



PRESS RELEASE

Ramallah Cultural Palace Celebrates a Successful First Year

Jerusalem, July 15, 2005 — In less than 12 months the Ramallah Cultural Palace has become an immensely popular venue for world-class cultural activities, a glowing landmark, and a source of pride for all Palestinians. Built through funding from the Government of Japan and overseen by UNDP/PAPP, the 8-year long project was completed in July 2004, when the Cultural Palace opened with an eagerly anticipated series of showcase performances.

Now, one year on, the Cultural Palace is due to be officially handed over to the Ramallah Municipality at a ceremony being held on the premises today, and attended by the Palestinian Authority Minister of Culture, H.E. Mr. Yahia Yakhlef, the Mayor of Ramallah Ayoub Rabah, Mr. Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative, UNDP, and Mr. Hashimoto, First Secretary of the Embassy of Japan.

“We believe that art and culture are vitally important aspects of life and are glad to support Palestinian culture through the development of the Cultural Palace,” said Mr. Hashimoto.

Through the generous support and funding provided by the Government of Japan, the summer of 2004 saw the culmination of years of work and planning for the US\$6 million cultural complex that has since developed into the preeminent venue for both Palestinian and international cultural events in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

On July 5, 2004, the Cultural Palace was officially inaugurated in the presence of Palestinian dignitaries and government officials, representatives from international organizations, cultural institutions, and members of the public. Groups that took part in the opening festivities included popular Palestinian dance troupe El Funoun; renowned Palestinian composer and musician Simon Shaheen; and Spanish group, Radio Tarifa. Since this promising beginning, the Ramallah Cultural Palace has hosted over 60 local and international performances and events, attracting 45,000 visitors.

“The fact that so many Palestinians appear to be proud of their cultural center, that it has enriched the community, enhanced cultural awareness and become a desirable venue for both international and national cultural gatherings and performances, is in my view, the greatest measure of its success,” said Mr. Rothermel. “I hope that this institution will continue along this path as a center of cultural excellence and a venue for important gatherings, and that it will inspire the creation and dissemination of cultural endeavors throughout the West Bank and Gaza.”

“We hope the Ramallah Cultural Palace will be used by all Palestinians as often as possible and will continue to be a good example of bilateral relations,” added Mr. Hashimoto.

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