Palestine online: cyber Intifada and the construction of a virtual community 2001-2005

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Table 1: Timetable Palestinian Internet

One decade of Groundbreaking Developments

1996  
15/11/96 (Palestinian Independence Day): investors Telecom sector receive monopoly licence; 
First Palestinian ISPs (PalTel, Palestine Online, etc.) begin to offer internet connection; 
First Internet Cafe (IC) experiment; costs were 10-15 NIS per hour; 
Palestinian ICT initiative applies for .PS domain name at ICANN;

1997  
Palestinian Telecom sector begin to operate; start of PalTel; 
First Palestinian website (Birzeit University) and first Homepages in Palestinian Diaspora; 
First Online Radio programme OutLoad (by the BZU team).

1999  
First Arab Interface Website started by Maktoob; 
Increase of ICs, prices drop to 7-8 NIS an hour; 
Total (i.e. home plus Internet cafe access) Internet access rate estimated at: 3%.

2000  
mIRC chat programme becomes popular in Internet Cafes; 
Arab email and chat programmes popularize; 
Amman-Net website offers radio programmes via Jordan/Palestinian frequency; 
ICANN appoints .PS domain name to Palestine.

2001  
Costumers use webcam and microphone during MSN/Messenger/and Chat sessions; 
ICs price-war in the cities, prices drop further to 4 NIS an hour; 
Total (i.e. home plus Internet cafe access) Internet access rate estimated at: 6%.

2002  
Successful Palestinian PR campaigns through websites such as Electronic Intifada, Palestine Monitor; 
Hamas’ Palestine-Info develops into a successful Palestinian website.

2004  
PalTel introduces direct internet connection service, bypassing all ISPs; 
Total (i.e. home plus Internet cafe access) Internet access rate estimated at: 20%.

2005  
Google enables Arab search tools; 
(R)Evolution of websites: from Homepages to Blogs; 
RSS-feeds outdo classic hyperlink reference; 
Hamas’ Palestine-info becomes important source/reference; 
PalTel penetration rate for direct (home) internet connection reaches: 11%

2006  
YouTube and other multimedia video/music programmes also popularize in Arab World; 
PalTel penetration rate direct (home) internet connection grows to: 18%; 
Intensive online involvement Palestinian political movements via internet forums; 
Total (i.e. home plus Internet cafe access) Internet access rate estimated at: 30%.