

Annual Report 2025

Palestine Institute
for Biodiversity and
Sustainability at
Bethlehem University



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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

**“Action is the best
antidote to despair”**

- Joan Baez

The Year 2025 has been an intense but productive year. Intense as the work of the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability (PIBS) took place under conditions that continued to test the relationship between people, land, and knowledge. Not only the Israeli hostility toward Gaza did not subside, but it has expanded into the West Bank.

In the Gaza Strip alone according to official statistics, 22,900 Palestinians were killed and 57,800 injured in 2025 (70,355 and 171,064 since 7 October 2023). Other data published in respectable journals suggest the numbers are two to three fold more due to destruction of health care systems and premature deaths due to diseases and starvation resulting from the Israeli blockade and denial of entry of humanitarian aid. 70% of the casualties are children and women. This genocide was accompanied by an ecocide

which PIBS studied (see Publications section in this annual report). Most tree cover was damaged and habitats of endangered species destroyed (in some cases 92% or 100% of habitats in Gaza for some species). More than 95% of buildings and other infrastructure (including institutes of higher education) were destroyed in the Gaza Strip. Almost 2 million people are homeless. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued opinions finding Israel’s presence in the occupied Palestinian territory to be unlawful and in breach of the prohibition on racial discrimination and apartheid.

Here in the West Bank, over 1,045 Palestinian civilians were murdered by the apartheid regime forces in 2025. Over 2,500 were injured and over 65,000 were made homeless. Over 1,200 new gates and checkpoints were placed around Palestinian areas. The movement restriction and sustained pressure on communities shaped daily realities. They also sharpened a fundamental question: what does it mean to act responsibly toward life when conditions are unstable and uncertain?

In 2025, PIBS expanded where expansion strengthened long-term foundations, and remained closely engaged where presence mattered most.

Investments in infrastructure, collections, education, and public engagement proceeded alongside sustained work with communities across Palestine. Under constraint, the focus remained on continuity, shared responsibility, and careful stewardship of ecological, cultural, and institutional systems.

What follows is therefore not only an account of activities, but a reflection of commitment—to land that is lived on and contested, to knowledge that must be preserved and shared, and to communities whose relationship with nature is both historical and ongoing. We are grateful to the Bethlehem University administration, Bethlehem University Foundation, the staff, volunteers, partners, and communities who sustained this work throughout 2025. Their efforts affirm that responsibility to people and nature is not a slogan, but a practice.

Prof. Mazin Qumsiyeh
Founder and Director

Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability



**ANNUAL REPORT
FOR PRIOR YEARS**

2025 IN REVIEW

9,744 volunteer hours

61 volunteers

46 internationals, 15 locals

**80 mobile education field
visits across 40 marginalized
communities**

Over 10,000 children reached

Over 11,000 adults engaged
through talks and email outreach

15 educational webinars

**371 Palestinian nature art and
photography contest submissions**

25 field research trips

24 scientific publications



Environmental Education

At PIBS, education is central to translating conservation research into lasting community impact by linking scientific knowledge with public engagement and the stewardship of Palestine's natural and cultural heritage. In 2025, our educational programs expanded in several areas.

LEARNING BEYOND THE MUSEUM

PIBS served as a space for discovery, welcoming students through school visits and summer camps. To ensure that geography and political constraints did not limit access, PIBS, with funding from World Vision, expanded outreach through our **Mobile Educational Unit** ("Museum on Wheels") and **conducted 80 field visits across 40 underserved communities** in six governorates. From Jenin to the Jordan Valley to the South Hebron Hills, the program reached **9,800 children and 1,170 community members**, extending museum-based learning to communities across Palestine. In addition to field visits, the Mobile Educational Unit hosted academic events at Bethlehem University and interactive sessions with Tomorrow's Youth Organization in Nablus, strengthening its role as a regional platform for learning and engagement.



CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

With continued support from Ms. Elena Probst since 2021, **PIBS hosted 763 children through 41 creative educational activities**. Programs combined environmental learning with cultural expression, linking biodiversity to Palestinian heritage. Activities included Land Day workshops, lessons on pollinators and bee life cycles, and hands-on exploration through nature-based play and experimentation.

As part of these initiatives, students contributed to the Artistic Bridges project, producing gouache paintings for an international digital library of 25 children's books, sharing Palestine's landscapes and biodiversity with young audiences worldwide. Building on this foundation, the program expanded in August 2025 to include a youth leadership track, **engaging 120 young participants across 12 hands-on activities**. Youth addressed practical conservation challenges, including habitat creation and waste upcycling, developing applied skills and environmental leadership.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

PIBS continued to strengthen long-standing educational partnerships while developing new collaborations. Work with the Salesians of Don

Bosco at Cremisan Monastery expanded to support the Monastery's regional environmental club, contributing to a model of community-led education. Collaboration with Tomorrow's Youth Organization in Nablus brought young people together through exchange programs and interactive learning. PIBS also engaged university students and partner institutions, providing hands-on educational experiences that foster knowledge, leadership, and long-term commitment to conservation.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Educational outreach also extended into digital spaces. In 2025, the Thursday Talks webinar series hosted 15 sessions, ranging from technical training on the use of camera traps for conservation, to discussions on the environmental impacts of war and ecocide. Many sessions connected local environmental work with global experts, contributing to broader dialogue on environmental justice and sustainability.



CHILDREN'S
HANDS-ON LEARNING

TESTIMONIAL

Thank you so much for your efforts. We were very happy to have you with us, and even now our children are still talking about everything they saw. It was a new, rich, and meaningful experience, especially in these circumstances when children are not able to see such things easily. You are among the best people we have worked with, and our children were truly happy with you because you bring things they love and are drawn to. We hope to have the chance to meet again.

– Parent of a student, Mobile Educational Unit





Infrastructure



LIBRARY RELOCATION AND REORGANIZATION

As part of broader efforts to strengthen research and educational infrastructure, PIBS relocated its library from the fourth floor to a larger and more accessible space on the second floor. This move improved user access, collection management, and capacity for future growth.

Following the relocation, reorganization using the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) system began following the classification system used by Bethlehem University. By the end of the year, **approximately 1,650 books had been fully classified and catalogued**, with an additional 800 donated volumes in various stages of processing. This ongoing work continues to strengthen the library's role as a core research and educational resource.

DEDICATED CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY ROOM

An additional infrastructure milestone during the year was the establishment of a dedicated children's activity room within the current museum building. The space supports both program preparation and implementation and is used regularly for weekly educational activities and indoor sessions.

Equipped with educational games, arts and crafts materials, a small nature-focused children's library, audiovisual equipment, and organized storage, the spacious room has improved the quality, consistency, and organization of children's programming and strengthened PIBS's capacity to deliver structured, year-round environmental education.

SEED BANK INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

In 2025, PIBS advanced the establishment of its seed bank through targeted infrastructure development. Dedicated rooms were rehabilitated for seed processing and handling, alongside the preparation of short-term seed storage facilities and the installation of freezers for long-term conservation. These investments created the physical foundation for systematic seed banking and the long-term preservation of wild plant diversity.

An additional infrastructure milestone during the year was the establishment of a dedicated children's activity room within the current museum building.



PALESTINE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY RENOVATION

In 2025, PIBS continued the transformation of the Palestine Museum of Natural History from a 100-square-meter exhibition space into a **1,300-square-meter national-level museum**, significantly expanding its educational and public engagement capacity.

The year focused on construction and renovation, including electrical, ventilation, drainage, security, and communications systems, as well as landscaping, masonry, steelwork, tiling, and the enhancement of outdoor areas to create accessible spaces for families and children.



WATCH THE RENOVATION PROJECT

Three key exhibits (biodiversity, geology & paleontology, and ethnography) from the former museum were carefully relocated into the new facility, ensuring continuity within the expanded vision. Interior and exhibition planning also advanced. PIBS staff collaborated with national and international experts to refine layouts, develop interactive and educational concepts, and begin fabrication of exhibition furniture, in line with best practices in museum education and visitor engagement.

The museum will open in phases, as some components remain pending due to funding constraints. There has also been delays in the procurement of the fabrication of exhibition furniture due to the complexity of the specification. Political conditions also affected timelines. Despite these challenges, renovation work continues steadily, laying the foundation for a dynamic national museum dedicated to preserving and communicating Palestine's natural and cultural heritage.







Scientific Research & Species Conservation

BOTANICAL GARDEN

The Botanical Garden at PIBS continued to serve as a core platform for plant conservation, research, and sustainable land-use practices. In 2025, development focused on expanding living collections, strengthening conservation infrastructure, and supporting community-based sustainability initiatives.

During the year, **118 native trees and 93 ornamental and hedge plants were added to the garden.** Existing plants were redistributed to improve ecological zoning and plant health. Mediterranean-zone terraces were further developed with native trees, shrubs, and ornamental plants, while a tropical plant greenhouse was introduced to expand ecological representation. Infrastructure improvements included the construction of a canopy near the pond and the installation of protective fencing.

Food production and sustainable land use remained integral to garden activities. Olive harvesting yielded 91 kg of olives, producing 23 kg of olive oil, while vegetable and tree crop cultivation produced over 250 kg of fruits and vegetables, along with 8 kg of thyme (za'atar), primarily supporting PIBS volunteers. The harvest was poor due to last winter's low precipitation-



40% less than average. Compost units and liquid fertilizer systems continued to convert organic waste into nutrient-rich inputs for the garden, reinforcing circular resource use.

Sustainability initiatives were further strengthened through the development of the institute's worm farm, benefiting 48 farmers and individuals interested in vermiculture. These efforts complemented ongoing composting practices and contributed to knowledge exchange beyond the institute. Living collections were further supported by herbarium and genomic conservation efforts, strengthening links between in-situ, ex-situ, and research-based conservation.



SEEDBANK

In 2025, **PIBS established a dedicated seed bank at Bethlehem University**, marking a major expansion of national plant conservation capacity. As part of this initiative, essential infrastructure was rehabilitated, including rooms for seed processing, a short-term seed storage facility, and freezers for long-term storage, ensuring appropriate conditions for the conservation of plant seeds. For the first two years (2025 and 2026), the seed bank focuses on endangered wild plants and wild relatives of domestic plants.

Seed bank activities were supported by **25 field trips**, during which seeds from more than **120 species of wild plants**, including rare and endangered species, were collected. Where seed collection was limited or not possible, herbarium specimens were collected, and living plant samples were introduced into the Institute's botanical garden to strengthen ex-situ conservation. Additional seeds of wild plant species were also received from the Royal Botanic Garden in Jordan, further enriching the collection and strengthening regional collaboration. Partnership with Kew Gardens and the National Seed bank of Jordan helped provide essential training.



HERBARIUM AND GENOMIC COLLECTIONS

In parallel, PIBS continued to strengthen its scientific collections. During the year, **more than 500 herbarium specimens** were processed and integrated, bringing the total number of specimens to 2,245. Genomic collections also expanded, with **28 new wild plant species** added and genomic-quality plant tissue samples increasing to 633.

Together, these activities reflect PIBS's integrated conservation approach, safeguarding Palestine's wild plant diversity through living collections, herbarium specimens, genomic material, and long-term seed storage, and providing a strong foundation for research, education, and future restoration efforts.

FAUNAL COLLECTIONS: VERTEBRATES AND INVERTEBRATES

PIBS maintains and continues to expand a comprehensive set of species conservation collections that underpin biodiversity research, conservation planning, and environmental education in Palestine. These collections safeguard specimens of high scientific value and serve as a long-term record of the country's fauna.



- **Vertebrates:** Over 750 specimens representing reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, and fish, including newly documented taxa, were added in 2025. The collection continues to grow through new additions and improved documentation, and is curated across exhibition spaces, scientific storage, and taxonomy work areas to support both public engagement and long-term research.
- **Invertebrates:** More than 12,000 specimens, including arachnids, insects, land snails, and other gastropods are in our collection. Ongoing specimen preparation, labeling, classification, and systematic organization enhance the scientific accuracy, accessibility, and monitoring value of these collections.

Together, these collections preserve thousands of irreplaceable specimens and constitute a vital scientific resource—supporting evidence-based species conservation today and safeguarding biodiversity knowledge for future generations in Palestine.

ANIMAL REHABILITATION UNIT

In 2025, PIBS continued to operate its Animal Rehabilitation Unit without any dedicated funding, responding to injured and rescued wildlife whenever intervention was needed. The unit received a range of species in cooperation with Palestine Society for Environment and Sustainable



PIBS maintains and continues to expand a comprehensive set of species conservation collections that underpin biodiversity research, conservation planning, and environmental education in Palestine.

Development, including birds of prey, reptiles, and mammals. All animals were rehabilitated according to clear protocols, with release as the primary goal and education as an integral outcome.

One of the happy occasions was the successful release of two hyenas first arrived as cubs in 2023. After nearly two years of sustained care, monitoring, and preparation, they were returned to the wild in April 2025.

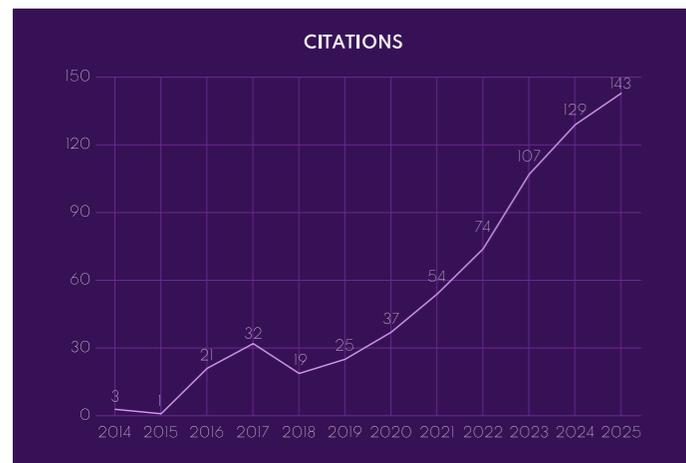
During the year, the unit also admitted an eagle owl, sparrowhawk, black kite, white stork, and chameleon. The eagle owl, received in a severely weakened condition due to malnutrition, underwent two carefully monitored release attempts. When follow-up showed it was not yet able to fly or hunt effectively, we brought it back for continued rehabilitation. Current efforts focus on rebuilding its flight strength and hunting skills, with the aim of a future release.

Operating under extreme constraints, the Animal Rehabilitation Unit reflects PIBS's commitment to act when action is needed, translating care into conservation impact and linking wildlife protection with education and responsibility.



PUBLICATIONS

Despite movement restrictions, PIBS carried out more than 25 field trips across the West Bank in 2025, generating essential data and specimens for conservation and research. Together, this work resulted in **24 publications** (list below) addressing biodiversity conservation, environmental change, and the environmental and social impacts of ecocide, scholasticide, and medicide in Gaza. The steady rise in citations over the past decade, shown in the graph below, reflects how this research is reaching wider audiences and contributing to ongoing scientific and public conversations. In 2025, annual citations reached their highest level to date. See full publications list at palestinenature.org/research.



- Abuhabib, A., Qumsiyeh, M. B., Pacetti, T., & Castelli, G. (2025).** "The destruction of the Gaza water system and its reverberating effect on health." Submitted to *The Lancet*.
- Adawi, S. H., Handal, E. N., Romdhane, M. S., Hmida, L., & Ben Ahmed, R. (2025).** "Diversity of freshwater leeches (Annelida: Hirudinida) in the West Bank, Palestine." *Zoology in the Middle East*, 71(1), 68–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09397140.2025.2444682>
- Adawi, S. H., Romdhane, M. S., & Hmida, L. (2025).** "Wetland ecosystems: Ecological functioning and value—A case study of the Wadi Qana Protected Area, Palestinian Authority." *Wetlands*, 45(7), 1–20.
- Al-Sheikh, B., & Gedeon, J. (2025).** "Newly documented invasive alien plant species in the West Bank, Palestine." *Feddes Repertorium*, 136(2), 136–145.
- Anabtawi, R. H., Emerson, A., & Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025).** "Sustainable development under stress: Eco-friendly agriculture in Palestine as a model." Submitted to *Agronomy for Sustainable Development*.
- Gedeon, J., & Al-Sheikh B. (2025).** "Distribution and Biological Traits of the Invasive Burr Ragweed (*Ambrosia confertiflora*) in the West Bank, Palestine." Submitted to *Biological Invasions*.
- Gedeon, J., Al-Sheikh, B., & Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025).** "Assessment of flora and butterflies in Al-Arqoub Valleys in Palestine: Value in conservation plans for disjointed areas." *Jordan Journal of Natural History* 12(2):108-124.
- Handal, A., Liu, H., Vogler, A. P., Gedeon, J., Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025).** "A molecular re-examination of taxonomy of Orchidaceae in the State of Palestine." Submitted to *Jordan Journal of Natural History*.

- Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025).** "Of civil resistance and joint struggle." *Fellowship: A Magazine of Peacemaking*, 87(1), 23–26.
- Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025).** "Of thawed memories: A novella." In L. A. Sharif, J. L. Kelly, & S. Sen (Eds.), *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Palestine* (in press). Duke University Press.
- Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025).** "Purpose." In Md Ejaj Ahamed (Ed. & Trans.), *International bilingual poetry: Poems and Bengali translations of contemporary 147 English poets from 62 countries* (pp. 199–200). Dream Raft Publication.
- Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025).** "Why Palestine matters." *Public Sphere*.
- Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025, September 2).** "Ecocide and resistance in Palestine." *The Ecologist*. <https://theecologist.org/2025/sep/02/ecocide-and-resistance-palestine>
- Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025, September 3).** "Ecocide and resistance in Palestine." *Progress in Political Economy*. <https://www.ppesydney.net/ecocide-and-resistance-in-palestine/>
- Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2025).** "Ecocide in Gaza: Colonialism, environmental destruction, and the struggle for life." *Brennpunkt Drött Welt*. In press.
- Qumsiyeh, M. B., & Amr, Z. S. (2025).** "Northern Great Rift Valley: Deserts and other biomes." In G. L. Demolin-Leite (Ed.), *Global biome conservation and global warming: Impacts on ecology and biodiversity* (Vol. 2, Chapter 2, pp. 23–34). Elsevier.

- Qumsiyeh, M. B., & Bibee, A. (2025).** "The nexus of environmental justice and potential for sustainable tourism under colonial occupation in Palestine." In F. Higgins-Desbiolles (Ed.), *Climate justice in tourism* (in press).
- Qumsiyeh, M. B., & Gueverra, A. (2025).** "Challenging the ecocide of colonization: Case study of Palestine." *Protest*, xx, 1–17.
- Qumsiyeh, M. B., Jarrar, K., & Sadr, M. (2025).** "Durable peace education towards sustainable communities." In *Peace education* (Chapter in book). Peace Knowledge Press.
- Qumsiyeh, M. B., Musleh, Z., & Kawwas, V. (2025).** "Future of sustainability of human and natural communities in Palestine." *Utopic Imagining*. In press.
- Qumsiyeh, M. B., & Soderberg, J. (2025).** "Colonialism and its effect on rights of people with disabilities (PWD): Case study from Palestine." *International Journal of Disability and Social Studies*. In press.
- Qumsiyeh, M. (2025).** "حماية الطبيعة وخدمة الإنسان في فلسطين: الاستفادة من التجارب الإقليمية. الحمى، أيار/مايو (Protecting nature and serving humanity in Palestine: Learning from regional experiences. Al-Hamma, May)" 2025 26–27.
- Ward, M., Watson, J., Van den Hoek, J., Mills, D., Qumsiyeh, M., Possingham, H., & Yin, H. (2025).** "War in Gaza severely impacts threatened species habitat." Submitted.
- Yin, H., Eklund, L., Habash, D., Qumsiyeh, M. B., & Van den Hoek, J. (2025).** "Evaluating war-induced damage to agricultural land in the Gaza Strip since October 2023 using PlanetScope and SkySat imagery." *Science of Remote Sensing*, 11, 100199.



Community Engagement & Service

DEVELOPMENT OF AL-ARQOUB RESERVE AS A BIOSPHERE RESERVE

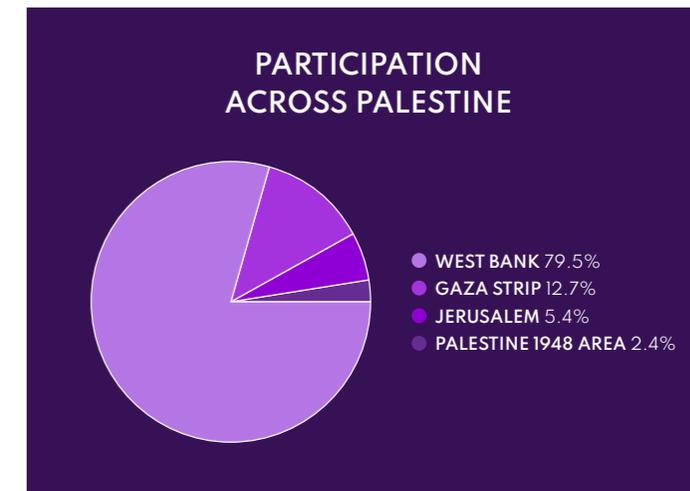
In 2025, PIBS led a community-based project to explore the designation of the Al-Arqoub area as a biosphere reserve, working across eight communities in the Bethlehem and southern Jerusalem region. Through field visits, community meetings, and participatory workshops with municipalities, farmers, local institutions, and relevant ministries, the project focused on protecting biodiversity while strengthening people's connection to land, livelihoods, and heritage. Drawing on lessons from community-managed reserves in Jordan and Lebanon, PIBS supported the development of locally driven approaches to stewardship, coordination, and long-term care of the landscape. The project was supported by the National Geographic Society.

CELEBRATING PALESTINIAN NATURE THROUGH ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

In 2025, PIBS invited artists and photographers from across Palestine to share their vision of the land's beauty and biodiversity in the “**Palestinian Nature Through Artistic Eyes**” contest. From the West Bank and Gaza to Jerusalem and the 1948 Palestinian territories, **371 submissions (223 photographs and 148 artworks)** captured the

deep connection Palestinians feel with their natural heritage. Through their creativity, participants told stories of resilience, cultural identity, and biodiversity.

PIBS proudly exhibited the works in Madrid, Spain, and Harlem, New York, and will feature them in the newly renovated Palestine Museum of Natural History, giving these voices both international and local platforms. The contest celebrated artistic talent, raised awareness about biodiversity, and inspired communities to value, protect, and cherish Palestine's natural heritage.



ART & PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST SUBMISSIONS



Momen Al-Rayyes | @momen.alrayyes



Ayat Al-Nawafleh | @ayat.nawafleh.7



Rashed Marie | @rashedkamel.marie



Ahmed Al-Omary | @AMDOphotos



Yaqoub Muammar | @Jacob.muammar.photography



Yasmin Rajabi | @yasmeen.saad_



Marlene Shahwan | www.marleneshahwan.com



Collaborations, Networks, & Capacity Building

Capacity building is a core priority at PIBS and is embedded across all aspects of our work.

We approach learning as a continuous process that integrates hands-on practice, formal training, scientific exchange, and webinars to strengthen institutional capacity and advance conservation, research, and education. In 2025, capacity building was strengthened through a combination of practice-based work and scientific travel, with learning intentionally translated into institutional improvement. Hands-on learning included exhibition development, scientific display and taxidermy preparation, and the continued expansion and curation of herbarium, genomic, and seed collections, requiring staff and volunteers to acquire new skills through expert guidance, peer learning, and applied problem-solving.

Scientific travel and regional exchange played a major role in institutional learning. PIBS team members undertook professional visits to Cyprus, Jordan, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and China, engaging in conferences, expert exchanges, and field visits:

- **Cyprus:** Scientific presentations and a research poster; visits to a botanical garden and protected areas; engagement with more than 150 researchers and practitioners.
- **Jordan:** Expert exchanges and field visits focused on protected area and biosphere

reserve management, wetlands, wildlife conservation, and community-based approaches.

- **Lebanon:** Learning centered on community-led conservation through visits to biosphere reserve areas, hima sites, bird monitoring stations, seed banking and agricultural research facilities, and meetings with researchers and environmental organizations.
- **United Arab Emirates:** Participation in the IUCN World Conservation Congress, providing exposure to global conservation policy, practice, and leadership.
- **China:** Participation in a regional training course on technologies for combating desertification and sandstorm disasters, strengthening technical understanding relevant to land degradation and climate challenges in Palestine.





Targeted technical training further strengthened core capacities, including specialized training on plant cultivation and pruning in Jenin, Palestine, as well as seed conservation training with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, which directly supported the establishment and operation of PIBS's seed bank.

In parallel, PIBS strengthened its institutional capacity through professional networks and knowledge exchange, including invited lectures and webinars at international universities and networks (such as the University of Glasgow and the Global South Exchange Network), engagement with international bodies including ICOMOS, and participation in professional and scientific networks through ICOM membership. Together, these efforts deepened international collaboration and ensured that learning from training, travel, and practice translated into stronger conservation action, research, and education in Palestine.





This is to certify that

Mohammad Najajrah
has successfully completed the
Seed Conservation Techniques Course 2025
Online 13th -24th October, 2025

Organised by the MSBP Team, Seed Collections
Department,
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Hanna Oldfield
Hanna Oldfield,
Training Coordinator

Elinor Breman
Elinor Breman,
Senior Research Leader, Seed Conservation




QUMSIYEH'S GLOBAL SOUTH EXCHANGE NETWORK TALK



Public Outreach & Global Visibility



In 2025, **Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh** significantly expanded the global visibility of PIBS and PMNH through sustained public engagement, media appearances, and invited talks. He participated in more than a hundred lectures, interviews, panels, podcasts, and webinars, facilitating lectures and seminars for more than 11,000 adults worldwide.

Engagements spanned universities, research institutes, international networks, civil society forums, and media platforms, reaching audiences across Europe, North America, the Middle East, Africa, and Australia. Through these platforms, Professor Qumsiyeh addressed the intersections of biodiversity conservation, environmental justice, ecocide, genocide, scholasticide, medicide, and human rights, drawing on scientific research and lived experience in Palestine.

These activities strengthened the international profile of PIBS and PMNH, expanded their reach beyond academic audiences, and reinforced their role as trusted voices at the intersection of science, conservation, and justice in contexts of conflict and occupation.

INTERVIEW ARTICLES ABOUT PIBS

Najjara, G., & Hamamreh, A. (2026). "التاحف الأهلية في محافظة بيت لحم. مجلة الدراسات الفلسطينية (Private museums in the Bethlehem Governorate) 145, العدد 192-151. <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1658282>

Ann Hsieh, Storm Media, Taipei. (October 2025)
"川普施壓下的「加薩和平」露曙光？巴勒斯坦科學家：對以色列守諾毫無信心 (Is there a glimmer of hope for "Gaza peace" under Trump's pressure? Palestinian scientist: No confidence in Israel's commitments)" <https://www.storm.mg/article/11073290#wholePage>



CELEBRATING PROFESSOR MAZIN QUMSIYEH'S NOBEL PEACE PRIZE NOMINATION

We are proud to celebrate **Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh**, founder and volunteer director of PIBS and PMNH, on his **2025 Nobel Peace Prize nomination**. Recognized by Nobel Laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire, this honor reflects his lifelong dedication to peace, nonviolence, and environmental sustainability.

Under his leadership, PMNH and PIBS have become pillars of education, research, and conservation in Palestine, inspiring community stewardship and safeguarding both natural and cultural heritage. As a scientist, educator, and author, Professor Qumsiyeh demonstrates the transformative power of knowledge, collaboration, and nonviolent action.

This recognition highlights the values that guide PIBS and PMNH and inspires us to continue building a sustainable, educated, and resilient future for Palestine and beyond.

Under Qumsiyeh's leadership, PMNH and PIBS have become pillars of education, research, and conservation in Palestine.

"I have great pleasure in nominating Prof. Mazin Qumsiyeh for the 2025 Nobel peace prize. I have met professor Mazin and have followed his inspiring peace work for many decades.

Prof. Mazin Qumsiyeh is a life scientist, teacher and activist for peace, nonviolence and the sustainability of human and natural communities over the past 50 years. Qumsiyeh was born in Beit Sahour, the Shepherds' field on the outskirts of Bethlehem. He got his formal education in Jordan and the USA in areas of biology and medical genetics. Yet the pressures of the Israel occupation on his people and the pressure on the environment that culminated in genocide and ecocide ensured Qumsiyeh pursued a life focused on peace-making, non-violent resistance, service to people, and service to nature."

– Mairead Corrigan Maguire
(www.peacepeople.com)



Fundraising & Appreciation



PIBS cannot operate without fundraising and in-kind support. In-kind contributions include donations of books, specimens, materials, equipment, and time (volunteerism), sponsorship of internship, among others. While these contributions are difficult to quantify precisely, our own assessment suggests that their monetary value likely exceeds that of direct financial donations. We thank Nassar Stone for donating a 3D stone-carved Palestine topography map which will be featured in the new museum reception hall.

Like every year, PIBS team focused our fundraising efforts on a combination of restricted grant funding and unrestricted individual donations.

For the restricted funding, we submitted a total of **12 grant proposals and award applications** during 2025. We have been successful so far with two being funded. Six of the 12 were not successful, and the results of the remaining four are still pending.

The two new grants being funded are:

- **Developing a seed bank in Palestine**, funded jointly by the United Methodist Church (\$15,000) and an anonymous Swiss benefactor (\$81,000). The project is being implemented from January 2025 to March 2027.
- **Supporting education related to rare plants**,

funded by CEPF/BirdLife. The project activity will start in 2026.

Previously funded grants that were being implemented in 2025 were:

- **Developing a science- and community-based management plan** for a protected area in the South Jerusalem region, funded by the National Geographic Society. The project period runs from January 2025 to June 2026.
- **The Children's Educational Program** funded by Elena Probst, who renewed her annual support for the fifth year. We deeply appreciate her long-standing commitment.



- **Renovating Palestine Museum of Natural History** partially funded by the American School and Hospital Abroad program under United States Agency for International Development, and the Munib and Angela Masri Foundation.

We received other designated funding from individual donors for the following purposes:

- A new lecture room and a children's exploration space - thanks to the fundraising initiative of **Bethlehem University Foundation** (a U.S. registered 501(c)(3) charity).
- New museum renovation - thanks to **Dr. George Kouchakji**
- Museum exhibit development - thanks to a **donor's double matching challenge up to \$100,000**. This challenge was met by **dozens of donors**, raising more than \$110,000, and resulting in over \$200,000 available for museum exhibit development.
- Salary for the position of Deputy Director of Administration - thanks to **Bethlehem University Administration**.
- Salary for the position of Deputy Director of Facilities & Gardens - thanks to **Professor and Mrs. Mazin Qumsiyeh**.

In terms of unrestricted fundings, we thank **Bethlehem University Advancement Office** for initiating a fundraising appeal upon the nomination of Profession Mazin Qumsiyeh for the Nobel Peace prize in January 2025. Over 300 donors responded to the appeal. A huge thank-you also to **Dr. D. Shamma**s for the single largest unrestricted donation of \$100,000.

While 2025 was a better year in fundraising despite significant challenges, the completion of the new museum and the expansion of planned programs will require substantially increased resource mobilization, both in-kind and financial, in the coming years.



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ABOUT THE
WORK OF
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DONATE TO
SUPPORT
PIBS/PMNH

Exhibition of submissions from our Nature and Art Photography Contest, held in Harlem, New York.

The show sold out, raising \$3,120 in support of our programs.





PIBS Family

2025 was a year of **growth, resilience, and transition** for the PIBS family. In January, we welcomed Victor Kawwas on board as PIBS' Deputy Director for Administration, succeeding Rami Abu Saad, who had a successful tenure at PIBS. In February, Zena Musleh joined PIBS as an Academic Associate. Their additions strengthen PIBS's operational and programmatic work. Toward the end of the year, Dr. Israa Al Qadi and Elias Handal (PhD candidate) were interviewed and recruited as researchers and curatorial assistants, laying the groundwork for the institute's continued growth as they prepare to begin their roles in 2026. We were also joined by Noor Bregith, who began a six-month internship (sponsored by Pro Terra Sancta) in September and contributed meaningfully to PIBS's work. We congratulate Mohammad Abusarhan who received a research intern scholarship in May to pursue advanced research leading to a PhD program in Canada. By the end of the year, the PIBS team consisted of 11 team members, supported by two full-time volunteers, Prof. Mazin Qumsiyeh and Jessie Qumsiyeh.

Volunteers remained central to PIBS's mission and daily work. **In 2025, a total of 61 volunteers contributed their time and expertise.** They included 15 local volunteers and 46 international volunteers (eight of whom supported remotely), representing eight nationalities, 28 male and 33 female.

Together, they contributed **9,744 volunteer hours.**

At PIBS, volunteering is both a learning journey and a shared commitment. Volunteers gain practical skills, engage in conservation and environmental education, participate in applied scientific research and community-based work, and experience Palestinian culture while directly supporting biodiversity protection and long-term sustainability. International volunteers became ambassadors for PIBS and wrote and published their experiences. Seven Palestinian volunteers benefited from their experience at PIBS over the years and are now pursuing graduate studies overseas.





REFLECTIONS AND TESTIMONIALS

“My volunteering time at PIBS was one of the most rewarding and enriching experiences of my life, both working with the deeply dedicated staff of the Museum and encountering the people of Bethlehem. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of spirit I encountered there, the pride in culture and history, the deep love of and respect for land and nature, the awareness of how everything is connected: I came to understand here even more profoundly than living in an ecovillage has taught me, how nature and human welfare are inextricably intertwined and if the future of one is threatened, the other is equally threatened. I hope to return soon for I am “homesick” for Palestine. In the meantime, I am writing up my experiences for publication, to try and show the world how uniquely beautiful Palestine, and its very special people, are.”

- Eileen

“The kindness and strength you have shown me, and all those whom you meet and care for, is truly the embodiment of the radical love Jesus taught. I hope you have as joyful a day as one can under occupation, safe in the knowledge that you have made such a monumental difference to the world (certainly to me) and that you are deeply loved.”

- Matthew

“In Autumn 2025 I was immensely lucky to volunteer at the PIBS. My time there rekindled my belief in human kindness and ingenuity. It brought me daily proof that survival is rooted both in mundane tasks and an extraordinary faith in what the future can hold. Here resistance lives on and prosper through vision, preservation and action. Thank you.”

- Florence

“My stay at the Palestine Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainability in May of 2025 was truly an unbelievable experience. When at the Institute, I felt deeply part of this oasis of peace that is filled with a generosity of human spirit and where hearts and minds of unique individuals demonstrate an unfettered commitment to be caretakers of indigenous Palestine.”

- Evelyn

“Volunteering at PIBS was the highlight of my year. I feel very lucky to have contributed alongside the dedicated, knowledgeable and professional staff at the institute. PIBS projects make strategic, meaningful and tangible contributions in such difficult times. My new friends, the diverse Palestinian landscape and the lessons learned from these everyday struggles for social and environmental justice will stay with me for a lifetime.”

- Anonymous Volunteer

“The warmth, comradery, and inter-mingling of the visitors and volunteers at the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability (PIBS) sustains me long after I have returned home from Bethlehem, Occupied Palestine. We all hurt for the oppression of the occupation and the genocide throughout Palestine. PIBS is a light in the darkness that we all can energize and get energized by.”

- Don

“PIBS was a very special place for me. The institute is doing incredible work across many different projects. The staff were incredibly talented, hard working and kind. We learnt a lot about the struggle for Palestinian liberation and the connections to nature and the land. We had a great time helping with the garden, seed collecting, assisting with the museum set up, children’s weekly events, and learning to cook delicious Palestinian dishes. I will never forget these experiences and the friends made along the way.”

- Lucy



LEARN MORE ABOUT
VOLUNTEERING



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT PIBS/PMNH

Help us **protect biodiversity and advance science and environmental education** in Palestine. You can support PIBS and PMNH by volunteering, collaborating on research and educational initiatives, sharing our work through your networks, and participating in our programs and activities.

You can also contribute by donating expertise, books, specimens, equipment, materials, or financial support. Financial contributions—whether one-time or recurring—are especially vital as we expand our programs and prepare to open our new museum and exhibitions. Naming opportunities are available for major contributions.

Every contribution counts. Your time, skills, and resources help transform knowledge into conservation action and bring science closer to the community.

“Once you get to know Palestine, it’s difficult to stay away: a beautiful country with beautiful, lively, generous people... I always tell people at home, because they always ask, that Bethlehem is pretty safe, especially for Westerners. Go there if you can. They need you!”

- Johnnie

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

The year 2026 will be pivotal—for Palestine, for the planet, and for the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability. Building on the foundations laid in 2025, PIBS is entering a phase of growth, expansion, and deeper impact.

In 2026, we plan to open the first phase of the new Palestine Museum of Natural History and its surrounding gardens, including herbal, medicinal, Quranic, and Biblical gardens. We will introduce new educational and learning programs for diverse segments of society, expand children’s and youth activities using our new facilities, and further integrate art, culture, and nature into environmental education.

We also aim to double our community-based conservation projects, strengthen sustainable human–nature relationships, and expand our team and volunteer base, supported by continued capacity building and thoughtful use of technology. With the relocation and expansion of our library, we plan to establish a think tank to support research, dialogue, and policy-relevant work grounded in science and local knowledge.

Looking outward, PIBS will continue to define its role in Gaza, the Galilee, and the Negev, while expanding regional and global engagement. Guided by science, community partnership, and a deep commitment to life, dignity, and sustainability, we move into 2026 with determination, responsibility, and hope.

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.

Address: Mar Andrea Building, Al-Karkafa, Bethlehem, Palestine

Email: info@palestinenature.org

Website: www.palestinenature.org

PDF Version: www.palestinenature.org/annual-reports/

Tel/Fax: +970 (02) 277-3553