

# Annual Report 2024



10  
YEARS

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Palestine Institute  
for Biodiversity and  
Sustainability at  
Bethlehem University

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معهد فلسطين للتنوع الحيوي والإستدامة  
Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability



متحف فلسطين للتاريخ الطبيعي  
Palestine Museum of Natural History  
(PMNH)



# Welcome!

PIBS and its surrounding botanical garden is an oasis for people and wildlife in Bethlehem, Palestine: a place of conflict and rapid transformation. It is a place of learning and rejuvenation for Palestinians and international visitors.

## Preface

This report on our activities in 2024 can be summed up in one sentence: a very rewarding year but also a challenging one — not just for us but for Palestine.

An accelerating Israeli genocide (aided and abetted by Western governments) left tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians killed (including over 20,000 children). This was accompanied by the destruction of schools, universities, hospitals, infrastructure, homes, water facilities and more. The horror was compounded by denial of food, medicine, clean water, and electricity.

Our Institute rose to the challenge of not only operating as an oasis of hope in the West Bank but also directed energy and resources to help in the Gaza Strip and globally. Our research efforts were expanded to study the impact of wars on the environment and on education. We directly helped our colleagues and friends in the Gaza strip and also the suffering people in Bethlehem (lack of tourism in a religious tourism destination was devastating for the local economy). We held educational events and did media interviews about the genocide, ecocide, scholasticide, medicide, and omnicide. Prof. Qumsiyeh and

Jessie Qumsiyeh travelled to seven countries to talk about our institution's work and raised funds for Gaza and for the Institute. Their message reached over 20,000 people.

This (re)directed research and awareness work was in addition to our usual work at the Institute with projects in children's education and community service.

Despite restrictions on movement in the West Bank over the past year, we finalized projects requiring field research (taking risks to reach our work sites). And while the occupation destroyed all around us in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, we continued to build and plant in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ. For example, we held over 130 educational workshops and hundreds of lectures.

The team attended many capacity building workshops that ensure valorization and stewardship of our nature. Through our diverse programs in research, education, conservation and community service, we came closer to our goals in sustainable human and natural communities.

Our ongoing commitment to using education as a tool for positive change remains at the heart of our work, and we look forward to expanding our impact in the years to come.

This year was especially significant as it marked our 10th anniversary—a milestone that highlights a decade of commitment to protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainability, and advancing environmental education in Palestine. Despite the many challenges, we have continued to grow, innovate, and make a lasting impact on both people and nature.

We are deeply grateful to our dedicated staff, volunteers, donors, supporters, and well wishers who have been part of this journey. As we look ahead to 2025, we remain committed to our mission of fostering harmony between people and the environment, working toward a more peaceful, just, and sustainable future in Palestine and beyond.



SEE OUR  
10 YEARS  
BOOKLET



SEE OUR  
10 YEARS  
VIDEO

## 2024 IN REVIEW

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**9,996** volunteer hours

**53** volunteers

34 FEMALE, 19 MALE

**\$150,000** unrestricted funding

**9** funded projects implemented

2 NEW FUNDED GRANTS

**132** educational activities

38 SCHOOL VISITS, 58 WITH CHILDREN, 6 WITH WOMEN  
(BENEFITTING 89 WOMEN AND 3,200+ CHILDREN)

**600+** seminars and talks

BENEFITTING OVER 11,000 ADULTS

**18** field trips

**24** manuscripts produced



# Research

COLLECTIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

## Collections

The ongoing war in Gaza, which began on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent attacks severely disrupted our operations, particularly limiting movement between governorates and restricting fieldwork. Despite these challenges, we managed to carry out 18 field trips across the West Bank, focusing on nocturnal wildlife and local flora and fauna. PIBS team documented bat species using echolocation tools and emphasized identifying invasive plant species in biodiverse, under-researched areas.

These field trips provided crucial research insights and contributed to expanding our collections and deepened our understanding of local ecosystems, supporting our conservation and education mission:

### Flora Collections

We continued mounting specimens in the herbarium, which now holds 2,025 samples representing 1,085 taxa from 97 plant families, with seven families added in 2024. We identified 508 new or rare species (331 in 2024). Collected under the initiative funded by GGI-Gardens, our freezer now contains 605 genome-quality plant tissue samples from 509 species across 89 families.



### Fauna Collections

We updated and organized our catalogues, which now include over 7,400 insects, 750 vertebrates, 1,800 arachnids, and 10,000 snails (ongoing).

### Botanical Garden Survey

A thorough survey conducted this year revealed that the garden hosts 334 plant species, including 306 wild plants (150 in the herbarium), 9 introduced species, 10 ornamental species, and 9 invasive species being actively managed. Unfortunately, 58 species did not thrive.

## Publications

We published 24 papers in 2024 which is a record for our institution. As you can see, our research expanded to areas like environmental justice and the Palestinian struggle for sustainable living.

Adawi, S. H., Handal, E. N., Romdane, M. S., Hmida, L., and RB Ahmed, 2024. **Diversity of freshwater leeches (Annelida: Hirudinida) in the West Bank, Palestine.** *Zoology in the Middle East*, 1-20.

Allombert, Ch. and MB Qumsiyeh. 2024. [Israel designation of "Nature Reserves": A tool of colonization.](#) *International Review of Contemporary Law* 6(4):9-14

Al-Sheikh, B. and J. Gedeon. 2024. **Newly Documented Invasive Alien Species in West Bank, Palestine.** *Feddes Repertorium* (submitted)

Al-Sheikh, B. MB Qumsiyeh, and AS Hubbeih 2024. **Noteworthy Records of Vascular Plants from the West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territories.** *J Threatened Taxa*. Accepted.

Gedeon, J.G. and Khalilieh, A.I. **Shedding light on the geographical distribution, population size and inflorescence coloration variety of Royal Irises (Iris section Oncocyclus) family in West Bank, Palestine.** *Plant Sociology*, 61: 49-71.

Handal, E.N., Al-Shomali, S.L. and Adawi, S.H., 2024. [Four New Records of Beetles \(Coleoptera\) from the Palestinian Territories-West Bank.](#) *Jordan Journal of Natural History*, 11(1), pp.18-23.

Khalifah C. and MB Qumsiyeh 2024. [How the colonizers are also mentally colonized: An Israeli-Palestinian Example.](#) *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*, 29:92-100.

Qumsiyeh M.B. 2024. [A Path to Peace: Challenge transformed to opportunity.](#) *This Week in Palestine*, Jan 2024.

Qumsiyeh MB 2024. [Impact of Israeli Military Activities on the Environment.](#) *Int'l J Env Studies* 81(2) 977-992.

Qumsiyeh M.B. y H. Clauer 2024. [El uso de los "parques nacionales israelíes" como herramienta de limpieza étnica.](#) *Comité de Solidaridad con la Causa Árabe*. 5 Jan 2024

Qumsiyeh, MB 2024. [Biologiste palestinien : «Nous vivons un génocide et un écocide. ils sont intentionnels.»](#)

Qumsiyeh, M.B. 2024. [The Gaza Strip Lights the Way Globally as Colonizer Masks All Fall.](#) *New Observations Magazine*. 144:38-41.



Qumsiyeh, M.B. And Z.S.Amr. 2024 **Northern Great Rift Valley: deserts and other biomes.** Chapter 28 (in Global Biome Conservation and Global Warming: Impacts on Ecology and Biodiversity, Elsevier Publishers)

Qumsiyeh, M.B. 2024. [Destroyed Ecosystems: Impact of Israeli Military Activities on the Environment.](#) This Week in Palestine, Feb 2024.

Qumsiyeh, Mazin, Zena Cumpston, and Rasha Tayeh. 2024. **Conversation: Land, Biodiversity, and the Colony.** The Arrow: A Journal of Wakeful Society, Culture & Politics 11(1):82-89

Qumsiyeh, M.B. and S. Banat 2024. [Scholasticide: The ongoing colonial attack on Palestinian Higher Education.](#) Science for the People. 26(3): 20-22, 46-47.

Qumsiyeh, MB 2024. **Everything we do is engaged in resistance.** Chapter in Book on Wall of Tears (edited by David Kerr)

Qumsiyeh M.B. M.H. Najajrah, E.N. Handal, J. Gideon , and M.A. Abusarhan 2024. [The Importance of Urban Eco-gardens for Biodiversity and Human Sustainability: A Case Study from Palestine.](#) Cities and the Environment, vol 17, issue 1.

Qumsiyeh, M.B. 2024. **Of Thawed Memories: A novella.** In Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Palestine, edited by Lila Adib Sharif, Jennifer Lynn Kelly, and Somdeep Sen. Duke University Press. In press

Qumsiyeh, M.B., C. McHugh, S. Shaheen, M. H. Najajrah. 2024. [Bio-cultural landscape and Eco-friendly agriculture in Al-Arqoub villages, south Jerusalem, Palestine.](#) Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems. 48(10):1489-1513

Qumsiyeh, MB, K. Jarrar, M. Sadr. 2024. **Durable Peace Education towards Sustainable Communities.** Chapter in Book on Peace Education. Peace Knowledge Press

Qumsiyeh, MB 2024. **A path forward.** Z Magazine, September 2024, pp. 7-8.

Qumsiyeh, MB 2024. **Of civil resistance and Joint Struggle.** Fellowship of Reconciliation Magazine.

Qumsiyeh, MB 2024. **Why Palestine Matters.** Public Sphere.



CHECK OUT MORE  
PUBLICATIONS ON  
THE SITE



# Education and Awareness

Our mission is anchored in three core pillars: research, education, and conservation. Education is crucial for successful conservation efforts, which is why we focus on raising awareness and sharing knowledge within local communities. We offer educational initiatives that cater to children, environmental professionals, researchers, activists, and stakeholders.

Throughout this year we partnered with many wonderful organizations including [Caritas Jerusalem](#) to strengthen environmental stewardship among 500 students in eight schools around the Al-Makhrour region, and with the **A.M. Qattan Foundation** to host two workshops for 6th to 9th grade students at [Thabra Mixed Basic School](#).

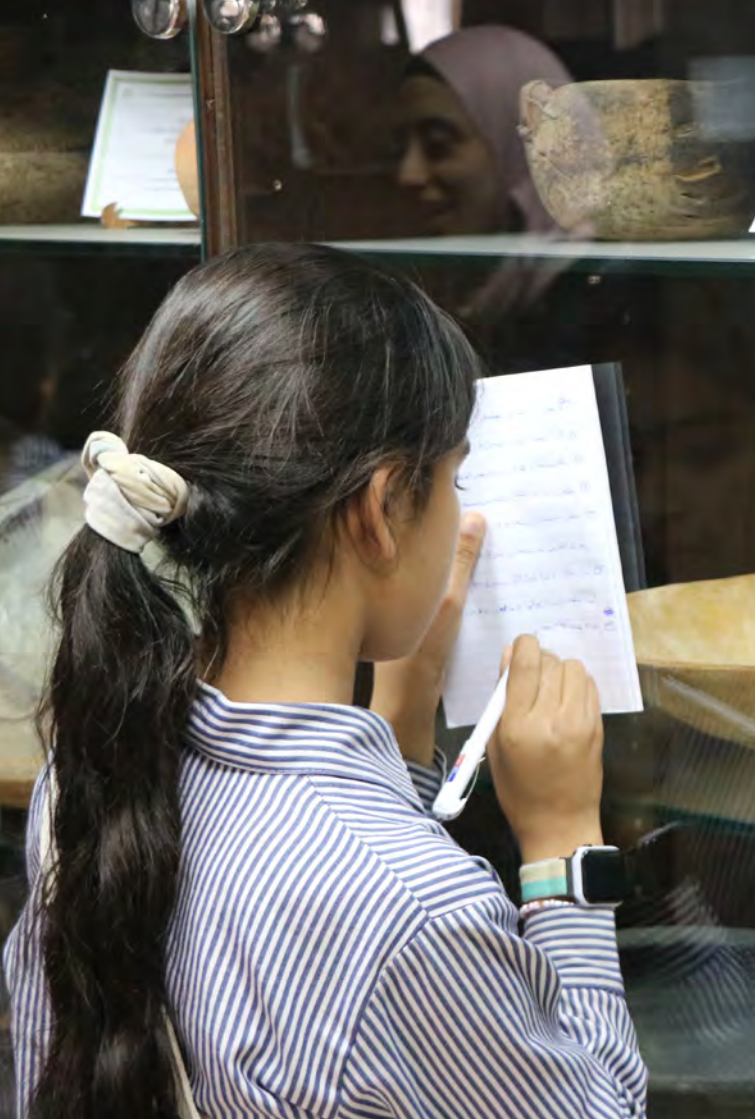
We conducted an [Environmental Day at Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem](#) (**Lutheran World Federation**) focused on educating hospital staff about agriculture's role in promoting biodiversity and well-being, marking an important step in our efforts to serve Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem.

We continued our collaboration with the **Salesians of Don Bosco at Cremisan Monastery**, which began in 2021 and allowed us to organize 10 educational trips for 275 children in 2024 ([link](#)).



including guided hikes through the protected Cremisan Nature Reserve.

Through [partnership with the Palestine Heritage Trail](#), we introduced 14 schools and 581 students to environmental trails and eco-friendly hiking. It also included a Training of Trainers (ToT) session for 4th-grade teachers on geography, biodiversity, and sustainability, empowering them to inspire ecological awareness and responsibility in students.



We partnered with **Women Media and Development/TAM** and the **Nahalin Municipality** to conduct four engaging workshops focused on establishing a [Women's Environmental Center in Nahalin](#). As part of our commitment to empowering women, we offered sessions on [sustainable gardening](#), and practical solutions to water shortages, such as making [biodegradable detergents](#) and [scrubs](#), empowering participants to promote eco-friendly practices and water conservation in their communities.

As part of our ongoing children's educational activities, funded by Ms. Elena Probst since 2021, we organized 32 interactive, hands-on activities in 2024, reaching 552 children—and the program continues to grow. These activities explored important environmental topics such as biodiversity ([link](#)), endangered species ([link](#)), food waste ([link](#)), and animal adaptation ([link](#)). By engaging children early on, we aim to nurture a generation of environmental advocates and change-makers.

Many of these activities were strategically timed to coincide with international environmental observances, such as World Cleanup Day ([link](#)), World Water Week ([link](#)), and World Nature Conservation Day ([link](#)). These global events helped to highlight the urgency of environmental issues and inspire action among the younger generation.

To further engage environmental stewards and key stakeholders, we conducted 21 online webinars for environmental professionals and other partners, engaging 315 participants. These webinars explored diverse topics, such as the [environmental impacts of war](#), [vascular plants](#), [Palestinian wetland management](#), [bees](#), [bat echolocation](#), [CO2 emissions](#), and other related subjects.

**By engaging children early on, we aim to nurture a generation of environmental advocates and change-makers.**



We hosted [summer camps and scout groups](#) (18 different groups, with 737 participants of all ages). These visits provided an opportunity for young people to explore the museum's diverse exhibits and deepen their understanding of the natural world, while encouraging positive behavioral changes to protect the environment. We continued to develop engaging educational modules, including [interactive games](#), to enhance our weekly activities, tours, and visits.

We took the Mobile Educational Unit (MEU) to schools and communities across the Occupied Palestinian Territories, especially those that cannot visit us in Bethlehem. This year, we focused on the Jordan Valley Rift and reached six schools and 700 individuals ([link](#)). The trips were conducted with the support of the **Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities**, in cooperation with the **Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation**, and were funded by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.

We actively commemorated international environmental days, using them as opportunities to highlight our efforts and promote positive behavioral change. This is achieved by designing educational activities tailored to these days or sharing informative posts, examples of which are provided to the right.

1. **World Wetlands Day** – February 2 ([link](#))
2. **World Wildlife Day** – March 3 ([link](#))
3. **International Women's Day** – March 8 ([link](#))
4. **Land Day** – March 30 ([link](#))
5. **Taxonomist Appreciation Day** – April 19 ([link](#))
6. **Earth Day** – April 22 ([link](#))
7. **World Bee Day** – May 20 ([link](#))
8. **Biodiversity Day** – May 22 ([link](#))
9. **World Environment Day** – June 5 ([link](#))
10. **World Nature Conservation Day** – July 28 ([link](#))
11. **United Nations Day, highlighting their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** – October 24 ([link](#))
12. **Remembrance Day for Lost Species** – November 30 ([link](#))







SAWA

سوا برنامج علم المتاحف  
SAWA MUSEUM STUDIES PROGRAM

10

سنوات  
2014 - 2024

مؤتمر | Conference

4 نوفمبر  
November -  
2024 5

Capacity Building



### **Weekly Environmental Workshop Series**

We continued our Thursday Environmental workshop series attended by all PIBS team members and colleagues, gained valuable insights into the latest research and facilitated discussions on emerging challenges and solutions to local and global environmental issues.

### **Internal Training**

Our team attended five internal training sessions on research writing, taxidermy, and other essential skills to further bolster our team's expertise.

### **SAWA Museum Studies Program**

PIBS Deputy Director, Mohammad Najajrah, participated in nine online sessions and two-week on-site training in Sharjah, UAE on key museum practices such as the role of museums, artifact collection and documentation, curatorial strategies, and effective communication. During his visit, he met with the Environment and Protected Areas Authority and the Sharjah Natural History and Botanical Museum to discuss future collaboration opportunities, followed by a tour of the museum, botanical garden, and wildlife sanctuary.

### **Smithsonian National Education Summit**

Amal Handal, PIBS Institutional Promotion Associate, attended the Fourth Annual Smithsonian National Education Summit, "Together We Thrive: Connecting

at the Intersections." The three-day online event explored topics such as using art to connect past and present, inclusive storytelling, global thinking with local action, and empowering youth through civic engagement.

### **Future of Museums Summit**

Amal Handal also attended the 2024 summit organized by the American Alliance of Museums, where she joined eight webinars and one networking session. These sessions focused on leveraging museums to inspire hope for the future, empowering communities, integrating AI in museum practices, advancing sustainability, addressing the psychological impacts of climate change, and promoting collaborative climate action.

### **UNESCO event on World Environment Day**

Sara Khair, PIBS Academic Associate, virtually attended this year's event that focused on connecting people and the planet through education. The event highlighted the importance of environmental awareness and the role of education in fostering a sustainable future.

### **The Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) Workshops**

Under the Climate Toolkit Initiative, our team organized several CHM workshops and gained knowledge and skills necessary to address the pressing challenges in biodiversity, heritage preservation, and sustainability.



# Conservation and Community Service

### **Project Concluded on “Rare and Endangered Flora from Newly Designated Protected Areas in Palestine”**

This was done in collaboration with the Global Genome Initiative for Gardens (GGI-Gardens), Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), and the U.S. Botanic Garden (USBG). Through this initiative, we collected 605 genome-quality plant tissue samples from living plant collections, representing 509 species across 89 plant families and 339 genera. These samples were preserved in Global Genome Biodiversity Network (GGBN) biobanks, making them globally accessible for researchers. This effort plays a crucial role in safeguarding the genomic biodiversity of plants within botanic gardens worldwide.

### **Project Concluded on “Science-Based Conservation of Wetlands in Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in Palestine”**

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) funded this initiative focused on the Jordan Valley and Northern Dead Sea Region, areas rich in marshlands and spring wetlands. Using advanced methods like environmental DNA analysis, we assessed local flora, fauna, habitats, and threats. Stakeholder-driven management plans were developed in alignment with Palestine’s Protected Area Network Plan and National Biodiversity

Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), emphasizing species and habitat conservation. The project also identified IUCN-listed species and those requiring recognition, while enhancing the conservation capacity of PIBS, the Environmental Quality Authority, and local leaders. Educational outreach, including the use of our mobile educational unit, ensured that findings effectively reached both communities and decision-makers, bridging the gaps between science, policy, and practice.



### Project Funded/to start in 2025 on “Develop Science and Community-Based Biosphere Management Plan”

Funded by the National Geographic Society, this initiative aims to establish Palestine’s first biosphere reserve in Al-Arqoub, a culturally and ecologically vital area in the South Jerusalem Hills. The project will collect scientific data and draw on successful regional models from Jordan and Lebanon to create a comprehensive management plan. By restoring native habitats and protecting biodiversity, it will promote an eco-friendly economy and benefit eight local communities including farmers, students, researchers, and policymakers.



### Project Funded/to start in 2025 on “Developing a Seed Bank in Palestine”

To start in January 2025 funded by the United Methodist Church and A Swiss Funding agency. It addresses the environmental threats to Palestine’s biodiversity and agrobiodiversity caused by conflict and climate change. In partnership with the Union of Agricultural Work Committees’ seed bank in Hebron, the project will focus on collecting, storing, and distributing seeds from rare wild and domestic plants, promoting ex situ conservation for endangered species. It will also provide training in seed-saving, foster community involvement, and enhance resilience against environmental shocks, improving agricultural productivity, food security, and sustainable farming practices in marginalized communities.







## Animal Rehabilitation Unit

This self-funded project that started in 2019 helped rescue and rehabilitate a diverse range of mammals, reptiles and birds. In 2024, our Animal Rehabilitation Unit (ARU) successfully rehabilitated and released several animals back into the wild, including a marten, a fox, three hedgehogs, an European honey buzzard, and a grey heron.

We also continued caring for two striped hyenas that have been in our care since August, 2023 when five hyena cubs were confiscated by the Environmental Police from illegal traders. Since the cubs were never reared by hyena mother in the wild, the cubs became accustomed to human interaction and may not be suited for a safe release into the wild. We transferred three of the cubs to the Qalqilya Zoo in the spring of 2024. All of the hyenas, both at PIBS' ARU and Qalqilya Zoo are serving an important educational role in raising awareness about the conservation of this vulnerable species.



FOX  
RELEASE





## Botanical Garden

A member of Botanic Gardens Conservation International since 2019, PIBS botanical garden now hosts 412 plant species, including 93 rare ones, and features an ecopond, greenhouses, aquaponic systems, animal enclosures, and a children's playground.

This year, we introduced desert species, developed a small wetland habitat, and enhanced irrigation by redirecting water from the animal room and gutters, and installed some wooden railings for visitor safety. We initiated plant propagation for further planting in the garden and expanded our vermiculture, fertilizer production, and preparing signage for garden areas. In 2024, we harvested 16 kg of honey, 354 kg of olives (yielding 77 kg of olive oil), 13 kg of thyme, over 250 kg of fruits and vegetables, and 20 kg of tilapia. Through these efforts, the garden continues to foster sustainability and engage the community in environmental education.







### Serving the People (thinking globally and acting locally)

This work accelerated in 2024 with the acceleration of the human induced humanitarian catastrophe on Palestinians (both in the West Bank and Gaza). Our team acted in various areas:

- Did one activity for evacuated orphans from Gaza who were now at the SOS facility in Bethlehem
- Hosted an egg hunt activity featuring a clown to celebrate the religious holidays and Palestinian Child's Day. The event brought smiles to 50 children aged 2-5, offering them a joyful moment of relief during a particularly challenging year.
- We were also [acknowledged](#) from the International Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for our partnership with the Environmental Quality Authority (EQA) in developing the National Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) for Biodiversity in Palestine.
- Through Prof. Qumsiyeh's activism and the trips taken by Jessie and Mazin (see Outreach), we raised thousands of dollars to support those in need in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Additionally, we helped create and populate the new website, [ongaza.org](http://ongaza.org).
- We held a number of events highlighting the genocide, ecocide, scholasticide, and medicide (research papers and articles published where authors spoke of these things allowing actions to be taken).
- We held a joint event between Gaza and Bethlehem online to the rest of the world on Christmas eve 24 December 2024, discussing about repair and restoration
- Prof. Qumsiyeh participated in the ICCA Consortium "territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities" <https://www.iccaconsortium.org/> and Solidarity 2020 and beyond <https://solidarity2020andbeyond.org/> and Elders for Peace [www.elders4peace.org](http://www.elders4peace.org)
- Prof. Qumsiyeh was [nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize](#) on January 1, 2025 by Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire. The nomination highlighted the work of PIBS.



# Outreach and Publicity

2024 has been a pivotal year for networking, building new relationships, and advancing fundraising efforts for our institute. Prof. Qumsiyeh and Jessie traveled on two key tours: one to Australia and New Zealand, and another to the UK, Ireland, and the USA. The primary goal of these tours was to secure long-term support for three main causes: a) Palestine, b) sustainable global communities, and c) our Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability.



## Tours

### Australia and New Zealand (Aotearoa) Trip Summary (May/June)

- **53 days; 212 events** (approximately four per day), including lectures, workshops, rallies, informal gatherings, radio interviews, and media appearances
- **Cities Visited:** 17, including Perth, Adelaide, Sydney, Wollongong, Brisbane, Melbourne, Geelong, Canberra, Hamilton, Napier, Palmerston North, Wanganui, Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Queenstown, and Auckland
- **Audience Engaged:** A diverse group comprising students, scientists, Aboriginal and Maori communities, churches, mosques, Rotary clubs, environmental organizations, museums, and both local and national officials
- **Total Reach:** 22,000 individuals
- **Network Expansion:** Over 3,400 new email contacts added to our list
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Initiated more than 20 potential joint projects via over 40 meetings with key experts and activists



## England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, and USA Trip Summary (November/December)

- **37 days; 112 talks**, along with numerous visits, meetings, and other activities
- **Book Signings:** 3 (Pluto Press)
- **Universities:** 13, including Bristol, Swansea, Cardiff, Pratt, Queen's, Ulster, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity University Dublin, Wesleyan, Trinity College Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Union Theological Seminary
- **Environmental Groups:** Extinction Rebellion, Friends of the Earth, Ecovillage Cloughjordan, and others
- **Religious Groups:** Two mosques (highlight: Berlin), Shabbat sponsored by three Jewish groups, and four churches (e.g., First Baptist Church, Old Lyme)
- **Special Venues:** Palestine Museum (Bristol)
- **Major Conferences:** NENJP Conference (\$10,000 gift received)
- **Demonstrations:** Examples include events in front of Barclays Bank
- **Community Events:** Over 25 events in community rooms, libraries, and private homes (e.g., 30 attendees at Anna's home in NYC)
- **Organizing and idea-gathering events:** National Geographic Society representative, Gairloch Museum, Peabody Museum, Inverness Botanic Gardens, Merkinch Nature Reserve, Dundreggan (Trees for Life), four palestinian communities, three Rotary Clubs, four conservation sites (including Seeds of Scotland, Wicklow Mountains National Park, and Ecovillages)
- **Meeting Officials:** Over 45 Parliamentarians across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland
- **Academic Engagement:** Numerous graduate students and professors

## Other Coverage & Publicity

Our work was recognized and covered locally and globally.

### Global Publicity

We received the [Jonge Award](#) for our innovative plan to digitize museum collections, a milestone that underscores our commitment to preserving and sharing knowledge. We had international media coverage, particularly during Earth Month in April, when National Geographic featured our work three times—once in [National Geographic Magazine](#) and twice through National Geographic [Abu Dhabi](#). Additionally, on World Wetlands Day, the CEPF Mediterranean Basin Hotspot Program [showcased our contributions on their Facebook platform](#), further amplifying our message.

Beyond print and digital media, we extended our reach through over 120 radio and television interviews, discussing various aspects of our work—from the newly introduced [TES Bachelor Program](#) to [Environmental Education](#) initiatives.

This year also marked our official membership in the [Red Mundial de Museos Lasallian](#), a distinguished network of 25 Lasallian museums worldwide. This affiliation strengthens our ability to exchange knowledge, collaborate with esteemed institutions, and elevate Palestine's global presence.

The Green Planet Monitor published [an article and video](#) about our work, offering yet another platform to highlight our impact. Meanwhile, the Museo La Salle Peru, part of the broader Lasallian museum network, celebrated our 10-year anniversary by sharing key achievements from our commemorative booklet on their [social media](#).

Beyond media recognition, we are honored to plan and showcase our work at two prestigious international exhibitions in 2025—one at [National Geographic Base Camp](#) in Washington, D.C., and another at [La Papelería](#) in Madrid, Spain. These opportunities allowed us to share our mission with global audiences and expand our collaborative efforts.



## Internal Publicity

We made a concerted effort to expand our online engagement, publishing over 300 social media posts that educated and informed audiences about critical environmental and sustainability issues. Topics ranged from [the flora of the Jordan Valley](#) to the [importance of protected areas and wetlands](#), [food waste](#) solutions, and scholarly resources such as our post on [menasci](#). Additionally, we provided regular updates on our [projects, activities](#), and facility improvements, including progress on our [animal rehabilitation unit](#) and [ongoing renovation efforts](#). Our [YouTube](#) channel has also become a key educational resource, with 26 new videos uploaded this year, including recordings of webinars, workshops, and key meetings, ensuring our knowledge reaches a broader audience.

Bethlehem University played a pivotal role in amplifying our visibility, featuring us in 54 articles in its weekly newsletter and website. Moreover, we worked closely with the Bethlehem University Foundation, whose unwavering support has been instrumental in sustaining our operations. Their efforts also resulted in the production of a [video](#) showcasing our impact, further spreading awareness of our mission.

Our monthly virtual meet-ups for supporters, volunteers, and staff have continued to thrive.

Launched in November 2020, this initiative expanded in 2024 to include an optional second hour dedicated to discussions on human rights issues, a change made in response to attendee interest. Over the course of the year, we successfully held 12 sessions, bringing our total to 54 meetings—an ongoing testament to our commitment to fostering dialogue and collaboration. Anyone interested in participating is welcome to join by sending an email to [info@palestinature.org](mailto:info@palestinature.org).

Finally, we were honored to welcome Mr. Hani Al-Hayek, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, to our facilities. During his visit, he reaffirmed his commitment to partnering with us to advance our mission, further solidifying our efforts in research, conservation, and education.

**We made a concerted effort to expand our online engagement, publishing over 300 social media posts that educated and informed audiences about critical environmental and sustainability issues.**





## Our 2025 Focus

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Our plans for 2025 are very ambitious and would succeed or even expand with your support:

- Complete the renovation of the 1350-square-meter museum, supported by ASHA (USAID), the Munib and Angela Masri Family Foundation, and other philanthropic contributions. This will include engaging exhibits and a children's hall, enhancing education and public engagement with biodiversity and sustainability.
- Expand research and community-driven conservation initiatives through our National Geographic Society project, studying the potential for a biosphere reserve in the Al-Arqoub area. This project will benefit nature and people across eight communities (Al-Walaja, Battir, Husan, Wadi Fukin, Al-Khader, Artas, Nahhalin, and Beit Jala) by promoting sustainable land use and strengthening local environmental stewardship.
- Expand our in-situ and ex-situ conservation
- Develop a professional seed bank
- Expand work on the Gaza Strip (especially restoration and reclamation issues)
- Outreach to more marginalized communities via our mobile educational unit
- Establish projects for mitigation and adaptation to climate change
- Strengthen networking with indigenous people especially in the global south to advance sustainability

## Volunteer

The ongoing war in Gaza, which began in October 2023, has significantly limited international volunteer participation due to flight cancellations and travel restrictions within the West Bank.

Despite these obstacles, we were fortunate to see an increase in local and remote volunteers, as well as a dedicated group of international volunteers who remained committed to our mission.

This year, we welcomed 44 in-person volunteers—15 males and 29 females—including 23 local and 21 international participants. Their contributions were invaluable across various aspects of our operations. Volunteers assisted with essential tasks such as watering, weeding, and harvesting in the garden, as well as caring for the animals. They also supported children’s activities, guided visitors, cleaned exhibit areas, organized office work, and helped design materials.

Additionally, eight remote volunteers played a crucial role by editing documents, creating artwork, designing materials, and conducting research from afar. Their collective efforts have been instrumental in maintaining our operations and advancing our mission, even in the face of ongoing challenges.



## Support Our Mission

Beyond formal volunteering, there are countless ways to support our work. You can connect us with valuable networks, offer expert advice, lead workshops, or contribute specialized skills related to museum operations. Additionally, we welcome donations of resources such as books, specimens, artifacts, tools, materials, and supplies. Every contribution, whether of time, expertise, or resources, strengthens our ability to grow and serve the community.

## Donate Money

Donations are not only welcome—they are essential to our mission. Our ambitious goals for 2025 can become a reality, just as we achieved our 2024 milestones, but we need financial support to make it happen. This is especially true as we prepare to open our new museum, complete with engaging exhibits and a stunning new building. To bring this vision to life by September 2025, we must raise \$400,000 – \$500,000, depending on the richness of the exhibits.

Your generosity can make a lasting impact. We offer naming opportunities for significant contributions—whether it's an exhibition hall, a fountain, or a bench in the Garden, you can leave a meaningful legacy in your name or in honor of a loved one.

**To bring this vision to life by  
September 2025, we must raise  
\$400,000 – \$500,000**

To those who have already supported us in so many ways, we are profoundly grateful. We invite you to continue your generosity, and we warmly welcome new donors, including those who can commit to monthly contributions. No gift—whether of time, money, or resources—is too small. Every contribution brings us one step closer to opening our new museum and sharing this extraordinary space with the community.



VOLUNTEER



DONATE





## Reflections and Testimonials

“Kudos to the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability! The work you are doing represents so much of what we all should be doing to make the planet a better place, one where families and communities living nearby as well as students, scholars, teachers and volunteers from near and far come, including countries across the world, to attend workshops and learn more both about finding new and better ways of understanding and making use of the natural world, from hydroponic gardens to biodiversity and ecology.”

– Anita

“Thank you for your great kindness and wonderful hospitality today. I had been looking forward to meeting you, and to seeing the museum. But I was bowled over by the garden’s diversity and beauty, by the uniqueness of its situation, and by your remarkable resistance through the curation of Palestine’s natural history. I was very grateful for the delicious lunch, and for the lift to the bus-stop – and my teammates were thrilled at the gift of chocolates. I am so grateful. The experience was quite overwhelming, and I can’t do it justice in these few lines. I hope we will stay in touch and look forward to returning to your wonderful corner of the earth, which looks anything but God-forsaken! With my thanks and my very best wishes.”

– An International Visitor



“I would like to inform you that all the displaced population including ourselves are suffering from not only hunger in which we are adopted but also cold weather during nights. Not enough clothes, no planks, no wool clothes, all are polyester or plastic materials that become colder than the atmospheric air in the night. These issues make us very [susceptible] to diseases. We hope a fast end to this ongoing genocide, destruction and starvation war. Thanks again for your concerns about us and your support”

**- A colleague in North Gaza**  
(one of many friends we are in touch with almost daily)

“You are honestly my role model in science and academia. Every moment I spent learning from you leaves me inspired and amazed. From day one when you talked about the PIBS vision for sustainability I was hooked...I never met anyone who encourages and supports young people like you. ... I will stay connected with PIBS and hope to make more research”

**- Mona**

“Thank you so much for an incredible time at the museum. It really has been an honor to see the museum and all the incredible work that you all do...truly inspired...and so more committed to my own resistance and support for Palestine.”

**-An International Volunteer**

“Love that the youth are learning to take care of Mother Earth and that the PIBS is offering this vitally important education.”

**-Anita**

“[I was] one of your former students from Al-Quds and Bethlehem University, where I completed my undergraduate and Master’s studies. I wanted to reach out and share some exciting news with you. After several years of hard work, I have successfully completed my PhD in Biomedical Science at the University of Edinburgh in the UK last week. I am deeply grateful for the support, guidance, and recommendation letters you provided me during my time as an undergraduate. They played a significant role in helping me reach this point. As I reflect on my academic journey, I often think back to the invaluable training and mentorship I received under your supervision. Your unique character and teaching style, which encouraged me to pursue research and believe in my abilities beyond traditional standards, were truly inspiring. I also wanted to mention that I continue to follow your emails about Palestine and all the amazing work you do, and share these with my circle of friends and colleagues. Your work and dedication to these causes continue to inspire me!”

**– Shaden**

“Thank you for sharing the detailed resources and action points. Your emphasis on building and organizing more resonates deeply. The Palestine Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainability (PIBS) and the Palestine Museum of Natural History stand as powerful symbols of resilience and hope, and I am committed to supporting these efforts. The links and insights you’ve provided offer valuable perspectives and avenues for action. It’s a reminder of the importance of collective effort in addressing the pressing challenges of our times. Your call for joyful participation in the sorrows of the world encourages us all to remain engaged in causes greater than ourselves. May your efforts continue to inspire and mobilize many around the world. Together, we can strive to build a future of peace, justice, and harmony.”

**– Lenin**

“I’m forever grateful and proud that I could visit and meet you and Jessie at the museum twice, be a guest in your wonderful family and learn from you. Among the day to day life, work routine and distractions, this newsletter you send relentlessly is one of the glimpses of hope that keeps me connected to what really matters in life and what’s worth fighting for....Thank you. My best wishes for peace and justice from Milano and hope to meet you again soon!”

**– Stefano**



“On behalf of Brother Armin Luistro FSC, Superior General, the General Council of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and the entire Lasallian Family, we proudly join Bethlehem University in congratulating Prof. Qumsiyeh on his recent nomination for the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize. At a time of great upheaval in many parts of the world, this nomination is a source of hope and acknowledges the transformative power education towards a more just and peaceful world. The particular work by Prof. Qumsiyeh in the areas of environmental conservationism and sustainability reminds us of the “inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and peace” (ref. Laudato Si, 10). His work and witness are an invitation to all of us to recommit ourselves to integral ecological conversion as a means to “embrace a broad understanding that leads to overcoming the limits of the socio-economic and political systems and that address the human roots of the ecological crisis” (Circular 478, 32). This nomination honors Prof. Qumsiyeh’s steadfast commitment, the critical role higher education plays in promoting justice, and highlights the tireless peace efforts many in the Palestinian community continue to make amid so much suffering.”

– Oscar

## Our Vision

Sustainable human and natural communities: Empower responsible human interactions with all components of our environment to promote a sustainable ecosystem.

## Our Mission

Research, educate about, and conserve our natural world, culture and heritage and promote responsible human interactions with our environment.

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