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Palestinian poll: Hamas' Haniyeh would win PA presidency over Abbas

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If elections for Palestinian president were to take place today, and the candidates were Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, Haniyeh would win, a new Palestinian public opinion poll reveals.

According to the poll, published on Monday by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), headed by Khalil Shikaki, some 48 percent of the electorate would vote for Haniyeh, compared with 45 percent to Abbas.

In a poll published three months ago, the results were 40 percent to Haniyeh and 51 percent to Abbas. Voter turnout in these hypothetical elections would be 69 percent. If the candidates were Haniyeh and Marwan Barghouti, however, voter turnout would be 73 percent, and the imprisoned Fatah leader would win: 51 percent would vote for Barghouti, and 42 percent for Haniyeh.

Despite this, 44 percent of those surveyed believe that the Palestinians' "most vital goal" first of all is to end the Israeli occupation, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem. Some 33 percent of those surveyed believe that the most vital goal is to ensure the right of return of Palestinian refugees, and 14 percent believe it is to build a religious society on Islamic lines.

The poll was carried out between December 13 and 15 in 127 Palestinian localities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with some 1270 adult participants. Haniyeh's popularity – the highest it has been since 2008 – is directly associated with the way that Hamas dealt with Israel's offensive in Gaza in November this year, and the

results of that conflict.

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