

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to trace the parameters of the “new” Palestinian political elite in light of the second round of local municipal and legislative elections during the period 23/12/2004-25/1/2006 in general and the elected members in particular. The new elite emerged as a result of subjective and objective factors that shaped the socio-political structure of Palestinian society. The study also investigates the impact of those various factors that led to the selection process of the candidates and how those factors shaped the conviction of the voters and thus set up the framework for the municipal and legislative elites. Qualitative survey methods were used to uncover the major socio-economic features of both elites. A random sample of the successful municipal candidates was drawn together with the CV's of the legislative elites. Qualitative techniques were used to analyse the effect of factors and variables. In-depth interviews and case studies were made of elected municipal councils and legislative circles to access the relevant knowledge and variables. A comparison was made between the characteristics of legislative elites for the first and second elections to reveal the difference between candidates. A study was also made of the effect and difference between the variables affecting the new municipal and legislative elites of the second round of elections.

Of the findings of this study is that the new municipal and legislative elites of the second round of elections are educated, religious, young and varied in terms of genders, profession, members and intellectual level and political affiliation. Other findings show that artisans are well represented. Former municipal councils members, and legislative council members were

re-elected. The study also shows that the second legislative elites includes academics, holders of graduate and post graduate degrees, individuals descending from high social strata, political party members, freedom fighters, prisoners and other intellectuals and politicians.

The family and political affiliations were the major bases for producing the municipal elites while political party affiliation was the major source for the emergence of the second political elites. Civil society and its institutions were the dominant frame work for change and recycling of elites on both levels. The strongest factors were ideology, religion and educational level. The electoral system and democratic recruitment mechanisms played varied roles in the process of elites change. The second legislative elites differed from the first in terms of religious inclination and number of academics and graduate degree holders .The two elites also differed in intellectual and political variations, degree of representation of women and the Christian minority.

Personal factories, education, religion, a persons history in resistance movements, and political and social affiliations were the criteria of election and recruitments of the candidates, criteria that led to their victory.

Like males, females won the elections through familial and party affiliation as well as women quota. Other factors that contributed to the election and success of females include education, societal activities and profession. Traditional preconceptions of female inferiority, gender discrimination, however, were obstacles. The role of women and their institutions, as well as party membership failed to raise the percentage of female representation in the new elites.