Press release

Jerusalem

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The Palestinian Authority and the European Union lay the cornerstone of Dura Courthouse

Today, the Palestinian Authority and the European Union laid the cornerstone of the new Dura courthouse in Hebron. The new 5000 square meters courthouse will serve thousands of Palestinians living in Dura and surrounding communities. The event was attended by the EU Head of Cooperation, the Head of High Judicial Council, Minister of Justice, Minister of Finance and Planning, Minister of Public Works, and the General Attorney.

This project is part of a EU funded comprehensive programme of support to the Palestinian justice sector. This support will improve the quality of the judicial services and enhance the working environment for Palestinian judges and lawyers to better serve Palestinian citizens. The programme also includes projects that promote the establishment of sustainable national mechanisms for legal aid, institutional reforms and capacity building to the High Judicial Council, legal education through the Palestinian Bar Association, the Palestinian Judicial Institute and Palestinian Universities, as well as the supply of furniture and equipment for four courthouses.

Rule of law and democracy are founding principles of the European Union and, as an independent judiciary is a tenet of democratic systems, there is growing evidence that fair and effective justice support economic development and prosperity. In Palestine, our engagement in the justice sector is part of our support to the development of a future democratic, transparent and accountable Palestinian State, in the framework of the wider vision of the two-state solution.

" Rule of law and democracy are founding principles of the European Union and, as an independent judiciary is a tenet of democratic systems, there is growing evidence that fair and effective justice are crucial enablers of economic development and prosperity. " said the **EU Head of Cooperation Alessandra Viezzer** at the ceremony. *" In Palestine, the support to the justice sector further complements our vision of the two-state solution and support to building a future democratic, transparent and accountable Palestinian State. The EU has been investing EUR 28 million in the justice sector to improve the quality of its services to the Palestinian people*," she added.

In addition to the new Dura courthouse, the EU has been supporting the construction and equipment of new courthouses in Qalqiliya, Salfeet, and the expansion of Jenin courthouse. The new courthouses are designed based on the international standards for courthouses to provide the necessary infrastructure needed to facilitate and boost the justice sector.

Aside from infrastructure, the EU is supporting the Palestinian Authority in the field of legal aid, judicial affairs and the overall administration of justice. The EU also supports the development of the legal education system through the Palestinian Judicial Institute, the Bar Association and Palestinian Universities. Master degrees in Advanced Legal Studies have been also developed across Palestinian universities with EU support.

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