	58%	54%	42%
2-	0%	3%	1%	0%	5%	6%
3-	0%	2%	7%	4%	3%	5%
4-	5%	11%	6%	7%	5%	4%
5-	0%	4%	7%	4%	10%	14%
6-	6%	1%	3%	4%	3%	4%
7- Fully ready	35%	26%	20%	22%	20%	24%
Totals	32	44	209	52	107	64

IV. Participation According to Gender

The poll showed that more women (68 percent) than men (52 percent) support participation in protests, and more women (30 percent) than men (20 percent) are ready to participate personally.

Table 7: Should Palestinians participate? (Gender)

	Men	Women
Yes	52%	68%
No	30%	18%
We should have our own protests in Palestinian towns	13%	12%
Don't Know	5%	2%
Totals	363	145

Table 8: Are you willing to participate personally? (Education level)

	Men	Women
1- Not at all	52%	55%
2-	3%	1%
3-	6%	2%
4-	5%	10%
5-	6%	11%
6-	2%	6%
7- Fully ready	26%	14%
Totals	363	145

V. Participation According to Age

There are differences between younger and older Palestinians in Israel in their level of support for participating in the protests. While 50 percent of those 35-44 years of age support participation, the percentage rises to 68 percent among those between 55-64 years of age.

Table 9: Should Palestinians participate? (Age)

	18-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Yes	55%	50%	63%	68%	60%
No	26%	35%	27%	20%	21%
We should have our own protests in Palestinian towns	14%	13%	8%	11%	14%
Don't Know	5%	2%	2%	1%	6%
Totals	232	95	88	51	42

Table 10 shows different levels of willingness to participate personally in the protests between those under 44 years of age and those above 45. The percentage drops from 59 percent among the 18-34 group, to 40 percent among those 55-64 years of age. The lower numbers among youth are reminiscent of similar results in election turnout in the past.

Table 10: Are you willing to participate personally? (Age)

	18-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
1- Not at all	59%	56%	48%	40%	43%
2-	4%	2%	3%	2%	1%
3-	5%	8%	3%	1%	2%
4-	7%	4%	8%	5%	5%
5-	7%	7%	8%	15%	2%
6-	1%	2%	5%	8%	6%
7- Fully ready	17%	21%	26	28%	40%
Totals	232	95	88	51	42

VI. Conclusion

Mada Al-Carmel's position paper, which discussed the positions of Palestinian Arab parties, national institutions, and elite groups, concluded that participating in protests against the Levin plan to reform the judiciary or refraining from participating has not become an issue of contention in Palestinian communities in Israel. In general, Palestinian Arab society did not appear to support participating in the protests, as demonstrated by studying the official platforms of these political parties and that of the Arab High Follow-up Committee. But these conclusions necessitated a broader look at the Palestinian community at large through a public opinion poll to gauge if the results would reflect said conclusions.

The current survey has shown that differences apparent on the level of political parties are also present on the individual level. Fifty-seven percent of those asked their opinion said that they support participating in the protests, but 53 percent are not willing to personally participate in them. Additionally, Palestinian public opinion reveals that Palestinian society is opposed to the proposed changes, but that it does not see a role for itself to play in opposition to them.

The poll also showed that there is more support for the protests among Palestinian women than among men, among older Palestinians than younger ones, and among less educated Palestinians than those with a higher level of education. Moreover, the survey found that there is not much support for holding protests against judicial reforms inside of Palestinian areas, and that even fewer people are willing to participate personally in the current protests. This attests to the fact that political apathy exists in Palestinian society. This was evident in the low Palestinian turnout in the last election, and in the absence of a unified project for common action which, in and of itself, indicates Palestinians' alienation from the political process altogether.