



***Speech by Deputy Special Representative of UNDP/PAPP – Mr. Roberto Valent***

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here in Jenin today at the formal opening of this magnificent courthouse.

The rule of law and access to justice is of critical importance to Palestinians. Even in the most difficult days, when the prisons were destroyed and there was no access to courts, Palestinian families and communities, through their traditional justice mechanisms, stepped into administer justice amid chaos.

This chaos has been reduced and the work of building the Palestinian state has begun again.

A state is not just defined by geography but also by what it does. The administration of justice is one of the key activities of a state. If it is done well, it provides the framework for economic prosperity, social harmony and justice. If it is done badly then it can be a recipe for tyranny and dissatisfaction.

Our work in support of the justice system is about more than bricks and mortar. As important as the support for building the bricks and mortar is the support for the legal process. Here we have invested in technology to speed up the legal process and ensure that records are kept on modern databases that can be accessed from any legal office. Secondly, we are involved in projects to enhance the capacity of the Higher Judicial Court and the Attorney General's Office by aiding planning and strategy setting and id co-ordination.

The Jenin Courthouse contributes to engendering respect for the Palestinian legal system. This project is about the creation of a forum for the efficient administration of justice and the technology and procedures that go along with it. The building and equipment are in place, it is now up to the judges and officers to continue the work.



In theory, justice can be conducted anywhere. But it is difficult for a court to serve its proper purpose as the physical embodiment of justice, if it is hidden away in a building that serves many purposes. In practice, it requires dignified and specialized accommodation, to allow the timely and efficient administration of justice. Looking around, I can see this courthouse provides just that.

Courts are about far more than crime. They safeguard property rights, they can protect the environment, women's rights and protect the vulnerable from the powerful.

This courthouse is not only an important part of the evolving Palestinian legal system which has seen new courthouses opened in Nablus, Khan Yunis and Jericho. It is also part of the development of Jenin as one of the important cities of the West Bank. An efficient civil court will inspire confidence in investors and entrepreneurs, which will in turn inspire national self-confidence.

I am most pleased to pay tribute to the Government of Japan for its consistent support to the Palestinian legal system, through the funding of courthouses in Nablus, Khan Younis and now Jenin.

I would also like to thank the Chief Justice and the Governors for their help in implementing this project as well as everyone else who has contributed to the completion of it. Finally, I would like to wish the judges and officers of this course the best of luck as they turn this building into a living symbol of justice.