



SPEECH BY THE UNDP/PAPP SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here in Jenin for the opening of this mental health clinic which will provide a service to more than a quarter of a million residents of the Jenin district.

As well as providing a clinic, this project has also more than doubled the number of staff providing mental health care. Now Jenin will benefit from the services of psychologists, an occupational therapist, as well as social workers, psychiatrists and nurses.

Mental health is often not given the priority it deserves. Because it is not always tangible and does not present clear physical symptoms, mental health is treated with suspicion and indifference. That is as much the case here as it is anywhere else in the world.

There is clear evidence that mental illness, as well as being an illness in its own right, can lead to other social and health problems. It has a major impact on family life and work.

While mental illness can occur anywhere in the world, the stresses of living under occupation and coping with economic difficulty can make matters worse.

The first step in treating mental illness is recognising and understanding it.

This new clinic and its ten staff will make an important contribution not just to the treating of mental illness but to the recognition of it, which will in turn allow patients to receive the treatment they need to allow them and their families to quickly return to normal life.



The creation of a well-staffed clinic in Jenin will help inform other medical practitioners about mental health issues. An important part of this project is training nurses and general practitioners about mental illness. Hopefully the knock on effect will continue to teachers, police, religious leaders and court officers as well as the community at large.

The opening of the Jenin clinic is just one part of a \$4.3 million programme to improve mental health care all over the occupied Palestinian territory.

Agence Francais de Développement has been working with the Palestinian Authority on mental health care since 1995. This is just the latest product of that engagement.

In other projects we have expanded mental health clinics in Nablus and Hebron and increased staffing.

This means that a greater range of services are available locally. Healthcare that is not subject to checkpoints and long journeys is always going to reach more people that need it.

I would like to thank AFD and their outgoing director for their sustained support for mental health care in the occupied Palestinian territory as well as welcoming the incoming director and regional director.

In addition, I would like to thank the Mayor and the Governor of Jenin, the deputy-minister of health and everyone else who has made the successful completion of this project possible.