

Neck and neck, Hamas and Fatah out in force for election day
By Haaretz Staff and Agencies

With polls predicting a close race between the ruling Fatah movement and the militant Hamas organization, both parties were out in full force early Wednesday as voting opened in the Palestinian legislative elections.

At a polling station in the upscale Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City, Hamas activists warmly greeted voters.

About a dozen male activists wearing Hamas' trademark green hats and bandanas held computerized lists of voters, and assigned volunteer drivers to transport supporters to the station.

On the opposite side, five Hamas women - covered in full-length black robes and veils over their faces - handed out hats and cards with candidates' names. Fatah activists were nowhere to be seen.

But in the nearby Beach refugee camp, both parties formed long reception lines to welcome the voters. Fatah activists, wearing the party's black and white scarves decorated with Palestinian flags, mingled with voters, and the party transported voters in on buses

The camp was decorated in a sea of flags - green for Hamas, yellow for Fatah - and the sense of excitement in the air was palpable. Some vehicles were decorated with carnations, as if a wedding were taking place.

Hamas has won over voters with a tightly organized campaign focusing on local issues, such as public services and the need to clean up government, while playing down its violent ideology. In contrast, Fatah has been plagued by disarray, infighting and widespread perceptions of corruption.

"Something inside me led me to vote for Hamas because we are tired of corruption," said Samer Lulu, a 29-year-old merchant in Gaza City, voicing a popular sentiment. "With religious people at least we will have our public money in clean hands."

"Historically Fatah has been the only group leading the Palestinian march," said Wissam Abu Ajina, 28, who voted for the party in the northern Gaza village of Beit Lahiya.

He said he feared the rise of Hamas would isolate the Palestinians internationally. "It's an armed group. It doesn't have good relations with the West," he said.

Hamas has said it plans to retain its weapons and its commitment to the destruction of Israel after Wednesday's election, in which it slated to win seats for the first time.

צמוד, סמוך - Neck and neck	תחושה, (גם רגש, חוש, שכל, הגיון...) - Sense
בחירות - Election	התרגשות - Excitement
סקרים - Polls	מוחשית - Palpable
חוזים, צופים - Predicting	פרחי הציפורן - Carnations
תנועה - Movement	קמפיין, מסע(בחירות/תעמולה וכו') - Campaign
מיליטנטי, בעל אופי לוחמני - Militant	שהתמקד - Focusing
ארגון - Organization	סוגיות מקומיות - Local issues
בשיא הכוח - Full force	שירותים ציבוריים - Public services
מצביעים - Voting	השקיטו, הנמיכו פרופיל - playing down
מחוקק, רשות מחוקקת, מחוקק - Legislative	אלים - Violent
ברמה גבוהה - Upscale	אידיאולוגיה - Ideology
שכונה - Neighborhood	בניגוד - In contrast
פעילים - Activists	נגוע ב... - Plagued
קיבלו את פניהם - Greeted	אי סדר - Disarray
סימן היכר (גם סימן רשום, מותג) - Trademark	מלחמות פנימיות - Infighting
ייעוד, הקצו - Assigned	נפוץ, רווח - Widespread
מתנדב - Volunteer	תפישות של - Perceptions of corruption
לנייד - Transport	שחיתות
נגדי - Opposite	סוחרת - Merchant
צד - Side	מביעה - Voicing a popular sentiment
רעלות (גם מעטה, כיסוי) - Veils	תחושה רווחת
מועמדים - Candidates	מוביל - Leading
יצרו - Formed	מצעד - March
קבלה, קבלת פנים - Reception	כפר - Village
לקבל/לקדם בשלום - Welcome	תבודד - Isolate
(גם ברוכים הבאים)	מבחינה בינלאומית - Internationally
צעפים - Scarves	קבוצה מזוינת (בנשק) - Armed group
מקושטים, מעוטרים - Decorated	יחסים, קשרים - Relations
דגלים - Flags	מתכנן - Plans
התערבבו, הסתובבו בין אנשים - Mingled	לשמור, להחזיק - Retain
יצרו קשרי שיחה	מחויבות - Commitment
ים של דגלים (המוני דגלים) - Sea of flags	הרס ישראל - Destruction of Israel
	הציגה מועמדות, מיועדת - Slated