

The 1996 Presidential and Legislative Elections

The first Palestinian General Elections were held on January 20, 1996 in accordance with Article III of the Oslo Accords and the subsequent Palestinian Elections Law of 1995. The aforementioned Law adopts the electoral district system, block vote and open lists.

The Palestinian territories were divided into 16 electoral districts, 11 in the West Bank and 5 in the Gaza Strip. The following are key figures and results of the 1996 elections:

a. Voter registration and turnout

- Registered voters totaled 1,028,280.
- Voter turnout was 736,825 or 71.66% of total registered voters.
- The total valid votes was 715,966 or 97% of total cast votes.

b. Election observers

The elections were observed by 519 International observers and more than 2000 local observers. In their final report observers deemed that the elections had been conducted in a free and democratic manner.

c. The Presidential election

Two candidates competed for the presidency of the Palestinian National Authority: Mr. Yasser Arafat and Ms. Samiha Khalil. Mr. Arafat won the election with 88.2% of the votes.

d. The legislative elections

- 672 candidates, 370 from the West Bank and 302 from Gaza, competed for a seat in the Palestinian Legislative Council.
- Candidates included 25 women. Five won, constituting 5.7% of the 88 member PLC.

e. Allocation of seats per district

PLC seats per district were allocated through the Presidential Decrees of the 14th, 28th and 30th of December 1995. The seats were allocated as follows:

GAZA STRIP	
Gaza North	7
Gaza City	12 (of which 1 is a Christian seat)
Gaza Central / Dier El-Balah	5
Khan Younis	8
Rafah	5
Gaza Strip Total	37
WEST BANK	
Jerusalem	7 (of which 2 are Christian seats)
Jericho	1
Ramallah	7 (of which 1 is a Christian seat)
Bethlehem	4 (of which 2 are Christian seats)
Jenin	6
Hebron	10
Nablus	8 (of which 1 is for Samaritan Jews)
Tubas	1
Salfit	1
Tulkarem	4
Qalqilya	2
West Bank Total	51

f. Results of the 1996 Elections

Presidential Elections	Percentage of Votes
Mr. Yasser Arafat	88.2
Mrs. Samiha Khalil	11.5

Legislative Council	88 Seats
Fatah (Palestine Liberation Movement)	55
Independent Fatah	7
Independent Islamists	4
Independent Christians	3
Independents	15
Samaritans	1
Others	1
Vacant	2