



Jerusalem

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European Commissioner Johannes Hahn visits the Gaza and the West Bank

Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, visited Gaza and the West Bank today. Commissioner Hahn met President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, travelled to Gaza, and visited a number of EU-funded projects. The Commissioner concluded his visit by co-hosting an Iftar with the Ministry of Social Development at the SOS village in Bethlehem.

Commissioner Hahn is responsible for deepening the EU's relations with neighbours of the EU to the south and east, in the EU's interest and in the interests of our partners. In this context, Commissioner Hahn oversees the EU's assistance to the Palestine people. The EU remains the largest donor to Palestine by providing approximately 300 million Euros annually.

Commissioner Hahn started his visit from Gaza. He visited the EU-funded seawater desalination plant in southern Gaza. Commissioner Johannes Hahn signed with UNICEF a financing agreement for the second phase of the desalination plant for a total amount of 10 Million EUR. This brings the total EU investment in this plant to 20 Million Euros. Once the two phases are completed, the desalination plant will provide 12,000 cubic meters of with safe drinking water to 150,000 Palestinian in the Gaza Strip. The construction of the plant is carried out in partnership with UNICEF, the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and Gaza's Coastal Municipalities Water Utilities (CMWU). The Commissioner then visited UNRWA headquarters in Gaza and was briefed there about UNRWA's efforts to promote economic development.

In Ramallah, Commissioner Hahn met with President Mahmoud Abbas where they discussed EU-Palestinian relations. The Commissioner also met with Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah and discussed the EU's support for the Palestinian Authority in various sectors. Together with

the Minister of Local Government, the Commissioner inaugurated a new EU-funded road at Khirbet Um Al Lahem in Area C near Jerusalem.

The Commissioner visited the old city in East Jerusalem and met with representatives of Palestinian civil society organizations supported under the EU funded East Jerusalem programme.

Commissioner Hahn concluded his visit by co-hosting an Iftar for Palestinian children at the SOS village in Bethlehem together with the Minister of Social Development, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Shaer.

At the end of his visit, **Commissioner Hahn** commented: *"Today I have met with Palestinians in Gaza, Ramallah, Bethlehem and the Old City of Jerusalem. I have been able to witness first-hand the EU's presence across the Palestinian territory and in many areas of life. Whether it is by supporting schooling, helping to provide clean water in Gaza, strengthening civil society or businesses or paying the salaries of medical staff, teachers and civil servants. The EU is, and will remain, Palestine's most reliable and important donor. All of our efforts aim both to meet the needs of Palestinians and, above all, to support the establishment of a future Palestinian state as part of the two state solution. "*

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