



Jawwal

# Connecting Palestinians since 1999

**L**aunched in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1999, Jawwal, the Palestine Cellular Communications Company Ltd., is the first and leading mobile operator in Palestine. It offers its services to 2.9 million subscribers, employs more than 900 people, and has a network that covers 99 percent of urban Palestine with an extensive roaming network of 436 operators in 170 countries. Jawwal boasts 24 major showrooms in Palestine – 16 in the West Bank and 8 in Gaza; 5 service centers for strategic clients; 400 main and sub-distributors;

*Jawwal headquarters in Ramallah.*



*Abdul Majeed Melhem, general manager of Jawwal, Palestine Cellular Telecommunications Company Ltd.*

and literally thousands of points of sale. Jawwal is an integrated economic entity of Palestine Telecommunications Company (Paltel Group), which in turn is a telecommunications leader in Palestine, established in 1997 as a public shareholding company. The group is the number one employer among the private sector, with around 3,000 employees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, making it the largest employer after the Palestinian government. Being a pioneer in promoting international

standards of environment preservation in Palestine, Jawwal was awarded the globally recognized International Environmental Management System Certificate (ISO 14001) in 2006.

At the helm of Jawwal is Abdul Majeed Melhem who was appointed as general manager in October 2014. Mr. Melhem is entrusted with maintaining the company's strategic market positioning while strengthening its commercial and financial reputation and expanding its influence throughout the IT sector in Palestine. In order to carry out this formidable task, Melhem worked ceaselessly to strengthen the company internally by adopting the following as Jawwal's mission statement:

- We listen to our subscribers, individual and corporate alike, and strive to satisfy their changing needs
- We actively work to develop a national network that is reliable and trusted
- We are committed to setting a leading example of professionalism and integrity by grooming a world-class team of professionals
- We constantly showcase innovation in overcoming the challenges we face, aiming to realize desired growth and fulfill our vision.



Professionalism is at work at the Jawwal headquarters.

Jawwal does not simply follow up on technological advances, but more importantly, as Melhem notes, Jawwal in fact leads technology in Palestine. It seeks to keep pace with the most modern developments through upgrading and strengthening its own network in addition to providing Jawwal subscribers with the latest smart applications to benefit individuals, corporations, families, and students. *Sahlana Hayatak* (We made your life easier) is an umbrella term that is used for a number of applications developed internally at Jawwal, along with applications developed by major international companies. The Fleet Management System, which is based on the GPRS system and gives corporations control over their fleets, is one example of an application included under this umbrella. The *Hisabi* (My account) application, another example, allows both individuals and corporations to monitor and manage their accounts with extreme ease. In addition, Jawwal tailors programs for various segments of society and offers competitive prices based on the needs of each segment. One such program is the *Ana Hurr* (I am free) package that offers Palestinian youth (16- to 25-year-olds) unlimited airtime and messages with nine other subscribers for one shekel per day. Jawwal misses no opportunity to sponsor every major technology exhibition that is held in Palestine, and launches technology-related educational initiatives to support young Palestinians, such as the *We code* initiative, which aims to teach young Palestinians

coding skills with the aid of international experts, and the Hour of Code global initiative, which introduces computer science and basic coding to around 200 Palestinian schools through Paltel Foundation. Furthermore, Jawwal is a major sponsor for sports and youth activities across Palestine.

Similar to all telecommunication companies around the world, Jawwal faces the challenge of over-the-top (OTT) services, which result in the decrease of voice calls and messages due to platforms such as Viber and WhatsApp, etc., which bypass the operator in the control or distribution of the content. Although just about every other telecom company worldwide can compensate for its losses through selling data via 3G and 4G technology, politics weighs in heavily here and Palestine still awaits Israeli permission to acquire 3G technology. Melhem notes that Palestine is possibly the only country in the world that is still investing to acquire 3G, let alone 4G!

Unfair competition is yet another challenge that Jawwal faces. Major Israeli telecom operators strengthen their signals in illegal settlements in Palestinian territory, thus providing open access to 3G and 4G services. In addition, the Israeli authorities impose numerous restrictions on the import of key equipment and create other obstacles that hinder Jawwal's ability to package and offer value-added services.

Yet since its inception in 1999, despite continuing political and economic

instability, including fierce illegal competition, Jawwal has been able to grow and develop, gaining market recognition for operating in highly adverse conditions and winning the trust of more than 2.90 million subscribers to date. It would be an understatement to say that the journey has not been easy; however, Jawwal's achievement is a result of rigorous planning and determination in the face of huge challenges. Jawwal's team has long set its heart on providing the best service to subscribers and fulfilling their needs.

Prior to assuming his current position as general manager of Jawwal, Abdul Majeed Melhem spent four years as general manager of Paltel, the Palestine Telecommunications Company, the national fixed-line operator. He played

a key role in expanding the footprint of Paltel regionally in neighboring countries by signing agreements with major international companies. Melhem has had more than seventeen years of professional experience in the telecommunications sector, holding several key managerial positions. He is currently a member of the executive committee of Paltel Group. He is also a board member of VTel Jordan and Palestine Industrial Investment Company (PIIC). He holds a bachelor's degree in finance and accounting from Hebron University and received his executive training from renowned international institutions such as Harvard Business School and INSEAD.

*Photos courtesy of Jawwal.*

### In a highlighted box

#### Jawwal Milestones

- 1999: Commercial launch of Jawwal in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip
- 2000: Jawwal network utilizes a frequency of 4.8MHz, the minimum frequency required for any GSM operator
- 2001: Israeli authorities seize Jawwal equipment
- 2002: Jawwal halts the sale of lines to maintain a quality, dependable coverage that matches network capacity
- 2005: Jawwal installs switches and base stations in London, UK, enabling further expansion of line sales
- 2005: Jawwal exceeds the 500,000-subscriber mark
- 2006: Jawwal was granted the International Environmental Management System Certificate (ISO 14001)
- 2007: Jawwal resumes commercial sales
- 2007: Jawwal crosses the 1 million-subscriber mark
- 2007: Jawwal stops sales in the Gaza Strip following the destruction of infrastructure by Israeli aggression on the Strip
- 2010: Jawwal customer base surpasses the 2 million-subscriber mark
- 2011: Jawwal improves network support through new equipment and stations
- 2012: Jawwal provides professional and quality services to more than 2.45 million subscribers
- 2016: Jawwal provides professional and quality services to more than 2.90 million subscribers