

Roger Akelius has donated 100 million kronor to the construction of a children's village in Gaza - which has now been razed to the ground. Photo: Filip Landqvist

Roger Akelius Orphanage in Gaza bombed to pieces

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Economy • A Swedish children's village, partly financed by real estate billionaire Roger Akelius, lies in ruins after bomb attacks in the city of Rafah in Gaza. No people from the village were injured in the attack.

Now the billionaire is planning a new campaign to build 100 schools in the area.

- I thought: Now I'm going to help the children, he says.

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It was in 2014 that Roger Akelius invested 100 million kronor in SOS Children's Villages' project to build an area for children in the city of Rafah in Gaza. The organization calls it a children's village, a place with a number of houses for around 100 orphans, offices and support for vulnerable families. Now the entire area lies in ruins after being leveled to the ground in an Israeli bomb attack, something that [Aftonbladet](#) was the first to report.

The news reached Akelius on Wednesday morning. He says he has been deeply emotionally affected by the incident.

– I don't understand how grown-ups can shoot down orphanages. First they bombed, then they bulldozed over and leveled it to the ground.

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Roger Akelius has contributed to the orphanages through his own charitable foundation, the Akelius Foundation, through which he receives regular reports on how things are going.

Donates hundreds of millions a year

He has not personally visited the orphanages, although he has been to Gaza. However, Akelius says that he has previously visited refugee camps in Lebanon, among other places.

– I've been to refugee camps and seen the enormous difference, talking to these intelligent, nice, nice people who have an environment that is completely unimaginable. I just start crying when I'm there.



SOS Children's Village with the orphanages before the attack. Photo: Virginie NGUYEN HOANG

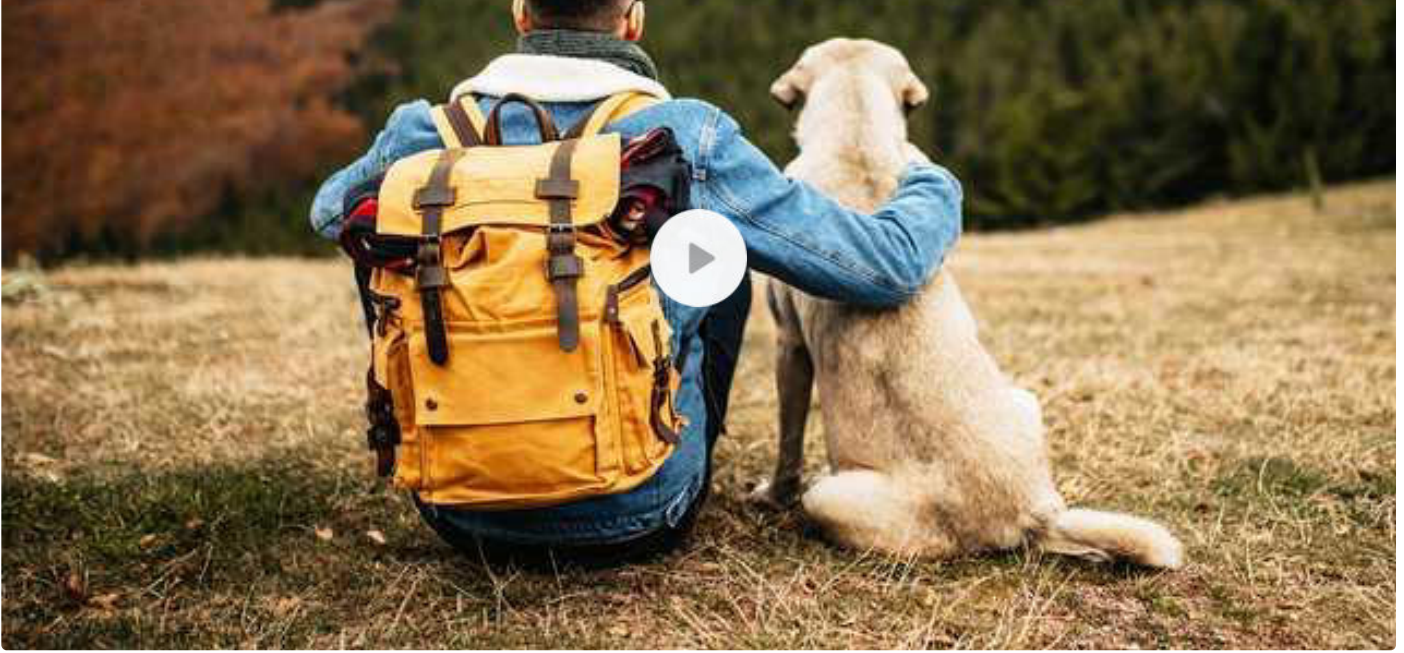
Roger Akelius is one of Sweden's richest property owners but is also known for his commitment to charity.

He has been involved in the work of SOS Children's Villages for 15 years. Among other things, he donated 100 million to the organization after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and 100 million to efforts for children fleeing Syria. In 2016, the organization received 340 million kronor from Akelius.

– I have had businesses for many years and they have been doing well, then there is money left over. So what should you do with this money? I found nothing better than taking care of children. And especially children who are affected by violent rulers. I see an extreme need there.

The children live in tent camps

No one was reportedly injured in the attack on the children's village, which has been evacuated in stages since last year, when the security situation changed drastically in the area.



In March 2024, most of the children and staff living in the Rafah Children's Village were relocated to the West Bank. Then, an emergency relocation began in May 2024, and the Children's Village ceased to be a humanitarian site.

Petra Nyberg, program manager for SOS Children's Villages, says that it is not exactly known when the village was destroyed as the area has been too unsafe to stay in and it has been difficult to keep track. It was only when the ceasefire came into effect in the area that the staff ventured there.

– We had hoped and believed that the children's village and the area had remained standing and was partially slightly damaged. So it wasn't until Sunday that we saw that it was completely destroyed. There was nothing left.

Now the children live in tent camps, where schooling and other humanitarian activities continue.

How do you continue working after this?

– Right now there is a lot of shock and sadness among the children. It is of course difficult to accept that it is not possible to move back to anything, even if the ceasefire were to hold. Now we are of course hoping to get more support and make the situation more bearable than it has been in recent months.

Will you rebuild the village?



– It is clear that that is the ambition and the hope, but whether it will be in exactly the same place and in the same way is difficult to say.

Wants to build 100 schools

Roger Akelius promises that he will continue to contribute to charity in Gaza.

But he also has more plans: A fundraising campaign with several organizations, where the Akelius Foundation will match the collection with its own funds.

– My own thought is that now I will help the children. I will give the children a hundred schools in Gaza. They may not have a tolerable existence, but at least an existence so that they can live on.

A similar campaign was carried out after the start of Vladimir Putin's invasion war in Ukraine. The campaign then raised 1.7 billion kronor, of which the Akelius Foundation accounted for 700 million kronor.

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