

## Emirates News Agency



### Foundation Stone Laid for Sheikh Khalifa City in Gaza

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GAZA (WAM) - Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Information and Culture has conveyed greetings of President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the people of the UAE to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and to the Palestinian people.



Sheikh Abdullah, who was speaking during a celebration held here Oct.8 to lay the foundation stone for the Sheikh Khalifa City in Gaza, congratulated the Palestinian leadership and people on the end of occupation of their lands.

He renewed UAE's support to the Palestinian people and its firm stand by them in their rebuilding and development efforts, in keeping with the legacy of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

Following is the full text of Sheikh Abdullah's speech: Your Excellency Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Palestine National Authority, Your Excellencies, President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan has given me the honour of conveying to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the resilient people of Palestine his greetings and those of the people of the United Arab Emirates.

We have come to you today to congratulate you and to share with you your joy at the ending of the occupation of a dear part of your beloved homeland, Palestine, and also to share with you the task of building the future of which you have dreamed for so long.

Mr. Chairman, as you well know, the United Arab Emirates is committed to stand by you and by the Palestinian people at these critical moments. Our presence here today and this project are an indication of the readiness of President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa to take part with you in the process of building and developing your country, and of his readiness to continue on the path of love for, and giving to, Palestine that was laid down by his father, the late His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

At the time when talk about demolishing of the settlements was being translated into real action, the UAE President grasped the historic opportunity to announce to the people of Palestine that he had decided to build a new city upon the rubble left behind from the occupation, thus emphasising his belief that the response to the destruction which Palestine has witnessed should be in the form of practical assistance on the ground.

We are here today, therefore, in this southern part of the Gaza Strip, to share with you your joy at the laying on land which would otherwise stand as a landmark of destruction of the foundation stone of Sheikh Khalifa City, a gift from His Highness our President to the resilient people of Palestine.

Mr. Chairman, we view with great approbation the enormous efforts that you are quietly, wisely, and determinedly, making in your leading of the progress of the Palestinian people so that it may draw from the jaws of the lion, with difficulty, its legitimate rights and thereby guarantee its existence and its future.

My dear Palestinian brethren, for the rebuilding of what was destroyed by the occupation and the creation of a real infrastructure in Gaza to be achieved, it is essential that you align yourselves with and that you support the Palestine National Authority, and bring to an end your internal disagreements.

Today, the task that faces you is to work to put in place a model of development that demonstrates fully that you are worthy of enjoying freedom and independence. The eyes of the world are upon you.

We are confident that you will be able to overcome your differences and that you have the patience and the ability to engage in an internal dialogue that will lead, with God's help, to the emergence of a cohesive national approach. A coming together between you is the real basis for a strong Palestinian position, and unity between you is fundamental to your strength. Your national unity is precious do not waste it.

The work of construction and development that lies ahead of you will require great effort and determination. We are confident that you will be able to achieve your ambitions and to reach your goals.

Finally, on behalf of President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa, let me assure you that we in the United Arab Emirates stand beside you and support you, as we have always done, in your process of liberation, construction and development, until the day that the state of Palestine is established with its capital in Jerusalem.

In his statement on the occasion, the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, said "the fingerprints of the late Sheikh Zayed and his sons can be seen all over the Palestinian land from Jenin to Jerusalem, Rafah and Beit Lahia, referring to the great assistance of Sheikh Zayed and the UAE to the Palestinian people. "The fingerprints of good works of Sheikh Zayed were not only limited to the Palestine but can also be seen in all the Arab and Islamic worlds. Sheikh Zayed was a man of great vision and wisdom. We really miss him these days which coincide with the first anniversary of his death, May his soul rest in perfect peace," President Abbas said in the statement.

"On your way from Rafah to this place you did not meet the occupation forces or its 21 settlements which used to deny our people the right to interact with each other. The Palestinian people used to suffer severe pain and anguish at the check points where they were being forced to wait for 24 or 48 hours to cross to the other end," he said addressing Sheikh Abdullah. "all the lands of these settlements have now become Palestinian.

Here we are today laying the foundation stone for the Sheikh Khalifa City which would house Palestinians whose houses were destroyed. Here we are building a new life and trying to live a normal life, to put back on our faces the smile that we lost for long years," he added.

"We are striving to build an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. The road ahead is long for Jerusalem and the West Bank," he said, adding that the Palestinian National Authority was committed to national unity and committed to bringing all the various factions of the Palestinian people under one umbrella in order to liberate the country.

President Abbas expressed profound gratitude to the UAE President and people for their continuous support to the Palestinian people.

Sheikh Abdullah and his accompanying delegation arrived here in Gaza on Oct. 8 and were received on arrival by President Abbas and a number of Palestinian officials, including Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister and Information Minister, Nabil Sha'ath, Minister of Housing, Mohammed Ashtiyah, Awqaf (Endowment) Minister, Yusuf Salama and a number of officials.

In a statement, the Palestinian Housing Minister, Mohammed Ashtiyah, expressed the profound gratitude of the Palestinian people to Sheikh Khalifa for his generosity in constructing the Khalifa City which would house more than 25,000 Palestinians, who were forced to leave their lands after their houses were destroyed by the occupation forces. He praised Sheikh Abdullah for visiting Gaza for the third time.

Darwish Al Holi, Representative of the people of Rafah, in Southern Gaza, expressed the profound gratitude of his people to Sheikh Abdullah for his personal solidarity with the Palestinian people. He said the Palestinians people will never forget Sheikh Khalifa for this generosity.