

Tsofen-Tashbik—Fostering Social Cohesion through Employment in Israel’s Hi-Tech Sector

In the wake of October 7, Israel faces unprecedented social and economic divides—particularly between Jewish and Arab communities. Now more than ever, partnership matters: together, we can shape a more just, inclusive, and united Israel.

Background | *Tsofen-Tashbik is a collaborative Arab and Jewish non-profit organization that develops hi-tech in the Arab community as an economic lever and catalyst for shared society in Israel.*

Since 2007, Tsofen-Tashbik’s core work has been the **integration of Arab engineers into Israel’s hi-tech sector** through a pipeline of technical and soft skills training, individual mentoring by industry veterans, and placement in suitable employment in the industry, along with myriad ecosystem and networking events, **as a lever for building shared society on Israel between Arabs and Jews**, directly influencing more than 110,000 Israeli Jews and Arabs. Along the way, various other connected projects have achieved considerable impacts in support of our vision, some of which we list here.

The Need | Disparities in socio-economic status could hinder Israel’s resilience and future growth. Arab citizens are disproportionately affected by higher rates of poverty and unemployment, underrepresented in the country’s burgeoning economic sectors. While Arabs constitute over 20% of Israel’s population, they currently represent just 4.5% of the hi-tech workforce.

Furthermore, an estimated loss of 32 billion Shekels annually in the Israeli economy is attributed to underemployment in the Arab population.

A few of our achievements since 2007!

- ✓ **Placed** a quarter of the 16,000 Arab hi-tech employees in Israel today (there were only 350 Arabs in hi-tech in 2007), contributing billions to Israel’s GDP annually.
- ✓ **Trained** 2,000 undergraduates and recent graduates through 80 technological and soft skills training courses.
- ✓ **Provided personal mentoring** by Jewish or Arab industry veterans to 1,864 candidates; many mentees return to volunteer as mentors for their successors.
- ✓ **Exposed** 15,000 Arab high school students majoring in STEM to the possibilities of studying for a degree—and subsequent career—in hi-tech. The program was discontinued when it was mainstreamed in the school system.
- ✓ **Drafted** government resolution 3780 providing for government allocation of 60 million NIS for the first hi-tech parks in Arab cities; [North Park](#) hi-tech park is expected to open in 2025.
- ✓ **Developed** a five-year policy plan for hi-tech in Arab society, fully incorporated into government resolution 550, the 30 billion NIS, 5-year economic development plan for Arab society.
- ✓ **Mainstreamed** our training and placement model when it was taken up by the government as the [Forsatech](#) project—for which we held the tender for the north of Israel for the last decade.
- ✓ **Hosted** hundreds of networking and ecosystem-building events, involving more than 10,000 Jews and Arabs.
- ✓ **Held** more than 20 hackathons bringing together Jewish and Arab engineers to achieve a successful development project in a competitive event over 2-3 days.



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Challenges today | The war which followed the tragic events of October 7, 2023, primarily affected our alumni—young Arab engineers who had integrated into often largely-Jewish tech firms, and were now feeling uncomfortable at best and under attack as ‘the enemy’ at worst. Even as we put in place programs to address this, the war led to reallocation of government budgets originally earmarked elsewhere, including to Arab society, to the military, to support displaced populations in the north and south, and to support the victims and families affected by the conflict. For us this meant that **the loss of one third of our revenues** which had historically come from the government, when the Forsatech tender was not renewed when it ended in the summer of 2024.

With no government funding, our 2025 budget comprised just less than 50% philanthropy, and just over 50% from the second year of a USAID grant program. But in January 2025, President Trump signed an Executive Order, Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid, freezing our USAID funding and, on 26 February, we received an official notice terminating our award, along with 80% of USAID awards. Our CEO, Maisam Jaljuli, was interviewed about the broader funding situation in an article in [Calcalist](#).¹ Everything we have achieved since 2007 is threatened and our beneficiaries left without the vital assistance we provide them as a result of this sudden loss with no notice, which amounts to **a loss of nearly \$1.3 million in 2025 alone, and a further \$800,000 in 2026**.

Forward together | Naturally we are working very hard to replace the lost funding, but we have already had to let go 25% of our experienced staff. Together with a partner NGO, we have applied for the new Forsatech tender which was finally published, but we need to bridge the financial gap to winning it later in the year, to be able to keep the experienced staff necessary to win this tender. At the same time, we are carrying out—together with our partner—a feasibility study into merging our two organizations, both to combine our respective strengths of provision, and to achieve economies of scale in the current economic downturn.

Further information | This is just a snapshot of our history and current situation. We will be more than happy to answer questions or provide additional materials about our activities, and how they are *changing Israeli society and bringing about social cohesion through employment*.

Please be in contact with our CEO, Maisam Jaljuli at maisam.j@tsofen.org, or her Deputy, Merav Boaz (Boozy) at merav.b@tsofen.org.

Tsofen-Tashbik was founded in 2008 by hi-tech entrepreneur, **Smadar Nehab**, former *Amdocs* executive, **Yossi Coten**, and **Sami Saadi**, a trailblazer in the field of Jewish-Arab relations.

Former longtime CEO of *HP Indigo*, **Alon Bar-Shany**, co-chairs our Board alongside **Fadi Aboud**, Intel fellow at *Intel Corporation*.

Founded and promoted by Tsofen-Tashbik, the *Public Council for the Advancement of Hi-Tech in Arab Society* is co-chaired by **David Perlmutter**, former Executive VP, *Intel Corporation*, and **Prof Ziyad Hanna**, Corporate VP, *Cadence Design Systems*.

Tsofen-Tashbik’s CEO is **Ms. Maisam Jaljuli**, a leading social activist in the Arab community.

¹ <https://www.calcalistech.com/ctechnews/article/wu3fc0hec>.