# Quarter II - 2021 Newsletter

## PalTechUS

## Together We Build Palestine.

We at PalTechUS would like to welcome you to our first newsletter.
We hope you will join us to mobilize the Palestinian diaspora and the international community to create economic opportunities for young Palestinians and nurture a thriving Palestinian tech ecosystem.

Hisham Jabi
Co-founder

Hisham Kassab
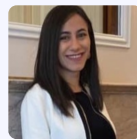Co-founder

## Meet Our Board!

Nadiah Sabaneh

Bader Hamdan

Khuloud Odeh

Hisham Jabi

Mona Demaidi

Hisham Kassab

Dr. Saeed Elnaj

Randa Masri

Loay Elbasyouni

Muhannad Kanaan

Louisa Rahmani

We are very grateful for all of the board's hard work so far!

## Ideation Workshop

We concluded the Ideation Workshop on June 26 with three goals:

1. Encourage global and multinational companies' investment in establishing remote offices and R&D centers in Palestine.

2. Partner with US-based and Palestinian-owned tech companies to increase offshoring & outsourcing of local Palestinian talent.

3. Facilitate the up-skilling and re-skilling of IT & soft skills, mentorship, and internships for Palestinian students, graduates & entrepreneurs.

## We are hiring!

We are looking for a PhD student to intern for us from August - December, 2021. The deliverables for this internship will be a 20-page report and a presentation on the IT skills and certifications most desired by US employers.
Contact info@paltechus.org to apply.

## Messages & Updates from the Board

- Keep an eye out for upcoming workshops if you are interested in participating!

- We are considering collaboration with several donors and partners.

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## Meeting With Experts and Adding to Our Team

Over the course of the past few months, we have had over 40 interviews with individuals and entities based in Palestine and the United States, during which we benefitted from their expertise and enthusiasm for our cause, and in many cases, have agreed to cooperative relationships , and our hopes to catalyze their respective successes.

We have also hired half dozen new interns, including current students at the Catholic University of America, Georgetown, and Purdue. With these talented youths' knowledge, creativity, and passion for helping Palestinian youths to find more and better jobs, we have no doubt PalTechUS is on the road to success.

## A Message From Our Founders

"We believe Palestinian STEM professionals and students have a lot to offer if they are given the opportunities. COVID-19 leap-frogged the digital transformation of the last 18 months, which otherwise would have taken ten years. We strongly believe that the Palestinian economy should be connected to the world, and particularly to the US economy, to create more and better jobs in the STEM sector. Thus, PalTechUS is eager to create linkages between the United States' IT sector and Palestine's IT sector to boost tech and business relations. We are up to this challenge because we see it as an opportunity to create a regional IT hub that fosters innovation and empowers Palestinian youths. If you believe in our mission, join us by sending an email to info@paltechus.org."

In our attempt to enable and persuade US and European corporations to open directly in Palestine, a group of PalTechUS experts is creating a database of Palestinian tech business leaders in the diaspora. This database is projected to consist of 200+ names and profiles, and will work as a networking platform for Palestinian STEM graduates seeking jobs, mentorships, and other opportunities. With this campaign, we will answer questions like why such businesses should make the financial decision to open R&D centers in Palestine.

We would like to give a huge thank-you to our pro-bono lawyer Beth-ann Roth of ESG Legal Services, who has worked tirelessly to support PalTechUS by providing her legal expertise with our board.

Thanks to her, PalTechUS is now officially registered as a non-profit organization in Delaware, and we are in the process of finalizing our 501(c)(3) status.

Following a highly productive meeting with Larry Cooley, the board was able to agree on our top four priorities as an organization and outline practical first steps. We are currently finalizing a "work plan" in which we specify what deliverables we aim to present by the end of 2021.

Some of these deliverables include: targeting current Palestinian IT firms operating in the US, who are already outsourcing to Palestine, and help them increase their outsourcing capacity and hire 50 engineers; develop a targeted survey for selective American IT firms to better understand their perspective regarding the challenges of outsourcing to Palestine; aid and improve current Palestinian tech incubators' mentoring programs through our team's connections and expertise.

## Thank You to Our Interns and Volunteers!

Lulu U. Onakpoya
Research
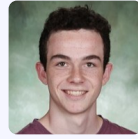
Ademola A. Akinrinola
Research

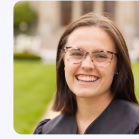Madeleine Walker
Cheif Operations Officer
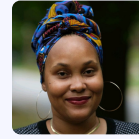Intern

Ali Taha Brown
Article Writer
Intern

Xanthia Yerby
Media Strategist
Volunteer

Gorden McNeill
Article Writer
Intern

Katherine Susich
Article Writer
Intern

Jenail Marshall
Research
Intern

Megan Witt
Social Media
Intern

We are eager to have youths in the driver's seat!

## Our Vision for the PalTechUS.org Website

**By the end of September, 2021, our website will be fully populated and feature:**

**- A "blog" of qualitative articles written by interns Katherine, Gordon, and Ali, featuring interviews with leading figures in the effort to improve the tech ecosystem in Palestine, among other topics (this section will be added to on a weekly basis)**
**- Links to recommended resources for additional educational resources regarding the current economic and technological situation in Palestine**
**- A sign-up form for this newsletter, and internship and associateship applications**
**- Summaries of our most recent workshops, such as the Ideation Workshop which occurred on 6/26/21, to inform site visitors of our trajectory and immediate next steps**

**We welcome all additional suggestions!**

If you missed the notification from Madeleine this past month, we officially transferred all PalTechUS-related materials from Trello to a Google Drive entitled "All Members Drive."
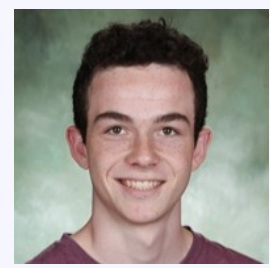
If you do not have access to this drive but would like to, please email info@paltechus.org with this request. One of our goals regarding our relationship with you, our supporters and members, is total transparency.

### Ready for a Challenge?

**We aim to have each current member recruit 3 people to join PalTechUS!**
**They can do this by sending a quick email to info@paltechus.org requesting to be included in the organization's further communications.**

## PalTechUS

# The Importance of Boosting The Palestinian Tech Ecosystem

By Gordon McNeill
Intern, Georgetown '24

The unemployment rate in Palestine currently stands at 27.8 percent. Every year, thousands of Palestinian students graduate from science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs at the top 14 Palestinian universities, and yet 60 percent of college graduates in the West Bank can't find work and are unemployed. While talented, capable Palestinians who could contribute greatly to the economy are abundant, opportunities for them to use their skills to help society are difficult to come by. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the negative effects of ongoing political instability on the Palestinian economy make it even more unlikely that new traditional businesses will be able to solve this problem. However, there is still hope. The growing consensus among development specialists at the World Bank and journalists who follow this issue closely is that there is a path forward for the Palestinian economy: tech start-ups.

One major argument for expanding and boosting the Palestinian economy through tech start-ups has to do with the benefits of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs create wealth, create jobs, and increase wages across the economy. While existing businesses eventually saturate established markets, entrepreneurs create wealth by making new goods and services. This not only creates jobs and incomes for the people that make these goods and services, but also boosts incomes for those in other sectors whose products can be made more efficiently as a result of the innovation. Tech start-ups that create unique goods and services can also help entire economies transition away from obsolete and inefficient technologies that slow down economic growth. This is even more important than many might think: the World Bank estimates that seventy to eighty percent of the gap between developed and developing countries can be attributed to differences in technology.

Some might argue that developing a tech ecosystem in Palestine is impossible due to their extensive political and economic obstacles. Fortunately, the knowledge and labor experience that Palestinians need can be easily obtained through economic relationships with other countries regionally and globally.

Some ways to create these relationships are through internships and other hands-on learning opportunities. Countries around the world would benefit from such cooperation because advanced economies are currently facing a severe shortage of skilled tech workers while Palestine has them in abundance. There are already programs such as the Palestinian Internship Program (PIP) that do great work connecting young Palestinian STEM graduates with internships at leading multinational tech companies. However, additional supplementary programs, such as long-term mentorship training, help applying to universities abroad, and soft skills programs are necessary to fill the education gaps still so prominent in Palestine.

If this gap were to shrink, more countries and global corporations would become aware of the abundance of skilled labor in Palestine, and they too would make investments in the country to further help train its workforce. These international investments, which are so important to developing economies, are far more likely to occur in the tech sector than anywhere else, which is another major reason for the growing consensus around tech start-ups being the solution to Palestine's economic woes. Perhaps understandably, multinational corporations don't want to set up operations in places perceived by the international community as conflict-ridden, so they prefer to - at the most - simply use Palestinian labor and collaborate at a distance. Fortunately, the tech sector is one of few fields, and is perhaps the only field, in which such a complicated business relationship could survive. Tech products are easy to export from anywhere in the world, even under the most complex conditions, and can operate in a much more decentralized way.

Therefore, despite the continued need for capacity building, and more and better tech accelerators, the reality is that tech start-ups and a healthy tech ecosystem are the best hope for the Palestinian economy moving forward. Hopefully, we can one day live in a world where young Palestinian talent isn't squandered and where everyone has the opportunity to use their talents to better their communities and the world.

## Sources:

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