

Risk Management and ISO 31000 in Palestine

Interview conducted for isotc262.org by
Dr. Frank Herdmann with

Ahmed Safadi, Head of the Palestine delegation to TC 262



Ahmed is a project and program manager for 16 years who started his career in the manufacturing sector in the oil and gas industry in Canada. He focused on lifecycle management with an emphasis on risk management. In 2013 he relocated to Palestine working as a consultant for both public and private enterprises integrating risk management into daily operations. Ahmed is a certified project management professional (PMP) in the Project Management Institute (PMI) and a member of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientist of Alberta (APEGA) since 2010.

isotc262.org: *Ahmed you were the head of the Palestine delegation to the ISO/TC 262 meeting in October 2016 in Amman. Can you briefly introduce the Palestine Standards Institution (PSI), your national standardization organization, please?*

Ahmed: Established in 1994, the Palestinian Standards Institute was established to be the entity acknowledged for standardization, metrology, and testing by business and consumer community locally and internationally. With a vision to significantly enhance Palestinian participation in the international system of specifications, PSI's mission is to facilitate trade and investment in Palestine. This is done through creating an enabling environment for businesses (measurement, testing, standardization...etc.) to comply with the latest technical, management, environmental and health and safety standards in all sectors of the Palestinian economy.

isotc262.org: *How long have you been mirroring the TC 262 work in PSI?*

Ahmed: I have been involved in risk management for about 14 years and have been an active member in the PSI management standards committee for the past three years. Risk management has been an exciting topic for the committee, for which we have established a risk management mirror committee in Palestine since 2015. We have

already translated and adopted the previous edition of the standard and we are looking forward to adopting and implementing the new one.

isotc262.org: *Was is your personal experience in risk management?*

Working as a project manager and later as program manager for the manufacturing sector, risk management was conducted casually and did not follow a structured approach. Since acquiring my PMP designation, I have paid greater attention to the management of risk and held many training sessions for my co-workers on how to properly integrate risk management throughout project implementation. However, moving to work in Palestine has proven to be a challenge for myself; most of the organizations I worked with lacked the proper structure of managing their daily affairs. I took on the challenge and I have been working actively to build the awareness of the importance of implementing risk and health & safety management in organizations.

isotc262.org: *What is the impact of risk management and in particular ISO 31000 in Palestine?*

Ahmed: Despite being well acquainted personally with terminology of risk management, the concept itself is new to the Palestinian market. The introduction of the latest ISO 9001:2015 edition lead to many business owners enquiring about risk management, what it entails and more importantly why should it be considered. I see a great value in the introduction of risk management 31000 for all types of businesses indeed it might even translate to a game-changer when it comes to strategic planning, specially in our volatile environment.

isotc262.org: *Who are the key stakeholders of risk management in Palestine?*

Ahmed: I would say all organizations currently certified to ISO 9001 would make up the majority of the key stakeholders. Most, if not all, financial institutions will definitely see the value of integrating the standard into their management systems, as well as organizations and non-governmental organizations involved in economic infrastructure development in Palestine.

isotc262.org: *What are the biggest obstacles for integrating risk management in all organizational activities for managers in Palestine?*

Ahmed: The current mindset of management who sees standards as an extra documentation activity might prevent them from seeing the real value of integrating such standard in their systems. Nevertheless, with awareness building, I believe this mindset can be easily changed. Moreover, business owners might consider the level of effort required to properly conduct risk management as an extra activity that consumes resources and eventually cost money.

isotc262.org: *ISO 31000 quickly became one of the bestselling and most well recognized standards in ISO. What do you think about the future of the standard and how will it change to adapt to new challenges?*

Ahmed: Let me first say how thrilled Palestine was in being part of the working group to get a first look at the new standard. Compared to the old version, the new standard is definitely more user-friendly, uses simpler language and can easily relate to different businesses. This will only bring a brighter future for the standard where I foresee greater demand for integration.

There is a lot of value to be gained by incorporating this standard into just about any organization regardless of size. Organizations can easily use the new version of the standard to steer their decision making to optimally achieve their strategic goals.

isotc262.org: *Having been to the Amman Meeting, what was your experience and what advice can you give to interested parties in Palestine who want to offer their input to the work of ISO/TC 262 and who should they address?*

Ahmed: I believe taking part of the development of the standard is a great honor and I strongly urge those with experience to join us so that the world can benefit from their experiences. The Palestinian market does not have many risk management experts but I am sure organizations conduct some type of risk analysis on an ongoing basis. I would like to take this opportunity to extend the invitation for participation in our mirror committee to maximize the benefits.

isotc262.org: **Thank you very much!**

Ahmed: Thank you.