

West Bank & Gaza

OVERVIEW

West Bank & Gaza Program Summary

With an unstable economic situation and bleak prospects for national elections or a revived peace process, the International Republican Institute's (IRI) current program focuses on amplifying moderate Palestinian voices committed to a democratic future at the grassroots level. IRI does this in a variety of ways, including regular public opinion polling, town-hall meetings, a televised civic education program and campaign workshops. In coordination with prominent civil society partners, IRI supports women's empowerment and civic education efforts focused on areas of the West Bank, particularly small villages that have not traditionally been politically engaged. IRI works with political independents to provide a credible democratic movement that is responsive to Palestinian development needs.

Public Opinion Research

In an environment that has lacked regular elections to measure public sentiment, opinion polls and surveys are instrumental tools in gauging citizen preferences on issues, informing decision makers and assessing the impact of events. IRI and local partner the [Arab World for Research and Development](#) (AWRAD) conduct targeted public opinion research around pivotal events including the creation of the National Unity Government in February 2007, opinion-leader surveys and in-depth studies on issues such as the status of women. Polls typically focus on Palestinian public opinion on national elections and public leadership. IRI and AWRAD also conducted one of the first scientific voter canvassing project in the Palestinian Territories in the northern West Bank city of Nablus, which generated information on voters' demographic characteristics and their expected voting behavior for Palestinian elections.

Outreach and Advocacy

In addition to campaign trainings, IRI partners with the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy to carry out civic education programs across the West Bank and Gaza. Through town-hall meetings, citizens are provided an open forum to participate in civic dialogue about such issues as governance and development. In the lead-up to recent local elections, town-halls focused on the importance of political participation and electoral procedures. IRI has utilized this program to lay the groundwork for possible national elections by ensuring the Palestinian electorate is informed about the importance of elections and the relevant internal development questions critical to citizens should elections be called.

Media Programming

In partnership with Wattan TV, IRI augments town-hall-style forums with a televised program. The program features high-profile political and civil society leaders discussing important political and social issues before a studio audience. Past guests have included Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and the director of the Independent Commission for Human Rights, Salah Abdelaty.

Campaign Training

Municipal elections were held on October 20, 2012, the first elections of any kind to take place in the Palestinian Territories in six years. Most local council terms had expired in January 2009, and until these elections, 25 percent of Palestinians were living in municipalities that had not seen elections since 1976. Through the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, IRI provided campaign workshops to women candidates with 53 of the 99 women who attended winning seats on a local council. IRI is now providing ongoing support to these elected women decision makers, many of whom are serving in elected office for the first time.

