



Centuries ago, Christians fasted in December in anticipation of the celebrations and joy of Christmas. Generally today, the abstinence and frugality of Advent – still practiced among many faithful of the Eastern churches – has given way to commercialism. And whereas some voices consider this

trend to be a distraction from the spiritual message of Christmas, from an economic standpoint, the Christmas season is a blessing for many businesses worldwide. Likewise, many Palestinians rely on visiting pilgrims and seasonal tourists, and benefit from the increased sales associated with gift giving, which illustrates the importance of export and the timeliness of this current issue.

The Palestinian economy relies heavily on its export sector for the generation of revenue. Palestine exports natural resources (stone and marble are main pillars of the export sector) and tourism (considered an export, as it brings in foreign currency), as well as manufactured items, such as footwear and leather or traditional handicraft creations that include carved olive-wood and mother-of-pearl objects, blown glassware, and embroidery. But there is more. The Palestinian ITC sector is expanding and full of as-yet-untapped potential, as it most easily transcends otherwise closed borders; the pharmaceutical sector is successfully defying difficulties; Palestinian dates are entering international markets; and Palestinian music groups are being discovered by international venues. But not all is rosy; the sector is facing numerous challenges, many of which are due to Palestine’s lack of control over its borders and crossing procedures.

Our thanks go to the authors and institutions that helped to put together this issue, namely, Minister of National Economy H.E. Abeer Odeh, Dr. Yahya Al-Salqan, Fadi Kattan, Samir Hulileh, the former Minister of National Economy Bassem Khoury, Mohammed Husain, Younes Yameen, Mohammed Al-Ram’ah, Hani Kort, Dr. Khader Zawahreh, Suzan Sahori, Rami Younis and Juliette Jagger, and Lucy Hishmeh. Contributing institutions include the Commercial Trade Representative Program, Pharmacare, PalTrade, and Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC).

Our personality of the month is the CEO of PalTrade, Hanan Taha; our book of the month guides visitors through Bethlehem; our artist of the month is Sana Tahboub. Where to Go entices visitors to visit the wood-carving workshops in Bethlehem, and TWiP Kitchen invites you to prepare delicious seasonal desserts from Palestine. Our Events section is bursting at the seams and encourages you to enjoy the Palestinian spirit of the season!

From the entire team of TWiP, we wish a Merry Christmas to all who are celebrating this month, and a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year to all of you.

Sincerely,

Tina Basem



Forthcoming Issues

January 2018: **Photography in Palestine**

February 2018: **Palestine’s Fresh Produce and Herbs**

March 2018: **Palestinian Women’s Ongoing Struggle**

Advisory Board

Nasser Al-Kidwa

Chairman, Board of Directors, Yasser Arafat Foundation

Naseer Rahmi Arafat

Cultural Heritage Enrichment Center

Ola Awad

President, PCBS

Riyam Kafri-AbuLaban

Principal, Friends Boys School

Mazen Karam

Managing Director, Bethlehem Development Foundation

Bassem Khoury

CEO, Pharmacare LTD

Abeer Odeh

Minister of National Economy