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# THE JERUSALEM POST



Photo by: TOVAH LAZAROFF

## Ya'alon pushes for water hookup in order to open new Palestinian city Rawabi

By TOVAH LAZAROFF  
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Rawabi, which is located on a Samaria hilltop between Ramallah and Nablus, is the first planned Palestinian city in the West Bank that offers affordable modern homes.

To help the new Palestinian city of Rawabi open its doors to its first residents, Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon (Likud) has ordered water to be hooked up to its large apartment buildings.

Rawabi, which is located on a Samaritan hilltop between Ramallah and Nablus, is the first planned Palestinian city in the West Bank. It offers affordable modern homes.

Although the first batch of apartment buildings is ready, hundreds of new homeowners have been unable to move in because the city lacks water.

Rawabi, along with other Israeli and Palestinian projects, has been frozen, pending approval from the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee (JWC), which has not met for the last five years.

Ya'alon, along with the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Maj.-Gen. Yoav Mordechai, decided to circumvent the JWC and ordered Israel's Water Authority to provide water to Rawabi and a number of other projects, including for Israelis.



Infrastructure Minister Silvan Shalom, whose office has oversight over the Water Authority, has refused to heed Ya'alon and Mordechai's demand. Silvan's office said on Thursday that, according to a 1995 Interim Agreement under the Oslo Accords, water and sewage projects for Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank must be approved by the JWC.

"To our sorrow, since 2010, the Palestinians have refused to convene the committee.

We'd be happy if the Palestinians would sit in the committee, which could then debate projects from both sides," Silvan's office said.

His spokesman added that, once the Palestinians return to the committee, a water hookup for Rawabi could likely be approved fairly quickly.

Rawabi is located in Areas A and B of the West Bank, which is under the civil control of the Palestinian Authority. It abuts Area C of the West Bank, which is under Israeli civil and military rule.

Security officials said that Ya'alon and Mordechai are working to find a way to advance projects, like Rawabi, that have been frozen because the JWC has not met.

Rawabi is the brain child of Palestinian businessmen Bashar al-Masri, who together with the Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company, has developed a city that will eventually house some 40,000 residents.

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