

# PITAtimes Newsletter

"In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity"

## Message from PITA's Chairman:

### Eng. Ibraheem Jaffal

Dear all; Members of The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies- (PITA) and all the affiliated companies working in the ICT Sector.

The global epidemic, Corona Virus (COVID-19) has affected the lives of every human being. This virus that keeps us contained in our homes for at least two months which already re-shaped our lifestyle and our interaction with the surrounding environment. We as a business community has experienced the severe economic implications of the corona-virus on the financial markets and on all the fundamental industries and sectors.

Notwithstanding of this crisis; PITA seeks to support and help its members in how to survive the corona-virus epidemic and keep their businesses alive without having to give up on any of their employees. In this harsh time period, it is very important for companies to show solidarity and work together to keep the workflow, even though they are struggling to keep their organizations alive while this monster is destroying the whole globe.



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## **Message from PITA's Chairman;**

The Palestinian ICT sector is playing a major role during this crisis; it is the backbone of all sectors. All the Palestinian companies rely on it to keep their work and communication and all their online services going, and even though no payments have been made from the customers to these companies; they still strive to keep the continuity of businesses in all sectors in addition to the help families and households to communicate with their relatives all over the globe.

This has put a huge pressure on the Palestinian ICT companies. Therefore; The Palestinian Information Association Technology of Companies - PITA aims to develop the ICT sector and promote its products, services and initiatives. We are aware of the important role we play in providing the optimum help and support during this critical time. Thus we are actively monitoring the COVID- 19/Coronavirus situation and we are taking steps that can help others during this period. We sincerely appreciate the effort our members are portraying in this epidemic; and with their innovative services and initiatives we shall pass this storm together and prove that the ICT sector is truly the leader of the other Palestinian sectors.

A part of PITA's endeavors; is to track, study and keep abreast of the economic implications that occurred as a result of the Corona Crisis so it can help these companies to make the right adjustments for such implications and provide the required support to get out of this epidemic with the least possible damages and to guide them through this crisis. Thus; a questionnaire was made and shared with PITA's members for achieving such goal, and this report includes some crucial findings and it highlights on the main challenges they are facing, so PITA is able to identify those indicators and accordingly will decide what methods shall be taken to provide such help.

PITA will do its utmost and push its efforts with The Ministry of Telecom. and IT in a win-win strategic plan for covering the sector's needs for the upcoming years. Accordingly; the ICT companies will be able to have a complete vision and a guided plan regarding where they shall invest in and how to improve their capacities and expand their operations as well as how to establish a strong bond and a partnership with the Government and its official bodies and so creating an E-Government platform within the ICT companies.



## Opening Article By Mr.Masayuki Magoshi – Ambassador for the Palestinian Affairs Representative of Japan to Palestine



Let me first express my sincere gratitude to the editor in chief, editorial board and staff of this amazing magazine for giving me this opportunity to address to the magazine's distinguished readers, particularly Palestinian youth.

At the beginning, I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the depth and strength of the Japanese-Palestinian relations. The recent visits of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Palestine in May 2018, and President Mahmoud Abbas to Japan for the participation in the enthronement ceremony of His Majesty the Emperor last October symbolize the strong amicable relationship. Also, I would like to confirm the determined Japanese position towards a two-state solution and supporting the Palestinian people's right of self-determination and establishment of an independent state. In this context, Japan has been providing assistance to Palestine amounting to 2 billion USD. Recently, Japan announced new assistance package amounting to approximately 24 million USD for Palestine, including 1.2 million USD for the assistance in the field of ICT sector development.

In 2006, Japan launched its unique initiative called "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" aiming to promote and support sustainable national economy of Palestine through regional cooperation. The flagship project of the initiative; Jericho Agro-Industrial Park (JAIP), has achieved tangible progress over the past years which were not possible without the tremendous efforts of all the parties engaged.



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In December 2017, the then Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, on the occasion of his visit to Palestine, announced Japan's commitment to upgrade "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative by expanding the scope of our effort and extending support to the ICT sector, because the potential of ICT sector in Palestine is huge with a young and well-educated population. We believe that ICT will assist to create network of the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" and connect the Palestinian people to the world beyond the walls. This will be achieved through investing in young people and empowering them with the necessary knowledge and skills.

To materialize this upgrading plan, the Government of Japan provided funding support to UNDP to construct Palestinian Industrial Capacity Development Center (PICDEC) inside JAIP. Currently, the construction is in the final stage and the center is planned to be inaugurated in the near future. PICDEC will have unique functions and will provide assistance to the existing business, entrepreneurs, and youth with the focus on the application of ICT technology to the Agro-Food sector. This will be achieved through the creation of 4 units, which are 1) Startup support and growth services unit, 2) Business Development services unit, 3) Quality, Certification and Packaging unit and 4) ICT services unit. Even before the completion of the construction of PICDEC, the Government of Japan extended another grant through UNDP in March 2019 amounting to 1.25 million USD, to assist the application of ICT and to promote the innovation in the agriculture sector in Palestine.

In addition to the above mentioned assistance to the ICT sector, in August 2018, my office, the Representative Office to Japan to Palestine, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with Palestinian Information Technology Association (PITA) and Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PICTI). We jointly conducted two ICT competitions in 2018 and 2019 with the participation of young entrepreneurs from the West Bank and Gaza. The winners of each competition were invited to Japan for networking opportunities with Japanese companies and visiting the ICT industry in Japan to further enhancing their capacity and improving their business ideas. We are planning to continue such initiative in close collaboration with PITA/PICTI in the coming years to further assist potential entrepreneurs in achieving their dreams, and thereby contribute to the promotion of economy in Palestine.

Lastly, I would like to introduce an English proverb, which is "A friend in need is a friend indeed". Japan, as the true friend of Palestine, is committed to support the efforts of the Palestinian people to establish a future independent state living side by side with its neighboring countries in security, peace and prosperity.



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# **The Role of the ICT Sector and its Companies in the Palestinian Arena during the Corona Pandemic**

The Palestinian arena is already in a weakened state and at a political, economic, and national crossroads in both the West Bank, under the Palestinian Authority, and the Gaza Strip. The global epidemic, Corona Virus (COVID-19) has almost affected the lives of every human being. This virus that keeps us contained in our homes – maybe for months – is already re- shaping our relationships with everything that surrounds us. We have seen the significant and extreme economic impact of the corona virus on financial markets and all fundamental industries and sectors. We are aware of the role the ICT sector is playing through this crisis; it is the backbone of all sectors and it's the core they rely on and this was clearly noticed during this crisis. This crisis has put so much pressure and great impact on this sector.

Notwithstanding of this crisis; PITA and its affiliated companies seek to support and help the Palestinian community to survive the corona-virus epidemic. In this harsh period, the Palestinian companies have shown solidarity and worked together to keep the workflow, even though they are struggling to keep their organizations afloat and employees safe and crying out for help while the novel corona-virus sweeps across the globe. The Palestinian government with its all ministries and sectors are doing their utmost and everything they can to guarantee and enable people's access to all facilities in full compliance with international standards.

The current crisis has proved that the ICT sector and the other Palestinian sectors are the backbone of the Palestinian economy and stood out the role they are playing in adopting a variety of methods to support the Palestinian citizens during the rapid pace of worsening global Covid19 crisis, and the lack of readiness to cope with the crisis in a timely and effective manner.



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# The Role of the ICT Sector and its Companies in the Palestinian Arena during the Corona Pandemic

**Therefore; the procedures that have been taken can be abridged in the following points:**

- Three response / emergency plans have been prepared from the beginning of this epidemic; such plans were designed based on different scenarios depending on the ongoing situation.
- The speed of internet was increased for free for all the clients in the West Bank and in Gaza Strip during the whole state of emergency.
- The speed of internet was increased for the Education Sector including the universities' professors, all the teaching staff and E- Learning platforms.
- Setting out precautionary measures for employees whom their nature of work requires their presence in their companies' headquarters.
- Providing free and internet minutes packages for people under the lock-down in coordination with the Ministry of Health.
- Sending awareness messages for the public and for some of the official institutions for the purpose of guiding and helping them.
- Keeping the landlines, mobile connections and internet services connected through the whole lock-down period.
- Conducting more than 50,000 phone calls for the purpose of limiting the number of injuries in Hebron city and for raising the awareness among the Palestinian people.

Amidst a landscape of this economic downturn and uncertainty, the people of Palestine must tap into their collective resilience and industriousness to make it through tough the times ahead because the Palestinian economy is expected to experience modest setbacks. Here we should stop by to point at the role that PITA is currently playing in **"Waqfet Izz"** National Fund; in which PITA is a member of its committee.



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# "Waqfet Izz"

**By: Mr.Saeed Zeidan; CEO of ULTIMIT  
Advanced Turnkey Solutions**



You are well aware of how many people got affected because of this crisis; people here in Palestine and in refugee camps and in the rest of the diaspora. They all are facing an existential danger of the coronavirus's wide spread. It is a disaster that wreaking an economic havoc and destruction, and it is a two headed monster that kills people on one side the other side the Palestinian and the global economy. So we have to work together in the face of the health, social and economic implications that this unprecedented crisis has caused. Those implications affected all of us specifically the families who could barely provide their main needs before this pandemic, and other small and daily and seasonal workers that have done their utmost every single day just to provide what their families needed and the health sector. Those implications are not limited to an individual or to a group of people or to a specific public or a private entity.

Therefore; "Waqfet Ezz" national fund was established following a decision from the Palestinian Prime Minister Dr. Muhammad Shtayyeh and according to the directives of H.E Mr. President Mahmoud Abbas, to face the ramifications of the corona pandemic in Palestine. The fund aims to focus all national efforts towards contributing to enhancing the economic, social and health sectors impacted due to this crisis. The fund also aims to reinforce the solidarity between Palestinians, through the participation of all institutions, companies, businessmen and individuals inside Palestine and in the diaspora; in contributing through a centralized fund.

The fund's contribution is limited to disbursing the donations to families in need and those whom affected by the pandemic through the Ministry of Social Development and donating to the health sector's urgent needs through the Palestinian Ministry of Health.



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## "Waqfet Izz"

Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies- PITA, has the honor to be a member in the fund; represented by its former Chairman; Mr. Saeed Zeidan. The bestowals and donations that were gathered from the Palestinian private sector were beyond extraordinary. The largest donor was Paltel Group in a sum of nine millions and two hundred thousand Shekels, not to mention several companies have also donated such as Safad Company, Mada, BCI and other benefactors from the ICT Sector. Such contributions truly implied and portrayed the vital role that the ICT Sector is playing in empowering and reviving the Palestinian economy and so achieving its social responsibility especially in times of need.

We, hereby would like to take the chance to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the key players who are responsible for this fund. Many thanks to all the benefactors especially PITA's affiliated companies and the people who donated individually their support and their generous, benign and active contribution during this crisis are highly valued.

The fund calls on all Palestinian institutions, businessmen in Palestine or in the diaspora, and Palestinian citizens who can help, to donate and to take a one man stand to survive this storm. We ask God nothing but to save our country and its people and to let us go through this crisis and help us until it shall pass.



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# PITA's Latest Activities

**3rd of June 2020, Ramallah;** PITA has held a meeting with the Hardware Companies in which it comes a part of several meetings PITA's board of directors is currently carrying out. Such meetings are tailored towards studying and keeping abreast of the current situation and the Corona epidemic and its implications have affected their work and to put a vision and a plan to deal with the repercussions of this crisis for the private sector in general and for other sub-sectors each depending on its needs. The meeting has also discussed the status of the hardware companies in terms of their dues, importing aspect and the Israeli constraints they encounter. In addition to highlighting the impact of this crisis on the Palestinian ICT sector and on the companies in Gaza Strip in order to make suggestions for enhancing and empowering their operations and attracting new companies to be part of PITA's umbrella.

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**3rd of June 2020, Gaza;** PITA has conducted a focus group specialized for women in partnership with the GIZ. The goal of such workshop is to discuss women's needs to start the second stage within "Women in the ICT Empowerment" Project. This project aims to empower women in the ICT field in order to reduce the barriers they encounter in creating businesses and having new job opportunities.

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**2nd of June 2020, Gaza;** PITA has conducted a meeting with a delegation from Oxfam. This meeting is a part of PITA's endeavors to enhance the partnership with Oxfam, and to enhance the ICT diffusion in different sectors for Instance Food, Agriculture and Market Information System.

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**3rd of June 2020, Gaza;** A delegation from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), has visited PITA's headquarter in Gaza; to discuss prospects of cooperation with PITA and PICTI and to highlight the role they can play in enhancing and empowering the ICT sector.

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# PITA's Latest Activities

**17th of May 2020, Ramallah;** PITA has participated in the annual event of the World Telecommunication & Information Society Day that was led by the Ministry of Telecom. and Information Technology; in which PITA was a member of its steering committee. The year 2020 represents a unique opportunity for ITU membership to commemorate ICT's contribution to the advancement of the information society, and to present the 'Connect 2030 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT Development'. PITA recognizes that the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has a great potential to accelerate human progress and to bridge the digital divide. The theme "Connect 2030: ICTs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)", aims to allow ITU membership to reflect on the ICT advances for transition to smart and sustainable development, by focusing on specific ICT-enabled solutions and emerging trends for fostering economic, environmental and social sustainability. PITA's Board of Directors urges on the need to stand together to enhance the Palestinian ICT sector for making it a promising pillar for developing the private sector whom capable of playing a significant role in strengthening the Palestinian economy and its social growth.

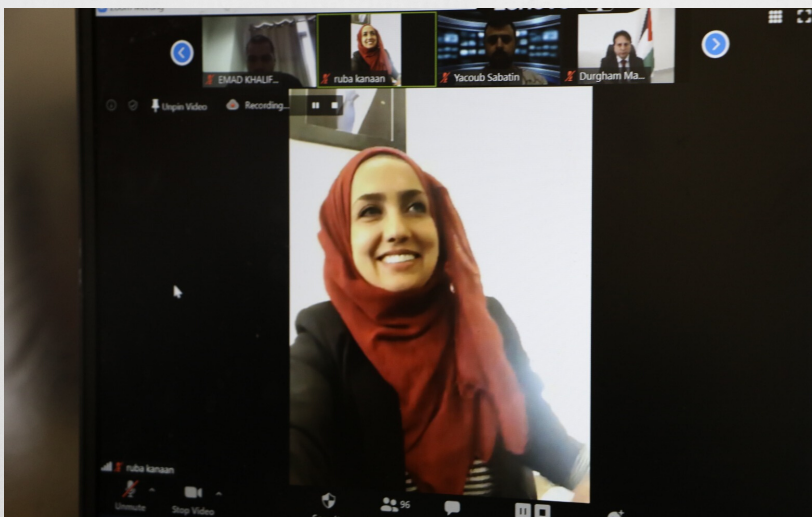
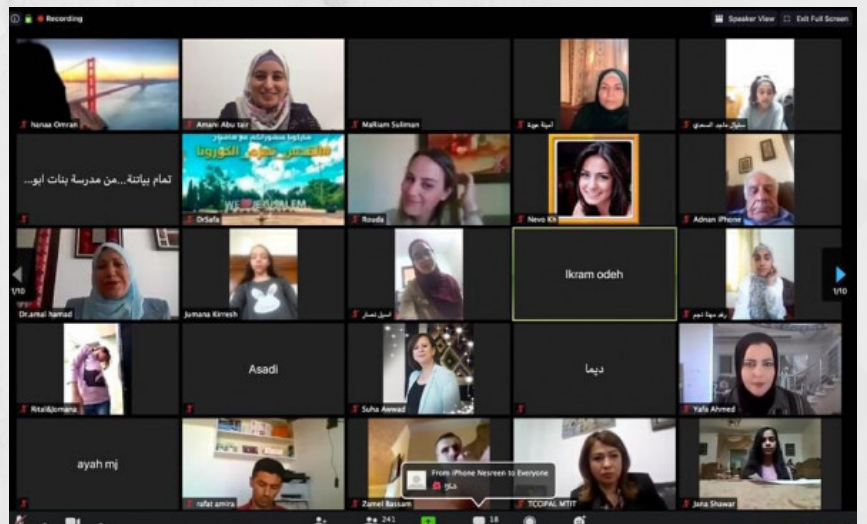
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**23rd of April 2020, Ramallah;** The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies- PITA in partnership with Women Technical Affairs Committee (WATC), Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Palestine Computers Society and Engineers Association have celebrated The International Girls in ICT Day that marked annually for highlighting the need to promote technology career opportunities for girls and women in the world's fastest growing sector. The event emphasized the importance of governments' engagement and the private sector in empowering women through technology and drew attention to role models and mentors and how they can inspire girls and young women to take up careers in the tech field. The event took place in the 23rd of April through Zoom due to the current crisis (Corona Virus); this initiative is tailored at creating a global environment that empowers and encourages girls and young women to consider careers in the growing field of ICTs.

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**15th of April 2020, Gaza;** PITA has organized in partnership with Gaza Sky Geeks and other corporate and official bodies **The First Virtual Hackathon** that brings together Gaza, the West Bank and the Global Tech Community. This Hackathon was launched as a result of the great economic, social and health implications of the Corona for the purpose of finding and reaching out to solutions and initiatives that could meet and overcome those challenges and implications.











# Upcoming Events

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**1. London Technology Week 2nd - 10th September 2020, London, UK.** This technology week will be championing the power of tech through conversation, knowledge sharing, and connections in areas including the future of HealthTech, the investment landscape and resilience in leadership and it will share insights from industry experts and to build connections at a time that matters most.

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**2. MENA ICT FORUM 2020 November 9 - 10, 2020, Jordan.** A premier two-day forum bringing together regional leaders in technology, innovation, and business to discuss and spread awareness on the future of technologies to the region. This event is targeted towards fusing technologies, building bridges and reshaping the generations of the future.

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**3. Expotech, Palestine 2020; EXPOTECH is an event** that is dedicated to the information and communication technology in Palestine, hence spotting the lights on the latest technological trends and opportunities happening on both local and global levels. For its 16th anniversary, EXPOTECH technology week made itself a great platform to learn about new technologies & trends and offer innovative solutions in ongoing technologies through showcasing the success stories of Palestinian businesses and entrepreneurs who seek to tap into the potential of the tech sector in Palestine. The focus this year will be on Artificial Intelligence and highlighting all the services and solutions that it provides

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**4. GITEX Technology Week, 6-10 DEC 2020, Dubai.** GITEX is a must-attend, world-class event located in Dubai. This is where the world's technology leaders, enterprises and startups come together to show you the future of every business and every industry. As the world is emerging from the great lockdown, healthcare and tech leaders in this event unpack how AI is shaping business and society's recovery worldwide and reveal AI's critical role in preparing businesses and communities for a post-pandemic world by shaping recovery and re-emergence strategies.

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## Why Participating is important ?

- Knowledge - Sharing
- Keep Pace with The Changing World
- Strengthen The Professional Ties
- Challenge and Grow
- Identify needs and challenges in the ICT sector
- Advance Economic Growth
- Create Opportunities



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**Be A Member !**  
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