

RAMALLAH
PALESTINE

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



RAMALLAH PALESTINE

WHO WE ARE

Founded in 1952, the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine (AFRP) is a nationwide organization headquartered in Westland, Michigan. The mission of the AFRP is to celebrate, strengthen and advance the rich Palestinian heritage and values of the Ramallah family in the U.S. and Palestine.

Through signature programs and events including the annual family reunion, along with the bimonthly magazine, *Hathihe Ramallah*, our main objective is to continue keeping our culturally rich heritage and traditions alive and present today and tomorrow for future generations.

OUR GOALS

- To enhance, guide and support the educational and cultural initiatives of chapter Ramallah Clubs located in major metropolitan cities throughout the U.S.
- To instill and nurture the sense of pride and uniqueness of our Ramallah family history.
- To cultivate and preserve our great traditions, music, song, language and heritage among our youth and young adults.
- To educate the American public about our Christian Arab culture and heritage and to promote better understanding of the humanitarian aspirations of the Palestinians and Arabs in general.

Currently, there are more than 50,000 descendants of Ramallah (prior to 1948) living in the U.S. They are concentrated in major cities such as San Francisco, San Jose, San Diego, and Los Angeles, California; Jacksonville, Florida; Houston, Texas; Detroit, Michigan; Chicago, Illinois; Washington, DC; Knoxville, Tennessee; Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Greensboro, North Carolina; Birmingham, Alabama; Cleveland, Ohio; Little Rock, Arkansas; Buffalo and Hempstead, New York; and South Plainfield, New Jersey. In all these cities, chapters were formed to create the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine, headquartered in Detroit, Michigan.

The purpose of the Federation is to lead and guide the people of Ramallah, raise funds for charitable purposes, and to establish better ties and understanding between the Ramallah communities in the U.S. and in Ramallah.

Today, the AFRP is considered the largest Palestinian organization in the U.S. We are recognized by state, local and federal officials and are often invited to join discussions and other meetings with members of Congress and other government officials. In addition, the AFRP works to ensure the viability and progression of Ramallah. Several humanitarian and community services have been established including healthcare facilities, a state-of-the-art senior citizen's home and more, supported through fundraising endeavors and generous donors from the U.S. Ramallah community.





A MESSAGE FROM THE FEDERATION PRESIDENT



Executive Committee President Attorney Chuck Farah

> Deputy President Fadi Harb

Executive Secretary Tamara Azrak

Legal Advisor Attorney John Kalil

General Fund Treasurer Taisir Eadeh

Educational Fund Treasurer Salem Abdelnour

Educational Fund Secretary Terry Ahwal Morris

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Publisher: AFRP Writers: Joy Batteh-Freiha and Dillon Odeh Dear Members of the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine.

I hope you are well. This Annual Report highlights our organization's progress and accomplishments over the year.

I would like to express my gratitude for your continued support to the AFRP. Your commitment and generosity are crucial to our efforts in fostering the growth of the AFRP and its overall impact on Palestine and our culture.

I am pleased to report that the various AFRP programs and initiatives over the past year were very productive. A few examples include Project Hope, which completed a successful two-week trip to Palestine; Camp Ramallah brought our youth together and created friendships that will last a lifetime; our Scholarship program helped select students continue their education; and the AFRP Medical Mission stepped up to help Gaza by providing medical supplies. These programs and others could not have been accomplished without the commitment and hard work of our volunteers and members.

The foundation of our organization rests on its members and therefore, the AFRP staff and leadership are accountable to its members. I hope you enjoy reviewing the report. Thank you for your continued support and dedication.

Chuck Aarah

Chuck Farah



AFRP DAY OF ACTION

The AFRP Day of Action took place last Oct. in Washington, D.C., with approximately 30 young adults from throughout the U.S.

Prior to the weekend event, the young adult advocates were required to attend two workshop sessions in order to prepare for meetings with Members of Congress and other government officials. During this time of heartbreak with

the Gaza war, everyone was in agreement that there was no better time for Palestinian-American voices to be heard in Washington, DC.

The group started off their first day at the State Department, then to Congress to meet with members of the House of Representatives and Senate, and then culminated in a meeting at the White House with the National Security Council. While opposition and stonewalling were expected, what was most intriguing about the meetings were the small nuggets of truth and signals to the deeper debates happening behind closed doors.

During the State Department meeting, there definitely was a large elephant in the room, as a high-ranking official had just resigned over this issue. Participants, through their relentless debate, were able to move the needle, even ever so slightly, demonstrating the importance of Palestinian-Americans continuing to advocate for what they believe is right.

The meetings on Capitol Hill varied greatly depending on where each Member of Congress landed on this issue. While nuance may be lost in the Congressional political arena, nevertheless, it is important to continue to speak to your representatives.

The last meeting with the National Security Council was a contentious one. While participants wished to receive more feedback from the panel, the group's talking points were diligently noted by the panel and hopefully passed along to the White House.

On our final day, the guest speaker was Brenda Abdelall, who works for the Department of Homeland Security, and Co-Founder and Executive Editor of Mondoweiss, Adam Horowitz.

Ms. Abdelall's perspective as an Arab-American in federal government showed the importance of having diverse voices as leaders. Mr. Horowitz's talk detailed the critical role that media plays in social movements. The group spent the rest of the day putting together action plans to capitalize on momentum. To this day, the 2023 Day of Action group continues to follow up with and pursue conversations with more Members of Congress.

THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE MISSION

In 2023, with agreement among committee members and AFRP, our Ziyara mission to Palestine pivoted to become the Palestine Fellowship. As a Fellowship, we seek to engage individuals with a commitment to Palestine and prioritize applicants from the AFRP Ramallah family.

Due to the start of the war on Oct. 7, the Palestine Fellowship was delayed. We are exploring potential avenues to launch the Fellowship to focus on Palestinian educational and cultural exchange from the U.S.

When the political situation permits, the Fellowship seeks to provide travel, room/board and a stipend to Fellows, which may number two or three each year depending on the individual proposals, our budget and other variable costs. We will also provide funds to our local partner/host to help sponsor our Fellows. The Fellowship will be open to graduate students and established researchers, authors, artists, documentarians, journalists, instructors, lawyers, medical and healthcare professionals, urban planners or others from various backgrounds.

During the one- to three-month fellowships, participants gain experience and give back of their expertise through training, speaking, technical assistance, exhibits, or other collabora-

tions with Palestinian partners. We envision the Fellowships will evolve into a network of alumni with personal and professional attachments to Palestine who continue to give of their expertise over the span of their careers.

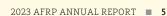
In 2023, AFECEM also supported the 170-student Harvard Pal Trek visit to Palestine with a grant of \$10,000, which was provided by the Muna and Basem Hishmeh Foundation. Since the start of the war on Oct. 7, 2023, the treks are on hold.

The Educational and Cultural Exchange Mission seeks to use private-donor funding to continue to support graduate student learning missions through Palestine Trek programs at Harvard and other top-tier universities.



"I am grateful to the good folks of the AFECM Ramallah Cultural Exchange Program who organize and fund these amazing trips to show the world a different, more complete side of Palestine...God bless the people of Palestine!" — AFECEM alumnus, Mary Texeira

Mary Texeira (August 2017) is a professor of sociology at California State University San Bernadino. Her classes, service, and research focus on social inequality, including race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and age. She teaches hundreds of students each year with the goal of eliminating as many "isms" as possible from our society.



CAMP RAMALLAH

Camp Ramallah is a one-week total immersion in Palestinian culture held in the summer.

Last year, Camp Ramallah was held July 16 – July 22 at Camp Montvale in Maryville, Tennessee, where a total of 53 campers attended camp. Committee members planned a mix of educational and entertaining activities including guest speakers. The morning activities planned included entertaining lessons on culture and heritage. Campers were taught Arabic words and songs, and also learned how to roll grape leaves or *warrack dawali*.

The afternoon programming depended on the weather, but never lacked in substance and fun. When the weather was agreeable, outside activities were always popular, especially sports such as volleyball, basketball, and swimming. Hiking up mountains was another favorite activity, especially for some campers who had

never seen mountains before. The evening activities included theme nights such as dancing and singing along to songs with their new and old friends and playing rounds of Family Feud. Last year, due to the weather, we took the campers on an excursion to the Dollywood amusement park.

Truly, the campers enjoyed being with one another. Many are friends from previous camps, while others forged new friendships. The campers value the experience, which proves Camp Ramallah's significance as an AFRP program.

As in past years, Camp Ramallah in 2023 was a great success that offered young people a chance to learn more about their heritage. It is an innovative program that every young teen should attend and where they forge lifelong bonds and strengthen their Palestinian identities. We are building leaders for future generations and for the federation.



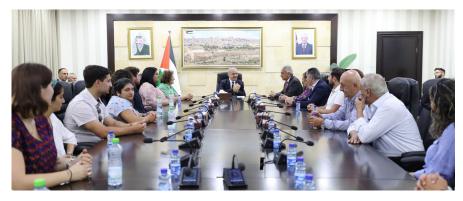
"I am able to connect with people who share the same stories as me, and who feel the same passion for Palestine. Although it's only once a year, the friendships you build and the love of your Izweh is something you will have forever." — Leah Hassan



PROJECT HOPE

Project Hope is a two-week cultural immersion program in Palestine, designed to expose and connect young adults to their ancestral homeland. Project Hope delegations partake in service projects alongside Palestinian volunteers, visit and meet local organizations serving the Ramallah community, meet elected leaders and government officials, and build connections with local Ramallah youth.

In 2023, 13 young adults traveled to Ramallah, where they worked alongside the Ramallah Municipality on city beautification projects, toured local organizations supporting the Ramallah Community, and explored life under occupation. Also, they planted trees near Mandela Square, toured the apartheid wall, and visited the holy sites of Palestine. The connections formed between participants and their deeper connection to Palestine will ensure that we are keeping our ties to Ramallah strong for the next generation.







LEADERSHIP RAMALLAH

Annually, the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine proudly hosts the Leadership Ramallah program, a vital and dynamic initiative designed to unite young Palestinian American adults from various regions. This significant twoday summit coincides with the AFRP's Mid-Year Meeting, offering a unique platform for cultural and leadership development. Leadership Ramallah stands as a cornerstone in nurturing the bonds of shared heritage among young Palestinian Americans.

Leadership Ramallah 2023 in New York, brought together 15 young adult Ramallites from all over the country. During their meetings, they discussed what it's like to be Palestinian in America and how it affects their identity. With this, participants met with Dr. Jessie Hanna to discuss mental health and its importance. Participants also took place in an AFRP spin on Shark Tank, where they presented their own ideas on how to build new programs designed for youth in the Ramallah community.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The American Federation of Ramallah Palestine (AFRP) sponsors many great programs that help its members. One of the oldest is the Scholarship Program. Established before the Federation was incorporated to help immigrant students from Ramallah with their financial needs, the goal of the Scholarship Program is to provide educational opportunities to deserving individuals. Since its inception, the AFRP Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$5,000,000 to financially support students throughout the world. In 2023 alone, the AFRP Board of Directors approved \$135,000 in scholarships — in the U.S., we provided 32 scholarships to students, totaling \$64,000 for the entire school year. In Ramallah, we provided 50 scholarships to students, totaling \$60,000 for the school year.

OUTSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR AWARD

The Outstanding High School Senior Award program is dedicated to recognizing and honoring the exemplary achievements of high school seniors within the AFRP community. These students, through their remarkable contributions to their schools and local communities, embody the spirit of leadership and civic engagement. Each year, we select Outstanding High School Seniors who have demonstrated exceptional community service activities, exemplary leadership skills, and have expressed the significance of these virtues in their submitted essays. In 2023, the AFRP awarded two \$1,000 Apple gift cards and two \$500 Apple gift cards, and four \$250 Apple gift cards, for a total of \$4,000 in awards for graduating seniors.

WOMEN TO WOMEN

The AFRP Women to Women Initiative was established to help support and fund the various of needs of girls and women living in Ramallah. We are a one-of-a-kind resource dedicated to helping all women physically and emotionally. Since its inception, the committee has raised nearly \$50,000 and funded several projects ranging from food support during the COVID-19 pandemic, to providing essentials and medications to members of the Arab Women's Union of Ramallah.

Last year, Women to Women supported the efforts of the Dunya Women's Cancer Center, a nonprofit diagnostic medical center, that provides comprehensive high-quality medical diagnostic services such as screening/diagnosing early breast and gynecologic diseases. Women to Women also provided support to the efforts of Muntda Al-Khibrat (Forum of Expertise), a forum that works to stimulate, activate and invest in the energy and skills of senior citizens in order to give them a sense of belonging to society.

Hathihe Lamallah ~

Hathihe Ramallah magazine's mission is to unite and strengthen the bonds of the original Ramallah families and their descendants through engaging articles, documentation of family news and history, and by highlighting the various programs, projects and efforts of the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine.

Founded in 1952, Hathihe Ramallah magazine serves as the primary communications between the Ramallah families throughout the U.S. Published bimonthly (six issues per year) in both English and Arabic, the content highlights the news and successes of the Ramallah community in diaspora. Club and community correspondents provide news of their respective Ramallah communities throughout the U.S. Other features include interesting and important information pertaining to Ramallah and its descendants around the U.S., mental health awareness, healthy living and modern ways to make traditional recipes.



Hathihe Ramallah magazine is supported through annual subscriptions of \$50 and advertising.

To contact the magazine staff, email: thisisramallah@gmail.com.

The *Hathihe Ramallah* magazine staff includes: Joy Batteh-Freiha, Executive Editor

Manerva Zaibaq, Arabic Section Editor
Ken Harb, General Manager
Mary Warra, Subscription Manager

MEDICAL MISSION

Established in 2000, the AFRP Medical Mission is a program of the AFRP's nonprofit Human Services Network.

The goal of the Medical Mission is to support the healthcare system in Palestine by overseeing the management of clinics, providing the latest in medical technology and training and working to develop new medical departments and services at various hospitals and clinics in Palestine.

The team of dedicated healthcare providers include members of the U.S. Ramallah community, those from within Palestine, various Arab Americans communities, as well as non-Arabs, who volunteer their services. These healthcare providers have the same goal and dedication - to provide humanitarian healthcare services wherever needed.

Last year, the Medical Mission successfully contributed, managed, or maintained the following:

- Pulmonary: The lab is fully functional and working at full capacity. Plans are being made to train a second technologist. A Ramallah-based pulmonary specialist and a critical care specialist are supported by U.S.-based pulmonary medicine/ critical care specialists.
- Vascular Health Services: A room dedicated to endovascular tests was completed and functional and is being utilized with cost-effective results. Plans are being made for the development of the remaining parts of vascular health - public education and awareness, developing the ultrasound vascular diagnostic unit, IT connectivity, follow-up program and a system coordinator. Also in development, is a rotation of an interventional vascular surgeon to spend a week a month for support and training. At present, vascular volunteers cover at least two years of service.
- Peritoneal Dialysis (PD) Project: This much needed project will be the first of its kind in the government health system and will save millions in referrals. A space to house the project has been built and being furnished for that purpose. A local team is onsite at the Ramallah Hospital with a supporting and advisory team in the U.S. and Zoom calls are taking place to assist. In addition, we're have connected with a support group "Friends of the PD patients" in Nablus to be expanded to entire Palestine.
- Breast Cancer/Women's Health Project: Services offered include mammography, stereotactic biopsy of the breast and other organs, sentigram sentinel node identification and biopsy, colposcopy, operative hysterescopy, bone density and fetal monitoring. The local team include four ontological surgeons, two radiologists, two gynecologists, an oncologist and a pathologist. A team of U.S. and German physicians are supporting team.



Tissue Pathology Laboratory: A fully digital automated tissue pathology laboratory is being installed in the same recently completed building. This service is meant to serve all of Palestine. The pathology team in Ramallah is fully engaged. Support for this program will be through tele-pathology from the U.S. and Germany.

Several other projects are being supported including but not limited to emergency medicine, critical care/pulmonary medicine, sleep lab and others.

Medical Mission's Humanitarian Efforts in Gaza

Following Israel's attack in early October, the AFRP Medical Mission launched an aggressive campaign to support humanitarian efforts in Gaza. Thus far, the Medical Mission has raised \$476,981 from 534 generous donors allowing us to support our brethren in Palestine.

Through these funds, we have provided much needed medical supplies (orthopedic equipment, pediatric chest tubes, etc.) to Ramallah Hospital that were limited due to the ongoing Israeli blockade. Additionally, we supplied a hospital in Gaza with medications including antibiotics, antihypertensives, analgesics, and diabetic medications as their supplies dwindled. As famine loomed, the AFRP Medical Mission shifted its focus to nutrition by providing 1,170 hot meals, groceries and food preparation supplies to churches and a hospital in Gaza, feeding health personnel, patients and their families and those sheltering in place where constant bombing affected their movement. Lastly, we funded the dialysis clinic in Ramallah which is now open to patients.

This funding is essential in enabling the Medical Mission to continue its vital work and make a tangible difference in the lives of Palestinians. Together, with continued support and advocacy, we can work to strengthen the capacity of the health system in Palestine to deliver effective, equitable, and quality health services.

THE RAMALLAH FOUNDATION

Established in 1943 by a handful of Ramallah families who settled in the New York area, the mission of the Ramallah Foundation Inc. of New York, is to provide health, education and social services to the people of Ramallah and surrounding communities. The Foundation uses every dollar of its income for philanthropic services. When it began in 1943, every Ramallah clan contributed to the vision of the first hospital.

Currently, construction is underway for the Azeez Shaheen Senior Citizens Home in Ramallah.

This monumental project to build this new, state-of-the-art, Senior Citizens Home, is the biggest project since their initial efforts in building the Ramallah Hospital, which was completed in 1965.

The new Senior Citizens Home will replace the outdated original Old Age Home donated by the Foundation in the 1970s and run today by the Arab Women's Union of Ramallah. With 30,000 square feet, the new Home nearly triples the size of the current senior home and will have the capability of housing more than 50 residents with room for expansion as needed. There will be four floors including a basement.

In addition, the new Senior Citizens Home will provide a broad spectrum of services suited to the diverse needs and interests of seniors in one place, to help them stay healthy and independent. Initial costs to build and fully furnish the new Home is estimated at \$5 million.



IN APPRECIATION

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Mr. and Mrs. Nadim[†] and Rima Ajlouny[†]

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