

# Opinion Poll:

## Fatah al-Islam is the result of Israel's successive attacks and the war on Iraq according to 38% of Palestinians

The Palestinian presence in Lebanon represents one of the factors in internal divisions, which led to wars and conflicts, in particular in 1975 and the following years. The presence of weapons in Palestinian camps transformed those into "states within a state". The number of Palestinian refugees increased as many of them who had originally fled to Jordan and Syria chose to reside in Lebanon.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) participated in Lebanese internal disputes, backing some factions and using Lebanon as an arena and a bargain card to serve Arab conflicts.

Following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Beirut, Palestinian forces moved from Lebanon to other countries such as Tunisia. Nonetheless, the Palestinians maintained a military and human presence in the camps, which remain outside the authority of the Lebanese government. Power and decision-making inside the camps are under the control of different Palestinian parties, which can be divided into four groups:

- ⊙ **Fatah Organization**
- ⊙ **Hamas Movement**
- ⊙ **Pro-Syrian Palestinian factions**
- ⊙ **Islamic Fundamentalist Movements**

The Palestinian issue in Lebanon awaits a solution that either lies in the return to Palestine, which seems so far to be unachievable, or in the emigration, which is actually happening, or in settlement, which is likely to occur.

No accurate data is available on the number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and their distribution in the 12 camps, as some estimates say that there are around 400,000 refugees equally distributed inside and outside the camps, while other sources estimate the total number at around 230,000. This decrease in the number of refugees might have resulted from escalating tensions and new emigration opportunities.

The Palestinian issue has been in the spotlight since the beginning of May due to the armed conflicts that broke out in Nahr al-Bared camp and their repercussions on other camps, in particular Ain al-Hilweh (Lebanon's largest refugee camp).

Taking into consideration the importance of this issue in Lebanon and its repercussions on the internal arena and in light of talks on the means to settle the crisis through a compromise including perhaps settlement projects, *Information International* conducted an opinion poll from June 7-12 on 1,000 Palestinian refugees distributed in eight camps, based on the population size in each. Another opinion poll was conducted on a sample of 800 Lebanese citizens in Trablous and Saïda, the first city being near Nahr al-Bared and the second near Ain al-Hilweh.

The questions of the opinion polls were divided into five sections:

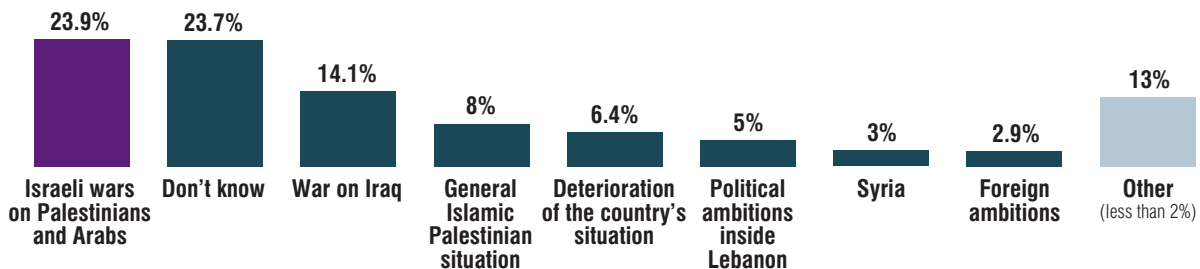
- 1. The image of Fatah al-Islam**
- 2. The situation in refugee camps**
- 3. Islamic Salafi Movements**
- 4. Solutions to the current crisis**
- 5. Lebanese-Palestinian current and future relations.**

### Reasons behind of emergence of Fatah al-Islam

Palestinian respondents seem to understand the reasons behind the emergence of Fatah al-Islam (52.4%). 23.9% of whom said Fatah al-Islam was the result of "Israeli wars on Palestinians and Arabs", 14.1% said it was one of the outcomes of the "war on Iraq" and 8% blamed the "general Islamic-Palestinian situation". Other answers included the "deterioration of the country's situation" (6.4%), "political ambitions inside Lebanon" (5%) and "Syria" (3%).

15.9% of Palestinian respondents listed other reasons behind the emergence of this group (instigating Sunni-Shia'a strife, Arab conflicts), while 23.7% said "don't know". (Graph no.1)

[Graph 1] **In your opinion, what are the reasons behind the emergence of Fatah al-Islam?**  
According to Palestinians in the camps (%)

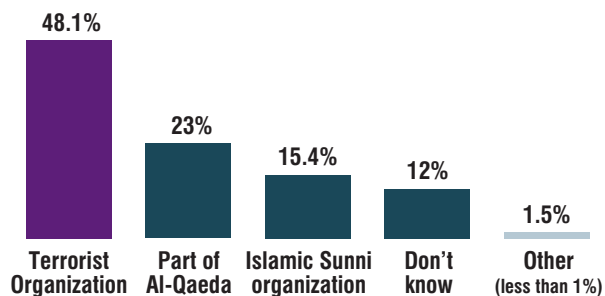


Meanwhile, Lebanese respondents in Trablous and Saida gave other reasons to the emergence of Fatah al-Islam. In Saida, “political disagreements in Lebanon” represent the main reason for 24.5% of respondents, while 22% blamed the “socioeconomic situation in the Palestinian camps”. 20% said the “Syrian intelligence was seeking to spread chaos in Lebanon” and 10.5% blamed the “US invasion of Iraq” (a convergence with the Palestinians’ answers is noted). 13% gave other answers and 10% said “don’t know”.

In Trablous, 59% of respondents said the “Syrian intelligence was seeking to spread chaos in Lebanon”, 11.7% blamed “political disagreements in Lebanon”, followed by the “creation of the international tribunal” (9.2%). 17.8% of Trablous respondents listed other answers and 2.3% said “don’t know”.

When asked about their description of Fatah al-Islam, 48.1% of Palestinian respondents described it as a “terrorist organization”, 38.4% said it was “part of al-Qaeda” and an “Islamic Sunni organization” and 12% said “don’t know”. 1.5% gave other answers. (Graph no.2)

[Graph 2] **How do you describe Fatah al-Islam?**  
According to Palestinians in the camps (%)



When it comes to the description of Fatah al-Islam by camp, a high percentage of respondents in Borj al-Shimali (79.1%) described it as a “terrorist organization” and 27.1% of Rashidieh respondents said it was an “Islamic Sunni organization”. It is noteworthy that only 24.1% of Nahr al-Bared respondents described the movement as a “terrorist organization”. Table no.1 shows respondents’ description of Fatah al-Islam by camp.

Respondents’ description of Fatah al-Islam by camp					Table 1
Camp	Terrorist Organization	Part of al-Qaeda	Islamic Sunni Organization	Don’t know	Other
Ain al-Hilweh	51.5%	24.9%	17.4%	6%	0.2%
Al-Rashidieh	59.3%	8.5%	27.1%	1.7%	3.4%
Borj al-Shimali	79.1%	6%	11.9%	3%	-
Beddawi	46.9%	32.8%	9.4%	10.9%	-
Nahr al-Bared (in Beddawi and Sabra/Shatila)	24.1%	31.3%	17.5%	23.5%	3.6%
Sabra and Shatila	42.9%	24.3%	11.4%	17.1%	4.3%
Borj al-Barajneh	45.7%	18.6%	9.3%	24.8%	1.6%
Wavell	45.5%	18.2%	18.2%	13.6%	4.5%
Dbayyeh	81%	14.3%	4.8%	-	-

Source: Information International – June 2007

Respondents' answers by political loyalty show that the supporters of Hamas and the Palestinian factions are less hostile toward Fatah al-Islam than the supporters of Fatah and neutral respondents. Table no.2 shows respondents description of Fatah al-Islam by political loyalty.

Description of Fatah al-Islam by political loyalty	Terrorist Organization	Part of al-Qaeda	Islamic Sunni Organization	Don't know	Other
Fatah	61.6%	21.2%	11.1%	4.8%	1.3%
Hamas	34.9%	28%	25.8%	10.2%	1.1%
Other Palestinian groups against Fatah or Hamas	34.1%	26.8%	22%	15.9%	1.2%
No one	45.6%	19.4%	10.5%	22.2%	2.3%
Not specified	50%	33.3%	-	16.7%	-

*Source: Information International – June 2007*

Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of Palestinian respondents (78.5%) said that the Lebanese government disregarded Fatah al-Islam activities in the beginning, against 9.5% who rejected this statement and 12% who said “don't know”. (Graph no.3)

Within the same context, the majority of Palestinian respondents (67.4%) said that Fatah al-Islam was receiving support from a Lebanese party, against 32.2% who rejected this claim, 0.4% did not specify. 41.4% of respondents said the party was the “Future Movement”, followed by “parties in the March 14” (15.9%) and “government parties” (13.1%). 6% of respondents named other parties, while 23.6% did not specify.

In Trablous and Saida, answers were very different. 72.3% of Trablous respondents said Fatah al-Islam was backed by the “Syrian intelligence”, 15.8% by “al-Qaeda” and only 2.7% said it was backed by “Lebanese political parties”. 4.7% blamed other parties and 4.5% said “don't know”.

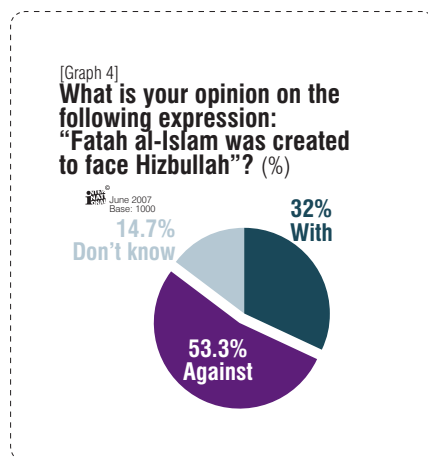
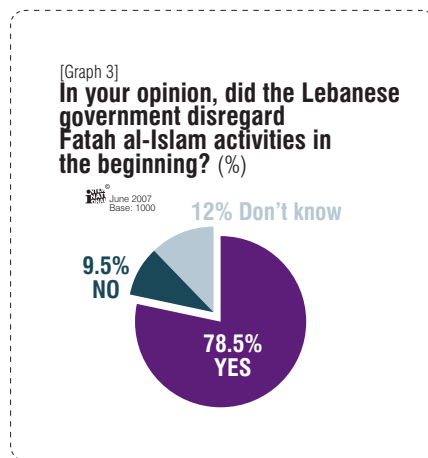
In Saida, 37.5% of respondents said Fatah al-Islam was linked with “al-Qaeda” and 24.5% said it had connections with the “Syrian intelligence”. 16% said the movement was linked with “extremist fundamentalist organizations”, followed by “armed militias manipulated by the west” (11%). 10% said it was linked with “Israel” and only 1% with “Lebanese political parties”.

### Fatah al-Islam and Hizbullah

More than half of respondents (53.3%) are against the claim that Fatah al-Islam was created to face Hizbullah against 32% who supported this claim and 14.7% who said “don't know”. (Graph no.4)

### Fatah al-Islam and the Palestinian Cause

The overwhelming majority of Palestinians (83%) said that Fatah al-Islam did not support the Palestinian Cause. 9.5% said Fatah al-Islam supported the Palestinian cause “to a certain extent”, 2.2% “to a great extent” and 5.3% said “don't know”.



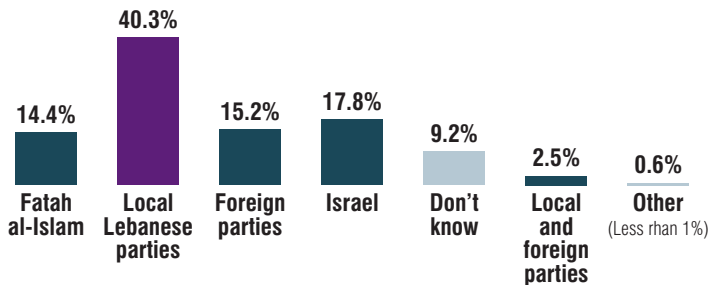
### Fatah al-Islam and Explosions in Beirut and Ain A'alaq

Only 14.4% of respondents blamed Fatah al-Islam for recent explosions in Lebanon, while 39.4% blamed it for the explosions in Ain A'alaq.

40.3% of respondents accused “local Lebanese parties” of perpetrating the recent explosions, 17.8% accused “Israel”, 15.2% “foreign parties”, 2.5% accused “local and foreign parties” and 0.6% blamed other parties. 9.2% said “don't know”. (Graph no.5)

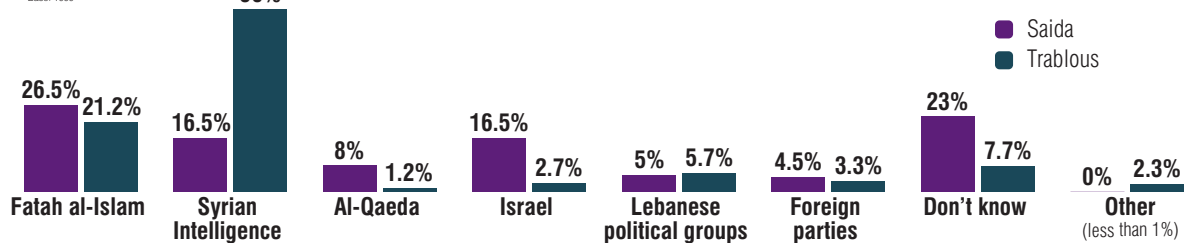
In Saida, 26.5% of respondents blamed Fatah al-Islam for the explosions, 16.5% the “Syrian intelligence”, 16.5%

[Graph 5] **In your opinion, who is responsible for current explosions in Lebanon?**  
According to Palestinians in the camps (%)



“The majority of respondents (41.3%) accused “Israel” of perpetrating the assassination of Rafik Hariri.”

[Graph 6] **In your opinion, who is responsible for current explosions in Lebanon?**  
(%)



“Israel”, 8% “al-Qaeda”, 5% “Lebanese parties” and 4.5% “foreign parties”. A high percentage of 23% said “don’t know”.

In Trablous, 56% accused the “Syrian intelligence”, 21.2% Fatah al-Islam, 5.7% “Lebanese parties”, 3.3% “foreign parties” and 6.1% accused other parties. 7.7% said “don’t know”. (Graph no.6)

## Responsibility for the Developments of Nahr al-Bared and Trablous

The majority of Palestinian respondents (43.9%) blamed “Lebanese political parties” for the developments of Trablous and Nahr al-Bared. 26.5% blamed Fatah al-Islam and “Lebanese security forces”, 21.2% blamed Fatah al-Islam alone, 20.6% accused the “Internal Security

Forces”, 4.9% the “Lebanese Army” and 7.6% “other parties” (including Syria 1.6%). 4.4% said “don’t know”. The majority of respondents (66.8%) summarized the reasons behind these developments in two points: “putting an end to refugee camps and settling Palestinians” (42%) and “creating tension to send for international forces” (24.8%). Other reasons included: “weakening the Lebanese Army” (13%), “preventing the creation of an international tribunal” (9.6%). 7.4% said “don’t know”. (Graph no.7)

## Nahr al-Bared Developments and the International Tribunal

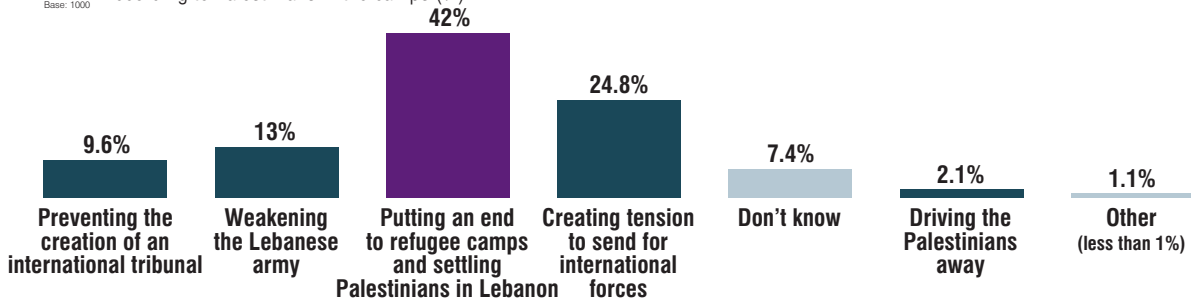
Answers vary on whether the developments of Nahr al-Bared are linked with the creation of an international tribunal to try the

assassins of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. 22% of respondents stressed the presence of a relation, while 26.7% rejected it. 39.7% said there might be a relation and 11.6% said “don’t know”.

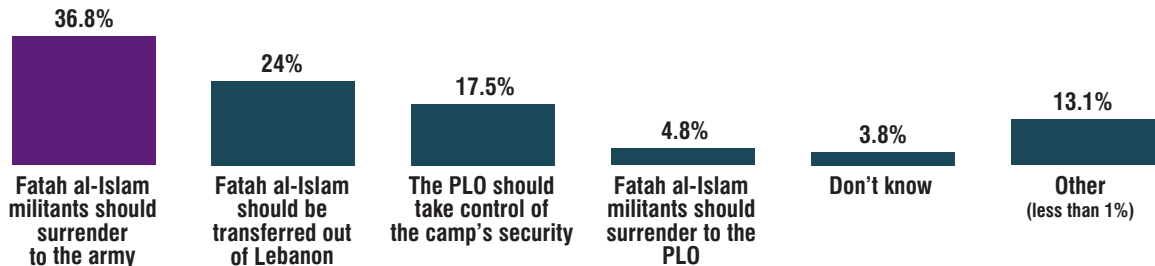
## Party Responsible for Rafik Hariri’s Assassination

The majority of respondents (41.3%) accused “Israel” of perpetrating the assassination of Rafik Hariri. 19.5% accused “western countries’ intelligence services”, 14.5% accused “Arab countries’ intelligence services” and 9.5% gave other answers. 15.2% said “don’t know”. On the other hand, 80.2% of Trablous respondents and 66.5% of Saida respondents support the creation of an international tribunal to try Hariri’s assassins.

[Graph 7] **In your opinion, what is the purpose behind Nahr al-Bared developments?**  
According to Palestinians in the camps (%)



[Graph 8] **In your opinion, what is the solution to Nahr al-Bared issue?**  
According to Palestinians in the camps (%) *Multiple response question*



Respondents' positions contradicted results of previous opinion polls conducted by *Information International*, when 49.5% accused joint Syrian-Lebanese intelligence services of committing Hariri's assassination and only 8.9% accused Israel.

## Solution to Nahr al-Bared Camp

While the overwhelming majority of Palestinian respondents (79.8%) said they were against the Lebanese Army's shelling of Nahr al-Bared to drive Fatah al-Islam out of the camp, 68.1% were against Palestinian factions' use of force against the movement. Solutions proposed to resolve the crisis included: "Fatah al-Islam should surrender to the Army" (36.8%), "Fatah al-Islam should be transferred out of Lebanon" (24%), "Fatah al-Islam militants should surrender to the Palestine Liberation Organization", which

"should take control of the camp's security" (22.3%). 13.1% gave other answers and 3.8% said "don't know". (Graph no.8)

On the other hand, 74.2% of Trablous respondents said the "Lebanese Army should enter the camp and drive out Fatah al-Islam with force", compared to 32.5% of Saida respondents who supported this option. 11.5% of Trablous respondents said the "Army should impose a blockade on the camps until Fatah al-Islam militants surrender", compared to 41.5% in Saida.

Moreover, 10.7% of Trablous respondents said "Palestinian organizations inside the camp should cooperate with the Army to drive Fatah al-Islam out", compared to 6% in Saida. While "dialogue to resolve the crisis" was supported by 2.3% of Trablous respondents, 19% supported

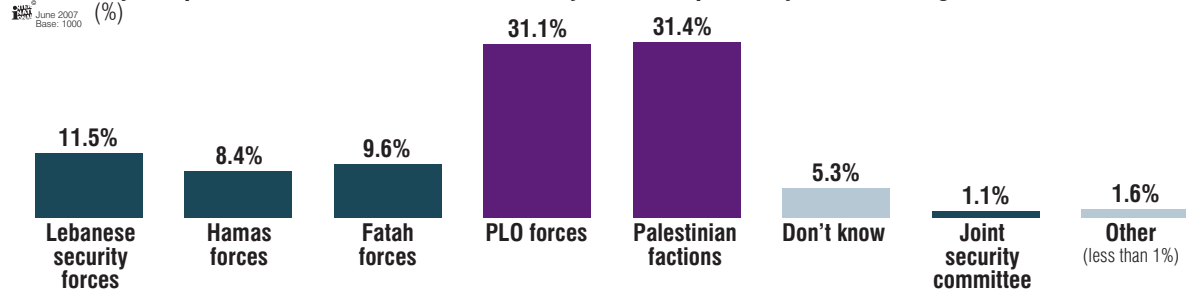
this option in Saida. 1.3% said "don't know" in Trablous and 1% in Saida.

## Who Should Control the Security of Refugee Camps?

46.6% of Palestinian respondents said that weapons inside the camps were a necessity to maintain security, while 45.2% said the camps would become a "safer place to live if there were fewer arms there". 8.2% said "don't know".

When asked about the party that should control the security of Palestinian camps, 31.1% said the "PLO forces", 31.4% said the "Palestinian factions", followed by "Lebanese security forces" (11.5%), Fatah forces (9.6%), " Hamas forces" (8.4%) and other forces (1.6%) and a joint security committee (1.1%). 5.3% said "don't know". (Graph no.9) This means that the majority of respondents believe that the camps' security should be maintained by Palestinian forces instead of the Army.

[Graph 9] In your opinion, who should control the security of the camp where you are residing? (%)



However, this position varies from one camp to another: 6.5% of Ain al-Hilweh respondents said “Lebanese security forces” should control the camps’ security, compared to 12.5% in Beddawi and 18.6% in Shatila. Meanwhile, 50.5% of Ain al-Hilweh said the PLO should control the camps, compared to only 9% in Borj al-Shimali, where 76.1% prefer that Palestinian factions control the security there.

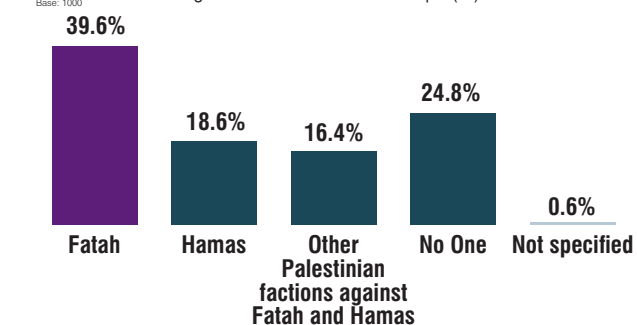
## Loyalty to Fatah or Hamas?

A high percentage of respondents inside the camps (39.6%) support Fatah, while only 18.6% support Hamas. 16.4% of Palestinian respondents support other Palestinian factions, while a high percentage of 24.8% support “No One”. 0.6% did not specify. (Graph no.10)

## UNRWA Services

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) offers educational, health and food assistance to Palestinian refugees inside the camps. However, the overwhelming majority of Palestinians (73.9%) said that UNRWA’s services were “poor/bad” or “very bad”, against 23.2% who described them as “good”, 1.8% as “very good” and 1.1% said “don’t know”. (Graph no.11)

[Graph 10] Are you with: According to Palestinians in the camps (%)



## The Palestinians’ Main Source of Concern

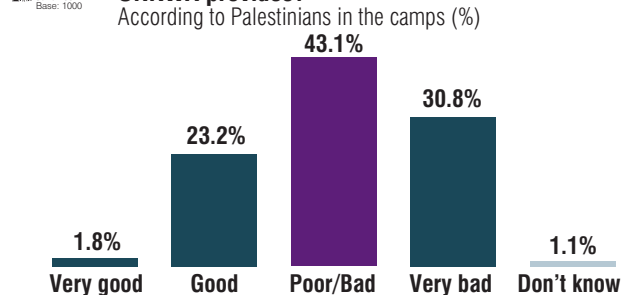
“Bad economic conditions” and “lack of job opportunities” represent the main source of concern for the majority of Palestinian respondents (40.4%), followed by “conflicts between Palestinian groups” (18.7%), “Israel and its possible attacks on the refugee camps” (16.4%), “spread of fundamentalism inside the camps” (9.7%), “political and security situation”

(5.7%), the “Lebanese Army” (3.6%), and other (1.2%). 2.8% said they had “no concerns” and 1.5% said “don’t know”.

## Relation between the Refugee Camp and its Lebanese Surroundings

More than half of Palestinian respondents (56.2%) said “cooperation and accord” prevailed over their relations with their Lebanese

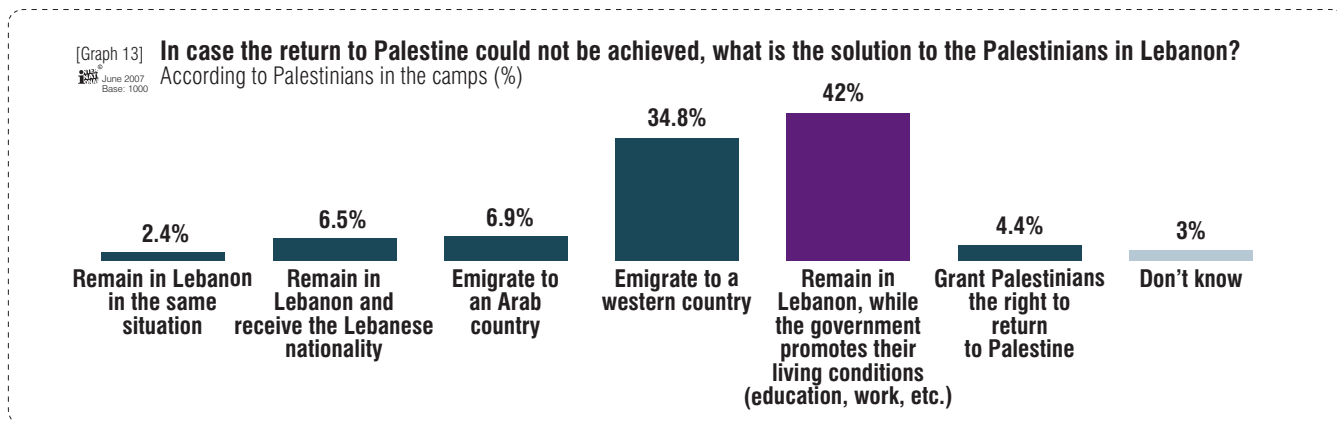
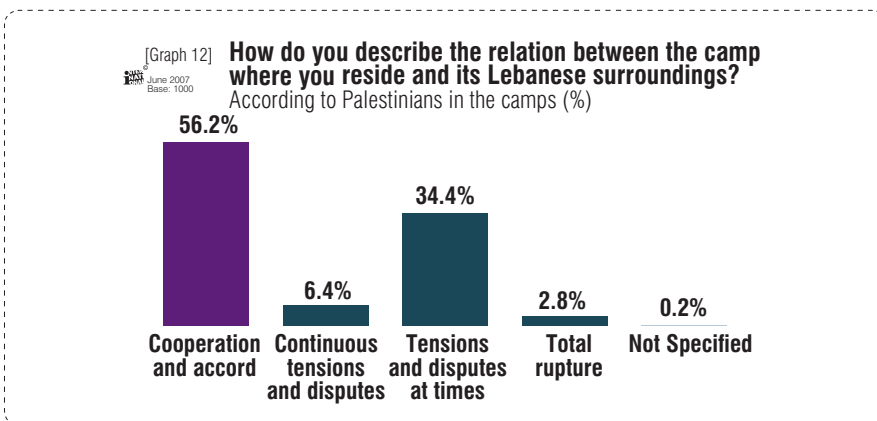
[Graph 11] How would you assess the services that UNRWA provides? According to Palestinians in the camps (%)



surroundings. 34.4% said there were “tensions and disputes at times”, 6.4% talked about “continuous tensions and disputes” and 2.8% said there was a “total rupture” and 0.2% did not specify. (Graph no. 12)

### Solution to the Palestinian Issue if the Return to Palestine could not be achieved

When asked what solution they would choose if the return to Palestine could not be achieved, 48.5% of respondents said they preferred to “remain in Lebanon while the government promotes their living conditions” (including 6.5% who expressed their wish to receive the Lebanese nationality), while 34.8% chose to “emigrate to a western country”, 6.9% chose to “emigrate to an Arab country” 6.8% listed other solutions and 3% said “don’t know”. (Graph no.13)



#### Description of the sample

The survey was conducted from June 7-12, 2007 on 1,000 Palestinians distributed in eight refugee locations representing nine refugee camps (Ain al-Hilweh, Al-Rashidieh, Borj al-Shimali, Beddawi, Nahr al-Bared (inside the Beddawi), Nahr al-Bared (inside Sabra and Shatila), Sabra and Shatila, Borj al-Barajneh, Wavell and Dbayeh). Respondents were equally divided between males and females.

In Trablous, 600 questionnaires were distributed in various areas within the city (Al-Mina, al-Qalamoun, al-Mohaitra, al-Tebbaneh, al-Haddadine, as-Soueiqa, az-Zahrieh, al-Tal, al-Noueiri, al-Rammaneh, al-Hadid and al-Qobbeh). Respondents were distributed as follows: 79.3% male and 20.7% female, as a high percentage of women refused to participate in the poll.

In Saida, 200 questionnaires were distributed in various Saida neighborhoods (old Saida, Dala'a Street, Jezzine Road, Sahel al-Sabbagh, al-Qanayeh, al-Hlalieh and A'abra). Respondents were distributed as follows: 49.5% male and 50.5% female.

The distribution of respondents by age category is detailed below:

Age Category	Palestinian camps	Trablous	Saida
18-24	24.9%	19%	8%
25-34	23.3%	31.2%	15%
35-44	23.5%	21.5%	37%
45-54	13.6%	12.5%	27%
55-64	9.6%	9.3%	8%
Above 65	4.8%	4.8%	4.5%
Undisclosed	0.3%	1.7%	0.5%