Startup Weekend East Jerusalem Report

February 1, 2020

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Introduction

Event Name	Tech Stars Startup Weekend East Jerusalem
Location	Fully virtual
Event dates	21-23 January 2021
Number of Hours	54
Leading Organizations	Station J Jerusalem Hi-Tech Forum (JHF) ITIQ
Sponsors	Ooredoo Sbitany SUN Group
Ecosystem & Design Partners	YPlus 16 Baker Street Menacatalyst Alnayzak AWSc Hasoub
Global Partners	Google for Startups Neustar
Startup Weekend Overview	Startup Weekend is a 54-hour weekend event, during which groups of developers, business managers, startup enthusiasts, marketing experts, graphic artists and more pitch ideas for new startup companies, form teams around those ideas, and work to develop a working prototype, demo, or presentation by Saturday evening. Startup Weekend has grown into an organization with a global presence. As of December 2016, Startup Weekend has reached 135 countries, involving over 210,000 entrepreneurs. Upon its 2015 acquisition, Startup Weekend, alongside Startup Week and StartupDigest, became one of the Techstars family of startup programs.
Impact	Supported Palestinian entrepreneurs, developers and designers in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and from the Diaspora in developing their business ideas.

About TechStars

Since the COVID-19 outbreak began to affect communities around the world, TechStars has made a variety of changes to programming and community engagement to keep people safe and still continue supporting startups and innovators in this time of great need.

Techstars is the global platform for investment and innovation. Techstars founders connect with other entrepreneurs, experts, mentors, alumni, investors, community leaders, and corporations to grow their companies. Techstars operates three divisions: Techstars Startup Programs, Techstars Mentorship-Driven Accelerator Programs, and Techstars Corporate Innovation Partnerships. Techstars accelerator portfolio includes more than 1,900 companies with a market cap of more than $26 Billion.

Organizers

The organizers of TechStars Startup Weekend are:

Station J
Station J is not just another entrepreneurial hub or business incubator neither accelerator; it thrives to build an innovative ecosystem in Jerusalem aiming to give Palestinian entrepreneurs and youth access to a dynamic, diverse and vibrant community in the field of entrepreneurship. Jerusalem has the people and the ideas, the access to resources and the skills to create a strong innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Jerusalem Hi-Tech Forum (JHF)
JHF aims at promoting economic and social development through technological innovation and establishing a tech ecosystem. JHF supports activities and intervention that use digital-skill building to support economic opportunities.

ITIQ
Information technology and innovation in QUDS "ITIQ" is a leader and nonprofit Palestinian institution of a developmental, social, cultural and technological nature.

Mentors

Community leaders from more than 16 organizations and companies have pledged their time to mentor the participants and helped them evaluate the validity of their ideas, learn how to pitch their ideas, and create a proof-of-concept prototype for their ideas.

The mentors that participated in TechStars Startup Weekend are:

Sari Taha
He is the cofounder and managing partner at Momentum labs. Sari is an entrepreneurship consultant. He is specifically passionate about impact investments and projects that add value and shape a better future.
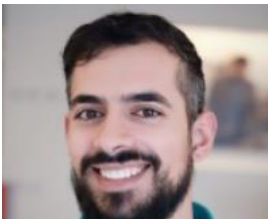
Heba Jaber
Heba is an enterprise technology strategist at Microsoft. She has an undergraduate degree in Computer and Information Technology and an MBA. She enjoys working with innovative mindsets.
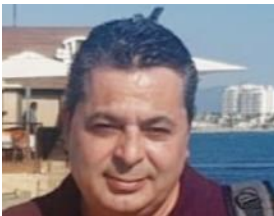
Muawyah Akash
Muawyah has 20 years of experience with a unique combination of technical knowledge and management/leadership in Israel, UK, France and Malaysia for major software companies. He holds a M.S.c. in Computer Science from the Hebrew University. He is highly motivated with multiple awards due to dedication, hard work and innovation.

Mohammad Awad
He is an experienced data scientist with a demonstrated history of working in the Hi-Tech industry. Mohammad is skilled in python, machine learning, deep learning and data Science. He is strong program and project management professional. He holds a Master's degree in Science (MSc) focused on Computer Engineering from Bahcesehir University.

Mazin Safadi
He is a results-driven, customer-focused senior software engineer, who has more than ten years of experience in implementing high-performance scalable platforms. He is an expert in using various software tools, languages, and methodologies.

Christian Zaknoun
He is a strategic business advisor and passionate about working with early-stage entrepreneurs. He enjoys supporting companies in developing scalable models. Christian is passionate about identifying scalable partnerships, business opportunities and overcoming development challenges.

Sami Kareen

Sami is the CEO of CUBE software tech. He developed EasySales; a mobile application targeting sales and marketing departments in companies.

Marwan Jaber

He is a software expert holding a master degree in Information Technology from Clark University. He works with different java technologies in web, mobile, client-server and enterprise.
He has experience in working with different technologies and agile methodologies.
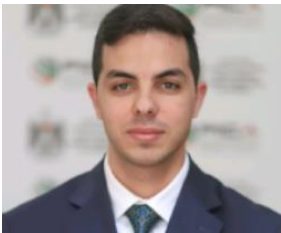
Muawiya Assali

Moawiah is an Experienced Software Engineer with a demonstrated history of working in various projects at different fields including semiconductors and automotive industries. He received his master degree with distinction from the Technical University of Munich. Today, he is a Senior Software Engineer at General Motors.

Amjad Abu- Rmileh

He is a machine learning and data science researcher: a biomedical & automation engineer (BSc, MSc, PhD) with experience in biological signal processing, machine learning, estimation theory, system identification and advanced control algorithms.

Majd Zghyer

He is passionate about the role of impact investing and entrepreneurial ventures in achieving peace, prosperity and sustainability across the MENA region. Majd holds a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in political economy.

Aya Abu El Khair

She is a designer and a specialist in branding and colors. Aya is a freelancer and she enjoys working with young entrepreneurs.
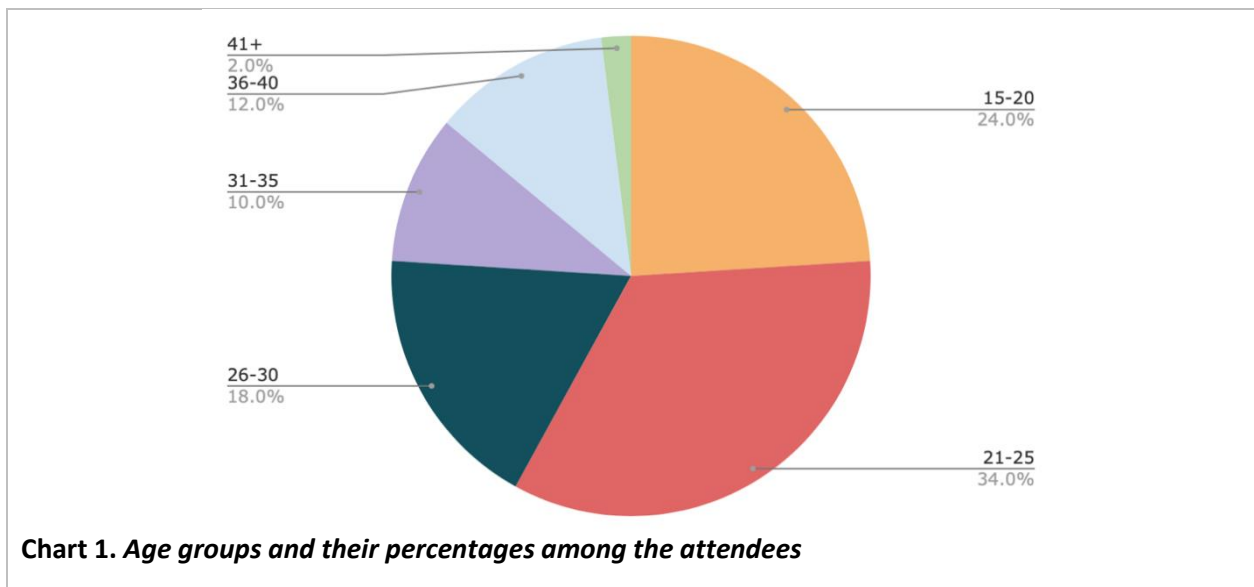
Hala Husseini
Hala is currently working at Bank of Palestine. She enjoys volunteering and helping young Palestinian entrepreneurs.

Participants

More than 120 people from Jerusalem, Gaza, Ramallah, Hebron, Haifa and Jenin were chosen to take part in the event and they formed 11 teams.

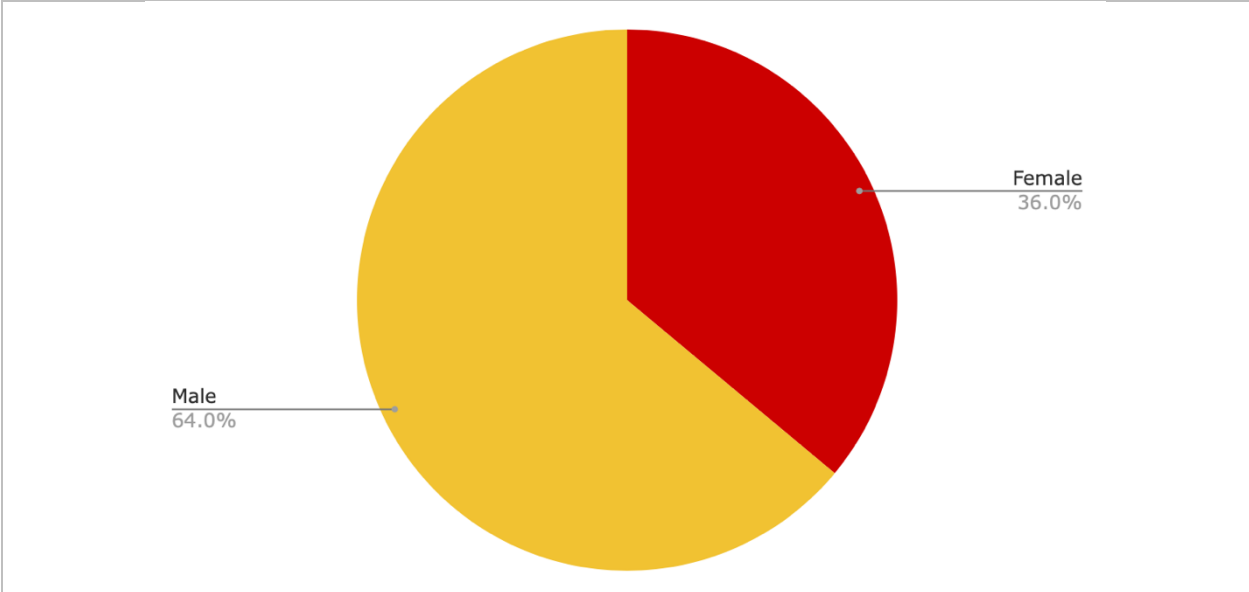The age group distribution of the participants can be seen in the graph below:

41+
2.0%
36-40
12.0%
15-20
24.0%
31-35
10.0%
26-30
18.0%
21-25
34.0%

Chart 1. *Age groups and their percentages among the attendees*

Chart 2. *The gender distribution of the participants*

Female
36.0%

Male
64.0%

Event Schedule

Thursday- 21.01.2021	
16:00	Opening remarks
16:10	Team Formation
17:00	Ideas Pitch
17:30- 21:00	Hacking & team work
Friday – 22.01.2021	
9:00	Hacking & team work
18:00	Guest session
19:00	Group leaders update
21:00	Hacking & team work
Saturday- 23.01.2021	
8:00	Hacking & team work
9:00	Group leaders update
10:00	Pitch deck preparation
12:00	Group leaders update
16:00	Pitch
17:30	Winners' announcement

Business Ideas

The teams worked on the following:

1. **MedTech:**
   - A system that saves the medical records of all the citizens (and can be shared with doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, etc.)
   - A Platform that provides scientific & medical content in Arabic for children.
   - An app that helps mothers know why their children are crying (if he/she is sad, hungry, sick, etc.,..)
   - AR system that assists people with first aid

2. **EduTech:**
   - A platform that offers interactive simulation games to help make education for children for entertaining
   - A platform that helps children learn new skills

3. **Ecommerce & Investment:**
   - A platform for ideas, that people can see and invest in the ideas that they are interested in
   - A platform that helps people design advertising and marketing materials
   - Platform for buying and selling PC parts

4. **Sustainable Products**
   - Generating electricity by pushing on things
   - Sustainable buildings

Winners

The winners took home the following prizes:

1st place	$2,850
2nd place	$2,150
3rd place	$1,550

The winners were:

First Place- QPC

About the Startup

What started as a simple idea focused around the provision of a special customer experience in a physical store developed to become centered around the creation of a region wide online community. QPC aims to serve the gaming sector through the provision of a unique digital experience and access to high-end products and accessories.

About the team members

Qais Alnoubani is a marketing specialist with a degree in International Business Management. He is the Co-founder of Pixelate Marketing in Jerusalem.

Dahoud Darwish is the Founder of matagir, an- e-Commerce startup that specializes in the automation of retail stores and product management, marketing and pricing. He is also the co-founder of watanimall.com.

Yazan Abbasi graduated in 2019 from Birzeit university as a computer engineer with a minor in marketing. He is currently working as a freelance full stack developer.

Second Place- Red Vision

About the Startup

Red Vision is an augmented reality application that provides the individual with first-responder abilities while using the mobile phone as an augmented reality headset. Red Vision connects the person who wants to give first-aid to an injured person of an accident with an emergency call center. The AR technology allows the emergency call center to instruct the user on how to give a proper first-aid. Meanwhile, the ambulance will follow the GPS coordinates that are provided by Red Vision.

About the team members

Samer Shawar is a user experience designer with various knowledge in different technologies from VR/AR, 3D modeling and 3D printing, machine learning, robotics, programming, and interactive installations. Samer founded the first hackerspace in Palestine (Vecbox), which was aimed to help empower communities through the use of technology. He has been practicing design and technology for the last eight years. His projects are based on user-centered research methods for collecting data and analyze it to produce reliable interactions and interfaces for the user. He led multiple projects in designing interfaces, interactive installations, and product design. He conducted various workshops in Design Thinking, Brainstorming, interactivity, and critical thinking. Samer is holding a master's degree in Human-Computer interaction from the University of Siegen. Samer is an active member of the Global Innovation Gathering, a network of grassroots innovators, social entrepreneurs, founders, and managers of maker spaces, hackerspaces, and innovation hubs.

Maha Abu Zarifa is a medical student who aims to change the world by combining her medical and business expertise.

Cry Care is an application that helps mothers, especially deaf mothers, know why their baby is crying, using artificial intelligence.

Mona El Rozzi is studying information technology. She is interested in entrepreneurship and artificial intelligence. She worked as a designer for several years.

Abed Al-Fattah Hroub is 23 years old, Computer Systems Engineer.
He has experience in software engineering and work techniques, he also has knowledge in web development. His greatest interest is in applications and algorithms of artificial intelligence and machine learning, and he obtained certificates related to deep learning, especially their application in self-driving cars, and he is working on a project in the field of computer vision for self-driving cars.

Mohammad Awad is currently studying computer system engineer. He is also a front-end developer.

Jenan Al-Far a student is a high school student at Schmidt Schule. She is passionate about coding.

Mahmoud Jamal worked as a freelance "Full-Stack" developer and enjoys learning new programing skills.

Startup Weekend Jerusalem invited Omar Jaabari to hold a session about the business model canvas, Adnane Addioui gave a very inspiring talk on his entrepreneurial experience and pitching skills, the second day, Dr. Mohammad Sharaf gave an inspiring talk about his success story in IOT.

Judges

The judging panel consisted of Reem Qawasmi, Mohammad Musleh, Salem Awadallah, and George Khadder.

Mohammad Musleh

He is an Information Technology professional with expertise focused on startups, technology infrastructure and collaboration platforms. He loves working with entrepreneurs and innovating and developing new concepts and products. He works and advises startups on building their technology and strategy. Additionally, he has a robust experience in establishing frameworks that can track business performance. Mohammad is passionate about development, inclusion, technology and science.

Salem Awadallah

Salem has Masters in Telecommunication Management and a B.S.E in Biomedical Engineering. He has over 20 years of experience in the information technology field that spans all areas of the software development life cycle from analysis and requirements to design, development, testing and implementation including Project Management and budgeting. He has the ability to lead teams from all facets of the business in the development and implementation of business and technology strategies that create competitive advantage. Salem is a member of the international institute of business analysis and a Certified Health Level Seven integration specialist.

George Khadder

George is a seasoned entrepreneur & business executive with 20+ years combined experience, over 13 of which were in the Silicon Valley tech & startup community. He is a strategic big-picture thinker and a results-focused Marketing, Strategy, Product Management, Business Development, & Investment professional. His experience covers startups to multinationals mostly in Silicon Valley, and includes enterprise and e-commerce software, semiconductor, private equity, healthcare, & Clean Tech, & GovTech verticals.
George holds a BS & MS in Aeronautical & Astronautical Engineering from Purdue University and master's level course work in Business, Marketing & E-commerce from the University of California at Berkeley.

Reem Qawasmi

Witnessing firsthand the way new ideas and innovations contribute to the well-being and development of people motivates Reem. She is not only passionate about growing new talents and innovative minds, but also loves building networks that bring new value to all members and connect people to create new opportunities. She believes that entrepreneurship is the engine for creating jobs and inventing the future.

Sponsors

The generous sponsors of this event are: Ooredoo, Sbitany and SUN Group.

Sbitany

A. Sbitany & Sons Co. Is an industry leader in the retail and wholesale of electrical home appliances. They believe that creating unique experiences is their duty; from shopping at thier retail stores to switching on a brand new tv for the first time, they strive to create those moments special for their customers. Founded in 1961 by the late Akram I. Sbitany, the company has evolved into the leader in the importing, marketing, and servicing of Electrical Appliances, Electronics, Commercial and Residential Air Conditions, Mobile Phones, and IT Products for the Palestinian market. With over 500 employees, 22 retails shops, and 250 dealers, Sbitany offers unmatched coverage throughout the Palestinian market.

SUN Group

Sun group is a Palestinian chain for retail stores that sell locally made clothes for all genders and age groups.

Ooredoo

Ooredoo is an international telecommunications company headquartered in Doha, Qatar. Ooredoo provides mobile, wireless, wireline, and content services with market share in domestic and international telecommunication markets, and in business (corporations and individuals) and residential markets.
It was the first operator globally to launch commercial 5G services in Qatar and is one of the world's largest mobile telecommunications companies, with over 115 million customers worldwide as of 2018.
Ooredoo has operations in 10 countries across the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia, including Algeria, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, Myanmar, Maldives, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, and Tunisia.

Ecosystem & Design Partners

The ecosystem & design partners are: 16 Baker Street, YPlus, Menacatalyst, AlNayzak, Hasoub, and AWSc.

16 Baker Street is a content creation and design firm that is based in Jerusalem.

YPlus

In the age of the widespread of false information, interrogative words are a tool for people across the globe to access credible and trustworthy information. Why is not just an interrogative word we use in the English language, as it became a universal term and one of the key words used in search engines on the Internet. The letter "Y" in people's minds is associated with questioning and curiosity to know more, and therefore we adopted Y+ as a symbol for our work.
Y+ is a digital storytelling platform that diffuses Palestinians unheard voices to the world. While our stories may focus on Jerusalem, we cover Ramallah, Nazareth, and wherever Palestinians live and strive to make a better future.

MenaCatalyst

MenaCtalyst consists of a group of talented and committed Palestinians from around the world working to build the "Palestinian virtual global economy." They do this by establishing collaborations between internationally based business leaders and investors from the Palestinian diaspora with our local based entrepreneurs and startups.

They have succeeded in reaching out to the Palestinian diaspora to create professional networks made up of high-profile impact investors, business leaders and mentors to enhance the viability of local entrepreneurial enterprise. They are taking these networks and creating connections between the Palestinian startup scene and our diaspora community of committed investors to provide guidance and the skill experiences needed to contribute to the success and marketability of entrepreneurs and startups.

ALNayzak

Al Nayzak is Palestinian non-profit, non- partisan, Jerusalemite and unique initiative that looks for young talents in science, technology, engineering, and math(STEM), and plants an ambitious vision in the hearts of our community:"To develop, root, and reinforce a new culture that embraces science, and to announce this culture among Palestinian youth so that their competence in productive applied sciences could provide them with better economic opportunities that would lead to their future prosperity."

Hasoub

Hasoub is a grassroots NGO paving the way for the coming generation of Arab tech-entrepreneurs and working towards creating a more productive Arab society, prospering with innovation and entrepreneurship.

Hasoub focuses on filling the pipeline with more potential Arab entrepreneurs by empowering university students and early-stage entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills, network and resources they need to pursue their dreams and build their startups.

AWSc

The forum of Arab Women in Science (AWSc) joins together postgraduate Arab women in the fields of sciences and engineering, aiming to support women's professional career pathways in academia as well as in industry.

It all started on April 17th 2014, when we met to discuss the sparse presence of Arab woman in advanced professional positions, and the efforts should be invested to increase it. And since, "if we are not for ourselves, who is for us? And if not now, when?" AWSc was established.

In AWSc, we are committed to provide women with the proper tools to help them break down barriers and achieve success and self-fulfillment, through invaluable leadership, innovation and commitment to their sector, and encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship, providing role models for the next generation.

Global Partners

Google Cloud Platform offered all Startup Weekend participants $300 USD in credit to build their web or mobile app! The participants received access to applications, storage and big data services.

Neustar provided a domain name for free for all the participants.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Private Sector Engagement

- Private Sector engagement with local NGOs is very promising, and will help the entrepreneurial ecosystem to grow faster in Jerusalem.
- Many family businesses have new generation of management on board, who are more open to explore and support new ideas, activities, and projects.

Logistics & Planning

- Bringing more than 120 Palestinians together from Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Diaspora together to work on solving global problems showed us a huge potential and hope in the rising generation. Even though holding the event fully online was not favorable for the organizing team, the fully virtual event allowed for more global collaboration.
- For any future similar events, the application process should be bi-lingual and simple. Complicated applications can push away good participants.
- With fully virtual events, it will be helpful in the future to have agreements with organizations that have a coworking space and good internet for participants, who do not have access to these services at home.

Guest Speakers

- Having guest speakers from different backgrounds and nationalities provided the participants with a unique experience.
- Guest speakers should be encouraged to use interactive activities in virtual sessions to increase engagement.
- Guest speakers should be encouraged to use one communication language (either 100% Arabic or 100% English).

Participants

- Including participants from different parts of the country (and internationally), encourages collaboration among the Palestinian youth and reduces the separation imposed by the occupation.
- The participants should be required to turn on their cameras in virtual events. This allows the participants to get to know their team members better. This also encourages more conversations and networks.

Next Steps

1. The organization team is contacting the winners to support them in growing their startup ideas. This includes connections to pre-seed accelerators, incubators, mentors (tech, business, financial, marketing, etc.) and co working space.
2. The organization team will also contact the participants, who did not win to explain how we can help them and connect them with the correct professionals to help their advance their entrepreneurial career.
3. We encourage anyone who can help the startups to contact us and discuss opportunities of cooperation.