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## Constructing a Future



Model of new  
Palestinian city

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## Building a Palestinian state, one city at a time

**While still struggling with Israeli bureaucracy, panoramic view and affordable prices bring much attention to newly constructed West Bank city of Rawabi, which is expected to be populated next year.**

**Elior Levy**

A narrow winding road leads to the Palestinian city of Rawabi, as one of the thoroughfare's curves reveals a tall flagpole with a massive Palestinian flag.

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The image resembles the prominent Jordanian flag that is placed at the entrance to Jordan's Aqaba, and symbolizes the pride of Bashar Masri, the entrepreneur behind the new Palestinian city, which is in the final stretches of construction before it is populated at the beginning of next year.

"The project bears two goals – economic and political," said Amir Dajani, deputy managing director at Bayti Real Estate Investment Company, which heads the city's construction. "The city provides and will provide thousands of jobs, and in the political angle, the idea is to construct the Palestinian state through establishing this city, as well as other cities."



**Palestinian flag waves over the future city**



**Architectural model shows potential plan for Rawabi**

Rawabi ("The Hills" in Arabic) is built on a West Bank hill that overlooks the entire region. Nablus is clearly seen

from the north, while Ramallah gazes back at the city from the south; the entire coastal plain appears on the western side of the city, including the Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan skylines.

The city is planned to spread over 6 million squared meters, and its first stages include 630 housing units – which have already been almost entirely sold, in buildings of four and five floors.

Meanwhile, three schools, a mosque, a church, a large amphitheater and a soccer field are all being built in the city. The construction of a large commercial center with stores, a hotel, a hi-tech center and a cinema complex is nearly finished; a kilometer away from there, a logistics center for light industry has been established.

It is not by chance that the city carries a resemblance to the Israeli city of Modi'in. "It was one of the central cities from which the developers learned how to build and where mistakes lie," Masri explained.



**Bashar Masri, the project's founder and funder**

"It's going to be a vibrant city that will also provide 3,000 to 5,000 jobs." Even now, he added proudly, the city is visited by Israeli city planners who want to learn how to build properly. "At first we learned from you, and now it's

the other way around."

The apartments in Rawabi are offered at prices that may sound imaginary to Israeli ears. For example, a fifth-floor 180-squared-meters four-bedroom apartment is offered at a price of \$110,000.

"On a clear day, you can see the Hadera and Ashkelon power plant chimneys from the balcony," said Masri. He stressed that Israelis are welcome to purchase an apartment in the city; however that will require filing a formal request with the Palestinian Authority. "The city is built first and foremost for Palestinians. Arab-Israelis are Palestinians just like a Palestinian residing in [Jordan](#) is a Palestinian," he emphasized.

The profile of the residents expected to reside in Rawabi fits the unusual sight of the city in the Palestinian landscape. Some 70% of those who purchased apartments are newly married couples and relatively young people from the northern West Bank; most have academic degrees and a steady job, and only 11% are single. Among those who purchased apartments are Arab-Israelis who bought a second apartment, and are planning to use it during the weekends, as well as East Jerusalem residents who are hiding the transition for fear of losing their Israeli IDs.





## Apartment model in Rawabi



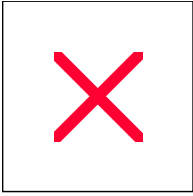
### Rawabi - Palestinian 'city on the hill'

Attorney Dov Weisglass, former Prime Minister's Office bureau chief under the late [Ariel Sharon](#), serves as a special adviser to Masri, "and accompanies the project with regards to its connection to Israel, particularly with regard to regulation." According to Masri, "[Israel](#) understands the necessity, importance, and strategic change that this city creates."

However, Masri still encounters harsh bureaucratic difficulties that delay the project. Among other things, the city needs to expand the road leading to it and to be connected to water.

The main reason behind the difficulties is the city's location in Area A, which is under full Palestinian control, north of the Area C which is under Israeli control. The water pipeline route, for example, is supposed to pass through Israeli territory, and eventually connect 40,000 residents to the Ramallah water system.

But the Palestinian prophets of this new city are undeterred. "I have two children, Rawabi is my third child," Masri proudly stated from one of the city's balconies.



[Back](#)