

Qatar is involved too: Rawabi - a city for 25 thousand inhabitants with \$ 1.2 billion cost.

Almost without realizing it, in the Samaria Mountains, between Ramallah and Jerusalem, the first preplanned city- Rawabi, is being built within the Palestinian Authority domain. We toured around the city, which is currently devoid of people, and we enquired who that entrepreneur who spilled so much money is.

By: Shay Salinas

23/06/15, 16:58

Almost not realizing it, in the mountains of Samaria, between Ramallah and Jerusalem, Rawabi- the first preplanned city is being built within the Palestinian Authority area.–

After years of delays which among many other issues, included connecting homes to town water network and to expand and widen the main access road to the city - where the first thousand apartments are ready for habitation expectedly by the end of the month of Ramadan. The next phase of the project will include 6,000 housing units when the population will amount to about 25 thousand inhabitants. In the final stages, which at the moment seem a little too far, they predict in Rawabi that some 40 thousand inhabitants will ultimately populate the city

We toured the city as part of the Geneva Initiative, and we deduced that if momentarily we ignore Palestinian flying flags that are almost everywhere in the city, and ignore the simple fact that it is not recommended to be there, this would be the place that we would want to live in.

About 6,300 square kilometers of clean streets, green parks, a huge amphitheater, sports field, wide sidewalks and spectacular views from anywhere - making us forget for a moment, that this is the place, which is only few minutes away from where Danny Gonen, a 25-year-old resident of Lod, was murdered a week ago.

Rawabi is designed with a lot of consideration to maintain high quality of life for its residents including huge use of green energy. You can also find in the city, entertainment venues such as restaurants, cinemas of international standard, fashion stores, banks, schools, libraries, health services and a police station.

The developer of the project is Palestinian-American businessman, Bashar Al-Masri, who has already spent about \$ 1.2 billion. However, even if all the apartments will be sold in accordance with the plans, it is doubtful whether this is an economically worthwhile investment. Al-Masri is not interested in selling his apartments for investment purposes only. Moreover, he is not interested to attract buyers who inhabit the city, but also have to get out of it every morning to work- he did not want to build a "sleeping town". Currently Al-Masri aims at the middle class Palestinians, and Arab-Israelis who enhance the living standard.

"The project aims to create something new to Palestine. The \$ 1.2 billion investment is only the first step - we may need to add much more dollars in the next steps," said Al-Masri. Concerning the financing of the project, Al-Masri added: "Financing of the project is through my company and the Qatari Government- owned company.

The apartments in the city are of sizes ranging between 90-to- 230 meters, whereas prices range between 60-to-180 thousand dollars for the apartment. Apartment's sale takes place in a luxuriously accommodated center- a little above the amphitheater seating 15 thousand spectators.

English Translation by Kameel Jafar/Rawabi

