

## PRESS RELEASE

### Palestinian Furniture: Is it ready for the US market?

*Sam Bahour: "Palestinian firms have real opportunities in the global marketplace but seizing them requires a conscious removal of existing dependency blinders and real market research investments."*



(Salfet, 24/7/2018) – The community engagement platform for business and development, [RITAJ Roundtables](#), organized a community meeting with manufacturers and stakeholders of the furniture sector in Salfet in the West Bank to explore their interest in entering the US market. The event was held on behalf of the US non-profit organization based in the Chicago area, Americans for a Vibrant Palestinian Economy (AVPE).

Ms. Nisreen Musleh, Managing Director of [Ritaj Managerial Solutions](#), the host of RITAJ Roundtables, opened the meeting with welcoming remarks and introduced Mr. Sam Bahour, chairman of Americans for a Vibrant Palestinian Economy and Managing Partner of Applied Information Management, a Palestinian business development consulting company based in Ramallah.

The meeting's invitation-only audience featured two of the leading Palestinian furniture manufactures from Salfeet and neighboring Nablus, representatives from the Arab Islamic Bank's Small and Medium Enterprise, a representative from the Palestinian Markets Development Programme (PMDP), a leading donor-funded project working on private sector development, along with AVPE's Palestine Operation Officer. In addition, attending the meeting via video clips were [Mr. Robert Friedland](#) and [Mr. Michael Hirschhorn](#), both Jewish Americans living in New York, who are supporting this effort and potential buyers of furniture for the US market. The meeting was held at the Salfeet office of the [Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center](#).

After presenting the difficulties in getting the meeting arranged, Mr. Bahour explained the context of why AVPE has taken interest in this sector. He noted that AVPE merely tries to match Palestinian firms with resources in the US that can assist these firms to enter the US market; although only one step in the process, a crucial one in the process of opening new markets. When [mebl](#), a New York City-based furniture store located in Manhattan, expressed interest in buying Palestinian furniture, AVPE began a process of linking them to Palestinian manufactures. Mebl's theme is to offer "high-quality furniture, handcrafted from discarded old wood and metal."

Mr. Bahour noted that "Palestinian firms have real opportunities in the global marketplace, but seizing them requires a conscious removal of existing dependency blinders and real market research investments."

The participants' insightful discussion identified several practical issues that Palestinian firms face when it comes to exporting abroad, including a deep existing dependency on the Israeli market and the level of required investment to study new markets, especially the US market which is distant and requires a level of sophistication that local firms do not typically use. That noted, the discussion also raised the positive fact that Palestine furniture has zero tariffs in the US given that the 1985 United States-Israel-US Free Trade Agreement was extended to products from the Palestinian market.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Sam Bahour welcomed the rich discussion and highlighted that AVPE understands that every market has its particular dynamics and AVPE is keen on complementing the existing efforts by linking interested Palestinian firms to market information and businesses in the US.

The event ended in the RITAJ Roundtables tradition of distributing a "Made in Palestine" gift to each participant. Today's gift was a gift bag of infused olive oil soaps from the woman-led start-up [SIBA](#), whose factory is the first such factory to enter the Jericho Agro-Industrial park (JAIP).

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For more information or to arrange an interview with one of the speakers contact:

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