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Executive Summary

Qatar Market Entry for Palestinian Startups

This memorandum provides a practical, founder-oriented guide for Palestinian startups considering entry into the State of Qatar. Qatar has intentionally developed a startup ecosystem that combines incubators, free-zone structures, funding programs, and government-backed incentives to attract innovative, technology-driven companies from the region and globally.

The document explains the three primary incubation pathways—Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC), Digital Incubation Center (DIC), and Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP)—and compares their eligibility requirements, target startup stages, and application processes. It also outlines the national Startup Qatar platform and Investment Program, which supports startups launching in Qatar or expanding into the Qatari market, including assistance with licensing, incorporation, and immigration.

A step-by-step Qatar market-entry roadmap is provided, guiding founders from program selection and application preparation through incorporation, immigration planning, and operational setup. Special attention is given to considerations for holders of Palestinian passports, including best practices for managing travel, interviews, residency planning, and risk mitigation by prioritizing online screening before incurring relocation costs.

This memo is intended as a decision-support and planning document. Program requirements and immigration rules are subject to change, and founders should confirm final eligibility, visa requirements, and legal structures with the relevant Qatari authorities and advisors.



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Qatar Market Entry, Incubator Eligibility & Application Process for Palestinian Startups

To: Palestinian Startup Founders and Entrepreneurial Teams

Subject: Eligibility, application processes, and a practical roadmap for establishing startups in Qatar

1. Purpose

This memorandum consolidates publicly stated eligibility requirements and application steps for key Qatar startup support entities (QBIC, DIC, QSTP) and national Startup Qatar pathways. It provides a practical roadmap tailored to Palestinian founders seeking to establish, incubate, or scale their startups in Qatar.

2. Key Qatar Startup Support Entities

- Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC): Mixed-use incubator with the Lean Startup Program.
- Digital Incubation Center (DIC): Government-backed incubator focused on digital and ICT startups.
- Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP): Technology-focused incubator and Free Zone for innovation-driven companies.
- Startup Qatar: A national platform and investment program supporting startups launching or expanding in Qatar.

Qatar Comparison Table — Incubator Eligibility & Application Snapshot

Program / Entity	Best-Fit Stage	Who Can Apply	Eligibility Criteria (Published)	Application Process	Notes for Palestinian Founders
QBIC – Lean Startup Program	Idea to early MVP	Early-stage founders	Large problem, innovative solution, strong team, investment readiness	Online application → 11-week program → pitch to selection committee	Best for validation and pre-seed readiness before relocation
QSTP – Incubation Center	Tech startups	Innovation-driven teams	Technology focus, growth potential,	Application → review/interview → Free Zone	Allows online interviews



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			full-time founder commitment	incorporation if accepted	for teams outside Qatar
DIC – Idea Camp / Incubation	Digital startups	Digital/ICT founders	Track-specific ; innovation and scalability emphasized	Apply online → screening → cohort participation	Confirm residency rules per track before travel
DIC – Make the Deal	Investor-ready startups	MENA-based tech startups	Tech-enabled , early to growth stage	Application → mentoring → investor pitch event	Accessible pathway for regional founders
Startup Qatar Investment Program	Launching or scaling startups	START (PoC/MVP) and GROW (established)	High-growth, innovative business model	Program application → funding & incentives	Includes licensing and immigration support

3. Market Entry Roadmap-Qatar

1. Phase A – Select Entry Path: Incubation-first (QBIC, DIC, QSTP) or Investment-led (Startup Qatar).
2. Phase B – Prepare Applications: Pitch deck, MVP/PoC, founder bios, traction evidence.
3. Phase C – Admission & Setup: Incubation onboarding or entity incorporation.
4. Phase D – Immigration Planning: Align residency with program or company sponsorship.
5. Phase E – Operations: Banking, accounting, hiring, and compliance.

Peleset Angels Note

The Qatar market entry process is not a single application or decision point, but a progressive pathway. Startups that move sequentially—validating first, then establishing, and only later relocating—tend to manage risk more effectively and integrate more successfully into the ecosystem. We have prepared a Founder Preparation Checklist (See Annex A) that can assist you in preparing for the process.



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Phase A – Select Entry Path

Incubation-first vs. Investment-led Market Entry

Founders should first determine the most appropriate entry pathway into the Qatari ecosystem based on their stage of development, capital needs, and readiness for relocation.

Incubation-First Pathway

This approach is generally recommended for:

- Idea-stage or early-stage startups
- Founders seeking structured mentorship, validation, and ecosystem access
- Teams that are not yet ready for full relocation or legal entity setup

Under this pathway, startups apply to incubation programs such as:

- QBIC for broad entrepreneurial validation and pre-seed readiness
- DIC for digital and ICT-focused ventures
- QSTP Incubation Center for technology-driven startups seeking an eventual free-zone base

Incubation programs typically allow founders to validate business models, refine products, and build relationships before committing to incorporation or long-term residency.

Investment-Led Pathway (Startup Qatar)

This approach is better suited for:

- Startups with a working MVP or proven traction
- Teams explicitly planning to launch or expand operations in Qatar
- Founders seeking capital alongside relocation and establishment support

Under this pathway, startups pursue national-level programs (e.g., Startup Qatar Investment Program) that combine funding with business setup, licensing, and ecosystem integration incentives.

Phase B – Prepare Applications

Founder and Startup Readiness

Regardless of the entry path selected, founders should prepare a consistent and professional application package. Strong preparation significantly improves acceptance outcomes across all programs.



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At a minimum, startups should prepare:

- **Pitch Deck**
Clearly articulating the problem, solution, target market, competitive landscape, traction, roadmap, and team.
- **Product/Service Evidence**
Depending on stage, this may include a Proof of Concept (PoC), MVP demo, pilot results, letters of intent (LOIs), or early customer data.
- **Founder Biographies and Roles**
Highlighting domain expertise, complementary skill sets, and founder commitment (especially important where full-time involvement is required).
- **Traction and Validation Evidence**
User growth, revenue (if any), partnerships, pilot programs, or grant/funding history.
- **Strategic Rationale for Qatar**
A concise explanation of why Qatar is a logical market for expansion, including sector relevance, regional strategy, and long-term presence.

Programs assess not only the idea, but also execution capability and clarity of intent.

Phase C – Admission & Setup

Program Onboarding or Legal Establishment

Once accepted into an incubator or investment program, the startup moves into the setup and onboarding phase.

If Admitted to an Incubation Program

- Founders complete onboarding requirements (program agreements, milestone plans, reporting expectations).
- Participation may include structured training, mentorship sessions, demo days, and ecosystem events.
- For certain programs (e.g., QSTP Incubation), acceptance may include facilitation toward legal incorporation within a designated free zone, along with workspace access and subsidized services.



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If Admitted Through an Investment-Led Program

- The startup proceeds with formal company registration and licensing, subject to program terms.
- Setup may include registration within a Qatari legal framework (e.g., QFC or Free Zone structures), aligned with the startup's activities.
- Program milestones typically govern the timing of funding disbursements and additional incentives.

At this stage, founders should engage legal, tax, and accounting advisors familiar with Qatar to ensure structural compliance.



Phase D – Immigration Planning

Residency, Founder Presence, and Sequencing

Local Country Immigration and residency planning should be closely aligned with the startup's program status and legal structure.

Key considerations include:

- **Short-Term Presence**
Early interviews, program screenings, and ecosystem engagement should be completed remotely where possible, or via short visits once entry requirements are confirmed.
- **Long-Term Residency**
Longer-term residency for founders is generally linked to:
 - Company registration in Qatar
 - Sponsorship through an approved entity or program
 - Participation in national initiatives that include visa facilitation as a benefit

Founders should avoid assuming automatic visa eligibility and should treat immigration as a sequenced outcome, not a prerequisite. Acceptance into a program or establishment of a legal entity typically precedes residency eligibility.

Phase E – Operations

Building a Sustainable Qatar-Based Presence

After legal and immigration foundations are in place, startups move into full operational mode.

Core operational steps typically include:

- **Banking & Financial Infrastructure**
Opening local bank accounts and completing know-your-customer (KYC) requirements.
- **Accounting & Compliance**
Establishing bookkeeping systems, financial reporting, and tax compliance aligned with the company's legal structure.



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- **Hiring & Talent Planning**
Recruiting local or regional talent, structuring employment contracts, and aligning compensation with local labor regulations.
- **Workspace & Infrastructure**
Finalizing office or coworking arrangements where required, and setting up IT, legal, and administrative support.
- **Ecosystem Integration**
Actively participating in Qatar's startup ecosystem through events, partnerships, accelerators, and industry networks.

Operational discipline at this stage is critical, as compliance, financial transparency, and execution quality directly affect credibility with regulators, investors, and partners.

4. Considerations for Palestinian Passport Holders

- Palestinian founders should verify short-term entry requirements through official Qatar channels prior to travel. Where possible, founders are encouraged to complete interviews and screening remotely. Long-term residency and entrepreneur visa pathways are typically linked to incorporation or participation in approved programs such as Startup Qatar. For further information go to <https://business.hayya.qa/en>

5. Some Useful Qatar Links

- <https://incubator.qa/>
- <https://startupqatar.qa/en>
- <https://www.invest.qa/en/how-we-help/about-invest-qatar-gateway>
- <https://qstp.qa/>
- <https://qstp.qa/programs/incub8/>
- <https://qstp.qa/programs/the-300/>



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Annex A — Founder Preparation Checklist

This checklist outlines the core materials generally required by Qatar-based incubators, investment programs, and government-supported startup initiatives. Founders are encouraged to treat this annex as a working preparation guide rather than a rigid compliance list, as requirements may vary by program, sector, and startup stage.

1. Pitch Deck

The pitch deck is the primary decision-making document for incubators, investors, and program committees.

At a minimum, the deck should include:

- A. **Problem Statement** – A clearly defined, material problem with regional or global relevance.
- B. **Solution Overview** – The product or service, its unique value proposition, and why it is differentiated.
- C. **Market Opportunity** – Target customer segments, total addressable market (TAM), and regional applicability (including Middle East relevance where applicable).
- D. **Product & Technology** – Architecture overview, proprietary advantages, and development status.
- E. **Traction & Validation** – Users, pilots, revenue, partnerships, or demand signals.
- F. **Competitive Landscape** – Key competitors and defensible positioning.
- G. **Go-to-Market Strategy** – Customer acquisition, partnerships, and scaling approach.
- H. **Team** – Founders' roles, expertise, and execution capability.
- I. **Roadmap & Milestones** – 12–24-month product and business milestones.
- J. **Funding & Use of Proceeds** – If applicable, how capital or incubation support will be deployed.

Best practice: Keep the core deck to 10–15 slides, with detailed appendices available upon request.

2. Product Demo / PoC / MVP

Programs in Qatar strongly favor evidence of execution, even at early stages.

Acceptable formats may include:

- A clickable product demo (web or mobile)
- A recorded walkthrough video



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- A live staging environment or sandbox
- Prototype designs, wireframes, or technical proof of concept
- Pilot results or early deployment outcomes

The objective is not perfection, but proof that the team can build and iterate.

3. Founder CVs & Roles

Each founder should provide a concise professional profile highlighting:

- Relevant technical, industry, or commercial experience
- Previous startup or scale-up exposure (if any)
- Clear role definition within the startup (e.g., CEO, CTO, Product Lead)
- Time commitment (particularly where full-time founder presence is expected)

Many Qatar programs place emphasis on founder commitment and capability, not just the idea. Commitment means full time, “all in” not just week-end work

4. Cap Table (Capitalization Table)

A simple, transparent capitalization table is typically sufficient at early stages.

The cap table should show:

- Authorized shares
- Complete list of shareholders
- The total number of shares each of the shareholders own
- The type of shares each stakeholder own
- The percentage of ownership stake
- Outstanding shares
- Shares reserved for stock options
- Unissued Share

Avoid complex structures at early stages unless legally required. Other equity elements, such as SAFEs and convertible debts, are part of the cap table but not included in its main section. This is because the value of these instruments is not yet important, because they only convert into equity on the startup’s next round or another agreed upon event. Therefore, they are listed in a separate cap table section containing other information. This information includes the investor,



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the date of issuance, any interest rate on the notes, their maturity date, and the terms for converting the convertible debts and SAFEs into equity. Contact us if you need a template.

For a more in-depth analysis go to <https://www.basetemplates.com/cap-table-template>.

5. Traction Metrics & Validation Evidence

Traction signals vary by startup stage but may include:

- User adoption or usage growth
- Revenue, bookings, or contracts*
- Letters of intent (LOIs) or memoranda of understanding (MOUs)
- Pilot programs or institutional partnerships
- Grant funding or prior investments
- Key KPIs relevant to the business model

**=For idea-stage startups, customer discovery insights and validation interviews can substitute for revenue.*

6. Financial Snapshot

A high-level financial overview demonstrates commercial awareness and discipline.

Recommended inclusions:

- Current operating expenses (burn rate)
- Revenue to date (if any)
- 12–24-month financial projections
- Key financial assumptions (pricing, margins, growth drivers)
- Funding to date and funding runway

Detailed audited statements are generally not required for early-stage programs. The key is to have good forecasted financial statements that are based on sound achievable assumptions.

7. Qatar Expansion Rationale

Founders should clearly articulate why Qatar/MENA is a strategic market, not just an opportunity for funding.

This section may address:



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- Alignment with Qatar’s priority sectors (tech, digital, health, energy, sustainability, etc.)
- Competitive or regulatory advantages of establishing in Qatar (Eg. tax savings, capital access)
- Regional expansion strategy using Qatar as a hub
- Potential customers, partners, or institutional demand within Qatar
- Long-term commitment versus short-term program participation

Programs consistently favor startups with a credible local relevance narrative.

8. Hiring Plan & Team Growth

Where applicable, founders should outline:

- Key roles to be hired over the next 12–18 months
- Functions expected to be based in Qatar versus remote
- Use of local talent, graduates, or ecosystem partners
- Executive versus technical hiring priorities

This helps programs assess job creation potential and ecosystem contribution.

9. Compliance & KYC Documents

Compliance documentation is typically requested after acceptance, but founders should prepare early.

Common items include:

- Valid passports for founders and directors
- Proof of address (home or business)
- Existing company registration documents (if incorporated elsewhere)
- Board resolutions or authorization letters (if applicable)
- Organizational charts or ownership declarations

Preparing these materials early reduces delays during incorporation or onboarding.