



PRESS RELEASE

The Palestinian Authority, the Government of Spain, and UNDP/PAPP, Pledge Support for Care of the Elderly and Homeless

Jerusalem, October 18, 2005 — His Excellency Dr. Hassan Abu Libdeh, Palestinian Authority (PA) Minister of Social Affairs; H.E. Dr. Ghassan Khatib, Minister of Planning; H.E. Mr. Jose Maria Ferre de la Pena, Spanish Consular General; and Mr. Timothy Rothermel, UNDP Special Representative, will today sign a Memorandum of Understanding at a ceremony to launch a project aimed at upgrading the “Old-Aged House” in Jericho. The ceremony will take place at the Ministry of Social Affairs in Ramallah at 10am.

The “Old-Aged House” is a governmental organization established in 1955 and administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The organization’s aim is to provide shelter, food, health care and clothing for two of society’s most vulnerable groups – homeless and elderly people. In recent years, mentally and physically disabled men and women, have also been assisted by the organization.

The organization currently has facilities for up to 30 elderly homeless people (24 males and 6 females), which date back to 1955. As such, the premises are in dire need of renovation and upgrading to meet the organization’s target of providing a home, as well as psycho-social support, for at least 80 elderly homeless people. In addition, the organization hopes to establish a Daycare Centre for elderly people not currently involved with the “Old-Aged House.”

The project is comprised of two components aimed at improving the organization’s facilities and services. The first involves the re-construction and furnishing of new premises with expanded capacity to accommodate 80 elderly homeless people. The second component will focus on training and development of institutional capacity within the organization itself. The training will be tailored towards two groups: the “Old-Aged House” in Jericho, and the PA Ministry of Social Affairs and NGOs working in this field. Training for the Jericho staff will be predominantly aimed at ensuring proper management practices and the development of the programme currently being implemented. This is aimed at providing the residents with the highest quality services possible, particularly for those with special needs.

Training for the Ministry of Social Affairs and NGOs will be geared towards national policy development in the area of care for the elderly. It is regarded as particularly important that the special needs of the elderly are addressed and mainstreamed by the Palestinian Authority. Building awareness is also seen as an integral part of the project, owing to the stigma often surrounding old-age homes and care for the elderly in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). It is seen as vital that the general public be made aware that the work of these organizations is aimed at protecting the dignity of the elderly, and can be a viable and acceptable option for those in need of full-time, specialized care.

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