

U.S. Senator John Kerry Visits Rawabi, the First Palestinian Planned City



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U.S. Senator John Kerry, senior Senator from Massachusetts and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited the site of Rawabi, the first Palestinian planned city on Sunday.



U.S. Consul General Daniel Rubenstein and R. David Harden, senior advisor to U.S. Special Envoy Senator George Mitchell, accompanied Senator Kerry on his visit to the Rawabi site.

Senator Kerry, Consul General Rubenstein and Mr. Harden visited Rawabi to view progress made since early January, when construction was launched on the new city's first residential phase and the central business district. Rawabi is the first Palestinian city to be built in accordance with a Masterplan. Braving intermittent downpours, the Senator and his delegation assessed from the work site the considerable strides that engineering and excavation crews have made on the challenging terrain, leveling rock road beds and preparing the site for utilities and underground infrastructure components. Palestinian and Qatari flags waved hopefully at the site entrance and from the cabins of the backhoes and bulldozers -- working in spite of cloudbursts and muddy conditions resulting from a period of much-needed rain.

Senator's Kerry's visit underscores the ambition and magnitude of the project and the attention it is receiving on the global scene as the largest project in Palestine. Construction of the new city will create thousands of badly needed jobs for Palestinians and alleviate a burgeoning shortage of affordable housing in the West Bank.

The Senator and the Consul General met with Bayti Managing Director Bashar Masri, the project developer, at the Bayti office on the Rawabi city site. Kerry and Rubenstein each expressed support for the successful completion of the new city and noted the project's significant potential to promote Palestinian economic growth. Masri provided members of the delegation a detailed brief on the status of the project to date, including some of the hurdles the city yet faces.

Although the site of the new city resides in PA-controlled Areas A and B, Israel has yet to accept the transfer of the jurisdiction of the proposed access road in area C to the Palestinian Authority to allow for the construction of the critically needed Rawabi access road essential to the viability of the entire project. Currently, the only way to access the new city is via a narrow road which winds through small villages and will not support the expected flow of commuter and commercial traffic from Rawabi to other metropolitan areas.

During his trip, Senator Kerry also met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Amman, Jordan and with Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad in Ramallah.

Background on the Project

Rawabi is being developed by Bayti Real Estate Investment Company - jointly owned by Qatari Government-owned Qatari Diar (www.qataridiar.com) and Ramallah-based Massar International (www.massar.com).

Rawabi will be built as a modern, high-tech city with gleaming high-rise buildings, green parks and shopping areas. The new city will provide more than 5,000 affordable housing units with 10 different floor plans for residents to choose from, spread across 23 neighborhoods. Initially, Rawabi will be home to 25,000 residents, with additional residential and commercial units slated for subsequent construction phases that will ultimately serve a city with a population of 40,000.

It is located in the heart of Palestine, 9 km north of Ramallah, 20 km north of Jerusalem, and 25 km south of Nablus. Rawabi will constitute its own municipality encompassing 6,300,000 square meters of land.

For more information about Bayti and the city of Rawabi, visit www.rawabi.ps.

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