



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF  
**RAMALLAH**  
PALESTINE

## ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

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AMERICAN FEDERATION OF  
**RAMALLAH**  
PALESTINE

## WHO WE ARE

Founded in 1952, the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine 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 the Arabs in general.

The purpose of the Federation or AFRP is to serve as the national organization to lead and guide the people of Ramallah, raise funds for charitable purposes which are of general welfare to the Ramallah people and to establish better ties and understanding between the Ramallah communities in the U.S. and in Ramallah.

## OUR TEAM

Fadi Harb, *President*  
Joy Batteh-Freiha, *Deputy President*  
Emeel Ajluni, *ARFECF Chair*  
John Kalil, *Legal Advisor*  
Taiser Eadeh, *General Fund Treasurer*  
Sonya Kassis, *Education Fund Treasurer*  
Terry Ahwal, *Educational Fund Secretary*  
Tamara Azrak, *Recording Secretary*  
Dillon Odeh, *Program Director*  
Kathy Harb, *Executive Administrator*

A gift from Johannesburg Municipality in 2016 and the only one authorized outside South Africa, the 20-foot statue of the late South African leader Nelson Mandela, which is a replica of the statue in the South African city, stands in the center of the square and symbolizes the universality of the Palestinian cause and the solidarity of the South African people with the Palestinian people. Preserved on the site are the famous words of Mandela: "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians."

*Publisher:* AFRP

*Writers:* Joy Batteh-Freiha and Dillon Odeh

*Cover Photo:* AFRP Medical Mission in April 2025



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF  
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## *A Message from the* **FEDERATION PRESIDENT**



Dear Members of the Ramallah Family,

We are a people deeply rooted—dispersed by circumstance yet bound always by our shared heritage, enduring love for our homeland, and the unbreakable ties of tradition.

For over 67 years, the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine (AFRP) has been a living testament to that bond. What began as a spark among early immigrants has grown into a national movement—one that spans generations, strengthens our collective identity, and unites Ramallah families across cities, coasts, and continents.

Our recent Easter visit to Ramallah was a poignant reminder of this unity. Amid the profound grief and hardship facing our people, walking the streets of our beloved city, embracing the community, and renewing our commitment on the ground brought both healing and strength. Even in times of immense sorrow, our roots hold fast—and our unity deepens.

This annual report reflects more than statistics or initiatives. It tells the story of a Federation that is not only alive but thriving. It chronicles a community that carries the legacy of Palestine in its heart while building a future with clarity, compassion, and purpose.

This year, we expanded the reach of our Medical Mission—designing and implementing unique programs, delivering essential equipment, services, and direct support to hospitals in Ramallah. Even under the harsh conditions of war, we delivered fuel and food items, launched a first-of-its-kind occupational therapy bridge training program, inaugurated the AFRP Medical Mission Prosthetic Clinic to serve amputees, began an eye screening initiative for early detection, initiated a hospital rotation program, offering Palestinian medical students hands-on experience in the United States and established STEM Excellence labs in two secondary level schools in Ramallah offering expanded opportunities for students to enroll in STEM and health related disciplines.

At home, we focused on revitalizing our grassroots—launching new Ramallah Clubs, reactivating dormant ones, and bringing fresh energy to our local communities. We reaffirmed that our true strength rises from the ground up.

We also launched two milestone initiatives:

- The Endowment Fund Campaign: Tomorrow Starts Today, a \$5 million, five-year initiative, represents our commitment to sustainability and long-term resilience. It is an investment in permanence, independence, and the enduring strength of the Federation.
- Our new Arabic language program, *Yalla Ni7ki 3arabi*, reconnects our families with the language of our ancestors. Through virtual classes led by Palestinian educators, we are passing on the heartbeat of our culture to a new generation.

None of these accomplishments would be possible without you. The dedication of our members, the selflessness of our volunteers, and the generosity of our broader community continue to give life to this mission. Your commitment fuels our purpose and amplifies our impact.

To serve our people—wherever they may be—is not merely a duty, but a profound devotion. Through advocacy, education, healthcare, and cultural preservation, we carry the honor of representing a people whose spirit refuses to be extinguished.

As Mahmoud Darwish wrote: *“We have on this earth what makes life worth living...the aroma of bread at dawn, a woman’s touch, the writings of poets, and the love of those who do not bend to despair.”*

May this report be a testament to our sacred work, a reminder of our just cause, and a celebration of the unity that sustains us.

With unwavering pride and gratitude,

Fadi Harb

President, The American Federation of Ramallah Palestine

# TOMORROW STARTS TODAY:

## *Investing in the AFRP's Future*



*In 2025, the AFRP formally launched a sweeping, five-year initiative to raise \$5 million for ARFECF Endowment Fund.*

Known as The Endowment Fund Campaign: Tomorrow Starts Today, this campaign represents our commitment to sustainability and long-term resilience. It is an investment in permanence, independence, and the enduring strength of the Federation.

For nearly 70 years, the AFRP has become a beacon of hope and support, touching countless lives through its programs. From nurturing young minds through educational scholarships to lending a helping hand to families in need, the AFRP's impact has been felt near and far. Growing the AFRP Endowment Fund is essential for the long-term success and sustainability of our programs. It allows us to reimagine our programs and expand our reach.

Through this campaign, we aim to create a stable financial foundation that ensures we can continue to support our initiatives well into the future. It provides a reliable source of funding that allows us to weather economic uncertainties and maintain our commitment to excellence.

Your generosity will enable us to plan and execute innovative projects, attract top talent, and offer high-quality services to our community.

Ultimately, your support helps us to build a lasting legacy and make a meaningful impact for generations to come.

## THE EDUCATIONAL and CULTURAL EXCHANGE MISSION

In 2024, the Educational and Cultural Exchange Mission awarded two prominent members of the AFRP community the inaugural Palestine Fellowship.

The Fellowship is a competitive \$5,000 grant initiative to help preserve and promote the Palestinian narrative through educational and cultural exchange with our community and global audiences. Amid the devastating and ongoing destruction of Palestinian communities, culture and society, the Fellowship aims to support the sharing and documentation of Palestinian culture and heritage.



**Nadine Foty** is an actor, musician, children's book author and public elementary school teacher in Washington, D.C. She will use Fellowship funds to further develop her Palestine in Our Schools (PIOS) curriculum. PIOS seeks to empower educators with pedagogy, social, artistic and musical multimedia resources and books about Palestine donated to libraries. The initiative helps inform, inspire and support educators who teach young students about the Palestinian culture and experience.



**Jennifer Mogannam**, Ph.D., is an author, oral historian, ethnographer, cultural critic and assistant professor in the Department of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies and faculty affiliate at the Center for the Middle East and North Africa at University of California, Santa Cruz. She is devoting her Fellowship to preserving Palestinian oral history by developing an oral history training for community members. Those who are trained go on to document the oral histories of many elders from Ramallah and Bir Zeit, among many others in the California community, to preserve these histories for future generations.





# AFRP DAY OF ACTION

In mid-November 2024, participants of the AFRP Day of Action and Project Hope joined forces for strategically meaningful advocacy in Washington, D.C. Twenty-nine young adults from New York, California, Michigan, Virginia, Texas, Washington, Tennessee, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and New Jersey participated in the 2-day event, filled with 28 meetings on Capitol Hill — 15 on the House side and 13 Senate meetings.

## 2024 TESTIMONIALS:

**Dalal Abboud, Birmingham, AL:** *“For anyone who may be hesitant to participate, I assure you, you will not be disappointed. I strongly encourage anyone passionate about supporting Palestine to take part in the AFRP Day of Action/Project Hope. By uniting, we can strengthen our collective efforts toward the goal of freeing Palestine.”*

**Anthony Jaghab, Levittown, NY:** *“This program is practical, hands-on and teaches you how to get involved in the democratic process, meeting with members of Congress to discuss our concerns and encourage legislative change.”*

Participants met with their representatives and voiced their concerns and called for action related to Palestine, such as supporting legislation to ban arms sales to Israel and stopping Israeli settler violence in the West Bank, reinstating UNWRA funding and pushing for entry of humanitarian aid in Gaza, as well as speaking out against discriminations against Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian Americans.

In addition, the group met with Mr. Hady Amr from the State Department and representatives from the National Security Council. Participants also visited the newly established Dar Al-Hurriya, Miko Peled’s House of Palestine, for a tour and heard firsthand from Dr. John Kahler, a medical doctor with Physicians Against Genocide, along with a former Biden Administration staffer, Tariq Habash, who resigned from his post in the Department of Education because of the Biden Administration’s stance on the war in Gaza.

Lastly, the group toured the Museum of the Palestinian People, and learned more about the history of Palestine through art.

## PROJECT HOPE

Since its inception in 1997, Project Hope was designed to introduce young Palestinian American adults to their ancestral homeland, by organizing a service trip to Ramallah, Palestine. The two-week cultural immersion program is designed to expose and connect young adults to everyday life in Ramallah.

Project Hope delegations participate 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. The purpose is to inspire the next generation of Ramallahites committed to carrying on the mission of Project Hope and the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine.

Due to the ongoing genocide in Gaza, travel to Palestine in 2024 was not possible. Instead, an alternative Project Hope trip was conceived and a delegation joined forces with the AFRP’s Day of Action group. Given the relentless assault on Palestine over the past year, young people were eager to engage in direct advocacy in support of Palestine. By combining Project Hope with Day of Action in 2024, these young



adults were still able to engage and advocate on behalf of Palestinian justice in their homeland.

# AFRP GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS



The AFRP Government Affairs Committee has experienced a year of remarkable community mobilization. Our persistent efforts to positively impact policy yielded an unprecedented surge in grassroots engagement throughout our network.

Over the past 12 months, we successfully organized virtual and in-person advocacy events, led letters to Members of Congress and government departments, and brought hundreds of first-time advocates into the policy process.

The Government Affairs Committee held more than 60 meetings with Congressional offices over the past year. These bipartisan meetings with Members of Congress saw over 200 individuals from our community in attendance, with active engagement with elected officials from Congressman Rich McCormick to Senator Bernie Sanders. We also held over 10 meetings with federal departmental agencies to push for a ceasefire in Gaza, an influx of humanitarian aid, and sanctions on Israeli settlers for land theft in the West Bank.

We created a first-of-its-kind Visa Waiver Program Violations catalog, wherein we chronicle Israel's violations of the Visa Waiver Program and instances of discrimination against Americans of Arab and Palestinian heritage or descent. This catalog has been instrumental in our talks with the Office of Palestinian Affairs and the Department of State.

Furthermore, the Government Affairs Committee hosted multiple Palestinian delegations on the Hill, from religious cohorts including Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and Rev. Dr. Jack Sara of the Bethlehem Bible College, to conflict negotiation contingents including founder and executive director of the Negotiation Strategies Institute Ihab Khatib, Dr. Estephan Salameh and Dr. Fadi Mizyed.

The committee utilized our robust contacts in Congress to assist HEAL Palestine in evacuating 15 injured children from Gaza to medical facilities in the U.S.

In January 2025, the Committee hosted an exchange program with 20 young Palestinian professionals from all over the West Bank. The Palestinian Young Leaders

for Democracy delegation spent one week in Washington, D.C. and a week in Dearborn, Michigan, where they met with federal and local government officials both elected and appointed, civil society leaders, journalists, religious leaders, cultural historians and others.

Beyond this, the Committee assembled a legal advisory team to explore avenues of recourse for land theft in the West Bank in domestic American courts, held Presidential Election Town Halls for the Democratic, Republican, and Independent parties, and have recently aligned new talking points under the current administration. We are preparing to launch a new initiative aimed at creating government outreach subcommittees in local clubs to encourage grassroots advocacy at every level of government.

Additionally, during the 2025 Mid-Year Meeting in New Jersey, the AFRP approved a partnership with ACCESS, a national Arab-American nonprofit organization. Working together with ACCESS, we will provide four college students with an opportunity to do an internship on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., starting summer 2026. We look forward to sharing more details in the future.

## LEADERSHIP RAMALLAH

Leadership Ramallah is a two-day event held in conjunction with the Mid-Year Meeting. It is a dynamic initiative designed to unite young Palestinian Americans from throughout the U.S. and offer them a unique platform for cultural and leadership development. At the conclusion of the summit, participants return to their communities equipped with the knowledge, skills and inspiration to drive positive change and uphold Palestinian heritage.

In 2024, Leadership Ramallah was held in conjunction with the Mid-Year Meeting in San Diego, California and included 21 young adults. The agenda included professional development workshops, leadership, advocacy and cultural preservation. Participants partook in various activities meant to promote leadership and Palestinian identity, ranging from dynamic discussions on effective advocacy strategies to poignant reflections on Palestinian heritage and identity — each workshop offered invaluable insights and practical skills.

Leadership Ramallah was held in Weehawken, New Jersey during the 2025 Mid-Year Meeting in March, and brought together 19 young adults from across the U.S. Like in years past, attendees participated in workshops led by leaders in various fields, including advocacy, cultural preservation and professional development.

Gaining insight with their like-minded peers, Leadership Ramallah participants forge friendships and collaborate beyond the summit itself. These connections, grounded in a shared commitment to Palestinian liberation and cultural preservation, serve as a foundation for future endeavors within the community. Participants return to their communities across the states equipped with the knowledge, skills, and inspiration to drive positive change and uphold Palestinian heritage. They are not just leaders in training; they are the torchbearers of a vibrant and resilient community, united in our quest for justice and the liberation of Palestine.





# CAMP RAMALLAH

*Camp Ramallah is a weeklong camp where Ramallah teens from throughout the U.S. and from Ramallah as well, come together to connect, honor our rich history and traditions, and learn about the wisdom of our ancestors.*

It is a way to bridge the gap between yesterday and tomorrow, ensuring our heritage remains alive and thriving for generations to come.

The 6th Annual Camp Ramallah took place June 16 – 22, 2024 at Camp Kanuga near Asheville, North Carolina. In 2024, approximately 85 teens from across the U.S. and four participants from Ramallah, counselors, the camp committee and volunteers attended.

As part of the educational program, campers discuss current events, social media and its impact, the definitions of Apartheid and Zionism, the history of Ramallah, the history of Palestine from Biblical times, the Ottoman Empire and much more.

There's outdoor fun, too. Campers participated in numerous hands-on activities such as learning and observing CPR demonstrations, dabke lessons, Family Feud games, learning the Palestinian the zefeh, and making custom kites with verses of the poem "If I Must Die" by Rafaat Alareer.

Outdoor activities include ropes courses, swimming, canoeing, archery, sand volleyball, ultimate frisbee, basketball, dodge ball and an Olympics Day that culminated with a giant game of Capture the Flag.

The hiking trails gave campers breathtaking views and beautiful North Carolina sunset.

Also there were theme nights, giving campers a variety of different ways to bond. Game night was a fun evening where the campers challenged each other to a few rounds of tug-of-war, huge lawn checker boards, twister and lawn bowling.

On 1970s Night, everyone got their groove on – including the chaperones with costumes, decorations and music by camp counselor DJ Michael Soudah – it made for a memorable night.

The last evening of camp, the campers typically perform and record the song they had learned over the week to the Federation President and guests.



**CAMP**  
RAMALLAH

# SCHOLARSHIPS

The American Federation of Ramallah Palestine is dedicated to supporting its members through various impactful initiatives, one of the most longstanding being the Scholarship Program. Originally established to assist immigrant students from Ramallah with financial challenges, this program aims to create educational opportunities for deserving individuals. Since its inception, the AFRP has awarded over **\$5 million** in scholarships, helping students worldwide pursue their academic goals.

In 2024 alone, the AFRP Scholarship Committee allocated **\$74,800** in scholarships. In the U.S., **27 students** received scholarships totaling **\$52,000** for the school year. In Ramallah, **19 students** benefited from scholarships amounting to **\$22,800**, reaffirming AFRP's commitment to empowering young scholars through financial support.

# OUTSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR AWARD

The Outstanding High School Senior Award celebrates the exceptional achievements of high school students within the AFRP community. This program honors seniors who exemplify leadership, dedication to community service, and a strong commitment to civic engagement. Each year, the AFRP selects students who have demonstrated outstanding contributions to their schools and local communities. As part of this recognition, in 2024, the AFRP awarded **one \$1,000 Apple gift cards, two \$500 Apple gift cards, and two \$250 Apple gift cards**—a total of **\$2,500** in awards for graduating seniors.

These programs reflect the AFRP's dedication to fostering educational success and honoring the leadership and efforts of young community members.

# ARFHSN

The Human Services Network (HSN) of the AFRP is a powerful force for humanitarian outreach, dedicated to uplifting communities through service and solidarity, particularly through its flagship initiative—the Medical Mission. Established in 2000, this nonprofit arm of the AFRP is dedicated to strengthening the healthcare infrastructure in Palestine. As a nonprofit, the HSN supports programs aimed at improving the quality of life for Palestinians. Whether it's facilitating educational opportunities, enhancing community development, organizing essential aid initiatives, or supporting Palestinian women through the Women to Women initiative, the HSN acts as a bridge of compassion connecting the diaspora with their roots.



# WOMEN TO WOMEN

Since its inception in 2020, the AFRP's Women to Women project has raised and funded nearly **\$60,000** that has helped and supported women and their families in the Ramallah area.

In 2024, the Women to Women initiative raised funds from direct donations, proceeds from selling "Keeping the Dream Alive" written by Terry Ahwal, and a \$5,000 donation from the 2024 AFRP Ramallah Convention's Women's Luncheon to support the following projects:

- Dunya-Breast Cancer Center: \$5,000
- Almasna – Audio Visual Training: \$4,000
- Tuition for a high school student: \$1,100
- Salaries for teachers at the Ramallah Catholic School: \$3,000
- Birzeit University tuition and living expenses: \$3,000

Total amount provided for all projects: **\$16,100**

# Hathihe Ramallah

For more than 70 years, *Hathihe Ramallah* magazine has been the heartbeat of communication, connection, and cultural preservation for Ramallah families across the U.S. As a vital link between generations, the magazine serves as both a historical archive and a forward-looking platform, weaving together stories that celebrate heritage, unity, and the enduring strength of the Ramallah community.

Published six times a year in both English and Arabic, *Hathihe Ramallah* magazine is more than a magazine—it's a bridge, bringing families closer through engaging features, inspiring narratives, and exclusive insights into the evolving traditions and milestones that define the Ramallah diaspora.

Each issue highlights family achievements, chronicles important historical moments, and showcases the impactful programs and projects of the American Federation of Ramallah, Palestine, ensuring that Ramallah's legacy remains alive and thriving.

New this year, is the online digital version of the magazine available free of charge with a paid AFRP membership renewal. Physical hard copies are still available for purchase as well.

With contributions from dedicated correspondents, the magazine delivers a rich tapestry of club and community news, in-depth profiles of remarkable individuals, and timely coverage of events that resonate both in the U.S. and in Palestine.

Whether celebrating successes, preserving history, or strengthening bonds across borders, *Hathihe Ramallah* magazine remains an essential voice, uniting generations through the power of storytelling.

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

To contact the magazine staff, email: [thisisramallah@gmail.com](mailto: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*





# AFRP MEDICAL MISSION



In February 2024, the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine (AFRP) Medical Mission launched a renewed effort under the leadership of a newly formed coordinating committee. The mission's overarching goal has been, and remains, to strengthen the Palestinian health system

by building the capacity of local professionals to deliver equitable, effective, and high-quality health services.

Over the past year, the Medical Mission has expanded its work across the West Bank and Gaza. In Gaza, the committee swiftly responded to the dire humanitarian situation by delivering medical supplies, fuel, food, and emergency funding to sustain healthcare services. Ongoing support was provided to key institutions, including Al Ahli Hospital, the Orthodox Church and Holy Family Catholic Church, which sheltered patients during times of crisis.

A major milestone was the launch of a first-of-its-kind **Occupational Therapy Bridge Program** in partnership with the Arab American University in Jenin. This initiative enables 20 diploma-holding practitioners in Gaza to pursue advanced training, with a focus on rehabilitative care for individuals suffering amputations. Currently, 20 students are enrolled, offering direct services while continuing their education remotely—despite challenges including power outages, displacement, and internet instability.

Another cornerstone initiative is a groundbreaking **prosthetics production and rehabilitation program**, developed in collaboration with Abu Raya Rehabilitation Center and the Arab American University. Through this partnership, the AFRP Medical Mission is funding a state-of-the-art limb scanner to be housed in Ramallah, while prosthetic limbs are fabricated at Arab American University's advanced laboratory in Jenin. This year, the program aims to serve at least 50 patients, restoring their mobility and livelihoods.

In response to urgent infrastructure needs, the Medical Mission also led the **refurbishment of Abu Raya's rehabilitation center**, providing modern hospital beds—including pediatric units—and patient-family seating, significantly improving comfort and care quality.

The AFRP Medical Mission's

education-focused efforts extended to the **establishment of two new science laboratories**, one in a girls' school and another in a co-educational school in Ramallah, opening doors for future health science professionals.

Support was also extended to **Al Nahda Women's Society**, which serves individuals with disabilities, through the creation of a therapeutic playground that encourages inclusion and physical activity. In addition, the Mission launched the **AFRP Eye Screening Program** at Al Nahda to provide early screening for eye conditions and related illnesses such as diabetes, glaucoma, and macular degeneration. The program aims to identify at-risk patients and refer them to specialists, helping to prevent complications and reduce the risk of vision loss.

The Mission facilitated new academic partnerships with the **American University in Jenin**, **Al Najah University**, and is pursuing collaboration with **Abu Dis Medical school in Jerusalem**. A key partnership with **Larkin Health System in Miami** has enabled a clinical rotation exchange program. Starting in the coming months, two medical students from Palestine will train in critical specialties like trauma, surgery, neurology and emergency medicine in the U.S., with plans to expand opportunities for students from both Palestine and also for medical students from Ramallah studying in the US.

Recognizing the emotional toll on healthcare workers, the Medical Mission launched a **Mental Health Support Program** for providers in Gaza and the West Bank. This includes short, recorded self-care training sessions led by certified mental health professionals from the U.S.

The AFRP Medical Mission Coordinating committee is in the process of launching an Advanced Trauma Life Support training for health professionals working in emergency care. The AFRP Medical Mission remains deeply committed to its mission. Despite immense adversity, its efforts continue to uplift, equip, and heal communities in Palestine with compassion, innovation, and enduring solidarity.





# THE RAMALLAH FOUNDATION: *A Legacy of Giving, A Future of Care*

Since 1943, the Ramallah Foundation, Inc. of New York has been a beacon of hope, compassion and philanthropy. Founded by a close-knit group of Ramallah families, the Ramallah Foundation, Inc. of New York has remained steadfast in its mission to uplift the quality of life, health, education, and the social well-being of the people of Ramallah and neighboring communities.

Every dollar raised fuels a vision of service, ensuring that generations benefit from its life-changing efforts. From building the first hospital in Ramallah — an ambitious dream realized by the collective strength of the Ramallah clans — to today's monumental project, the **Azeez and Shouky Shaheen Senior Citizens Home**, the Ramallah Foundation, Inc. of New York continues its legacy of care with unwavering determination, making history once again with the construction of this state-of-the-art senior citizens home — the largest endeavor since the building of the Ramallah Hospital in 1956.

In 2024, the **Azeez and Shouky Shaheen Senior Citizen Center** reached major milestones:

- The first and second floors were completed.
- Construction of the third floor is in full swing.
- Essential infrastructure, including internal plastering, electrical and mechanical rooms, and the water well, is in place.
- Exterior enhancements, such as retaining walls and ramps, are finished.

With an additional floor added, the new center will now accommodate nearly 70 senior citizens, ensuring that more of our beloved elders can transition into this welcoming space by mid-2026.

This project is more than just bricks and mortar, it's a symbol of love and respect for our elders.

Be a part of something extraordinary! Your donations are tax-deductible and directly contribute to the future of Ramallah's seniors. **Donate today through My AFRP and help shape a legacy of care and dignity.**





# RAMALLAH PRESERVATION PROJECT:

## *Preserving Palestinian Culture and History*

Palestinian heritage is deeply rooted in our oral histories, photography and historical documents, each serving as a powerful tool for safeguarding our identity and collective memory.

The Ramallah Preservation Project is reaching more than 20,000 people per month through social media channels. The oral histories play a crucial role in documenting Palestinian experiences, particularly those of displacement – immigration experience and resilience. We have conducted hundreds of interviews with the elders of our greater Ramallah community, documenting their personal narratives that provide insight into the life before and after the Nakba. These stories capture the essence of Palestinian identity, ensuring that voices from the past continue to be heard.

Photography and other historical documents – marriage certificates, titles/deeds, immigration papers, etc. – serve as a visual record of our Palestinian history, documenting everyday life, traditions and significant events. These images offer a glimpse into Palestinian culture, family gatherings, landmarks and other visual storytelling.



By collecting oral histories, photographs and documents, we are actively preserving our rich Palestinian heritage, ensuring that they remain protected as a comprehensive record of our Ramallah Palestinian life, struggles and achievements.

We are looking for old, historical family photos from Ramallah or the early days of immigration. Please email the photos with a short description to: [preservation@afrp.org](mailto:preservation@afrp.org).

There's no better way to preserve our history and culture for the benefit of future generations.

## RAMALLAH CLUBS

Currently, there are 14 active Ramallah Club chapters across the nation that serve as the heart of the AFRP. These chapters strengthen our ties to the Federation by fostering a spirit of unity, collaboration and shared heritage. Through engaging cultural events, social celebrations and meaningful charitable initiatives, they provide a space where members can connect, support one another, and uphold our collective traditions. Their dedication ensures that the Federation remains a powerful network, keeping us rooted in our identity while embracing new opportunities for growth and connection.

Whether organizing educational programs, networking opportunities, or celebrations of tradition, each Ramallah Club plays a vital role in preserving and promoting the rich legacy of Ramallah descendants. Their dedication ensures that future generations remain connected to their roots while building meaningful relationships within their local communities.

In 2025, the creation of the Ramallah Club of Phoenix was established and is actively engaging their members with

monthly events. Also this year, the Ramallah Club of New Jersey was re-established and hosted the successful 2025 Mid-Year Meeting in Weehawken, New Jersey.



# HEALING and HOPE:

## *AFRP Leaders, Medical Mission's Easter Journey Home*

This past Easter, the AFRP organized a special visit to our ancestral homeland. This visit was part of the Federation's ongoing efforts to strengthen ties between the Palestinian diaspora and Ramallah, which aligns with the Federation's motto: "Together we build, together we return."

Over eight days, the delegation participated in a comprehensive program of religious, cultural and social activities, including site visits, community meetings, and celebratory events that expressed a deep sense of belonging and renewed commitment to the Palestinian national identity. The visit served as a platform for intergenerational connection and unity under the theme: "Eight Days of Love and Belonging, and a Lifelong Promise of Return."

### Objectives of the Visit

The 2025 Easter visit organized by the AFRP in Palestine aimed to achieve a set of strategic and emotional goals, including:

- Strengthening connections between the Ramallah U.S. family and their home city through direct engagement with the local community and national institutions.
- Reviving religious and cultural traditions associated with Easter in their place of origin, fostering spiritual and emotional bonds with Palestine.
- Enabling the new generation of Federation members in the U.S. to experience their history, heritage and city landmarks firsthand.



- Supporting Palestinian presence and unity during religious and cultural events, despite geographical and political challenges.
- Building and expanding networks of cooperation between the local community and the diaspora through meetings, visits, and joint initiatives.

### Some highlights of the visit include:

- Meetings with the local government to strengthen the partnership between the Federation and the Ramallah Municipality, as well as meetings with our local partner organizations
- Visiting the Palestine Health Complex to work with local health administrators on strengthening the healthcare system
- The AFRP Medical Mission donating 50 hospital beds and companion sofas at Abu Rayya Rehabilitation Center (ARRC) and launching the AFRP Medical Mission Prosthetics Clinic at ARRC
- Visiting the site of the Azeez and Shouky Shaheen Senior Citizen Center and reviewing construction progress
- Participating in Easter celebrations, such as Holy Saturday (Holy Fire) in Ramallah
- Donating to Al-Nahda Women's Association in Ramallah for the creation of a playground for children with disabilities as well as distributing donations to over 12 partner organizations

## JUHOUD

*By Olivia Baba*

## PALESTINIAN YOUNG LEADERS FOR DEMOCRACY

In January, the AFRP hosted a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at fostering global democratic leadership. A select group of young Palestinian professionals were chosen to participate in the inaugural Palestinian Young Leaders for Democracy Exchange Program, jointly organized by AFRP and Ramallah-based nonprofit Juhoud for Community & Rural Development, with funding from the U.S. State Department Office of Palestinian Affairs.

The program brought together rising leaders from across the West Bank for an intensive two-week immersion

in American democratic institutions and civil society. Through carefully curated experiences in both Washington, D.C. and Michigan, participants gained firsthand exposure to the multifaceted nature of American governance and engaged with an impressive array of political leaders, policy experts and community advocates.

With a dedicated and hardworking team, the AFRP created an extensive and impressive program itinerary.

*continued >>*





The first week in Washington, D.C., provided participants with unprecedented access to key figures in American policy and Middle East relations. The young leaders engaged with various stakeholders in the American political system, deepening their understanding of how democratic institutions function at the highest levels. Despite a historic snowfall in D.C. and subsequent closings, the team worked diligently to continue with the program including a virtual legislative briefing on the inner workings of the American government, meetings and a tour of the Capitol.

The delegation participated in high-level meetings including one with Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland), Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib (D-Michigan), and influential voices in Middle East policy including Dr. Bishara Bahbah, Akram Elias, Dr. Jim Zogby, the Honorable George Salem, Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs Hady Amr, and Carnegie Endowment scholars Zaha Hassan and Dr. Nathan Brown, Raed Jarrar, and journalist Said Arikat of the Jerusalem Fund.

A historic trip was organized by our AFRP team to Annapolis, Maryland, where they were hosted by Deputy Secretary of State Michael Lore at America's oldest continuously used State Capitol. There, they engaged with Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley and Secretary of Service Paul Monteiro, gaining valuable insights into state and local governance. The curriculum emphasized the vital role of checks and balances, the importance of transparent governance, and the complex interplay between different branches of government in shaping national policy.

In addition, the AFRP also hosted two receptions for the group — the first with community leaders and the second with the most influential Arab American organizations in DC, including EMGAGE, ADC, DAWN-MENA, ANERA and the Rebuilding Alliance.

The group's second week in the U.S. took them to Michigan, where they experienced firsthand the Arab American community's role in American civic life.

The delegation met with Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan and Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud to discuss local governance and community representation. They held meaningful dialogue with influential community leaders including Arab American News publisher Osama Siblani and political activist, comedian, author and attorney Amer Zahr.

The participants also connected with representatives

from the Uncommitted Movement, gaining perspective on grassroots political organizing. The program included a visit to Ann Arbor, where the University of Michigan's Government Relations and International Affairs Office hosted discussions on the crucial role of academic institutions in civic engagement and community organizing, providing participants with a comprehensive view of how various sectors of American society contribute to democratic discourse and action.

This exchange program represents a significant step forward in international democratic leadership development, and the AFRP is proud to have made history as the first Palestinian American organization to host a State Department-funded exchange program. The wide range of experiences and high-level interactions provided this group of professionals with not just theoretical knowledge, but practical insights into the workings of democratic institutions at every level. As these emerging leaders return to their communities, they carry with them valuable perspectives on civic engagement, governance, and community organizing that could help shape the future of Palestinian civil society and democratic development.



# AFRP ARABIC LANGUAGE PROGRAM

*Language is the heartbeat of culture—an anchor to identity, history and belonging.*

In response to growing interest from our community, the AFRP proudly launched its online Arabic Language Program, Yallah Ni7ki 3arabi, in September 2024.

Developed in partnership with Bethlehem Bible College—a Palestinian academic institution accredited to teach Arabic as a second language—the program’s first phase offered five progressive levels of study. Led by highly experienced Palestinian instructors, with classes structured as interactive, small-sized learning environments to maximize participation and individual support. The program is designed to empower students with reading, writing, and conversational confidence upon completion.

The three-month pilot program began with a Level 1: Beginner’s Course for adults, introducing foundational skills in reading, writing, and conversation. Nearly 50 students completed the pilot, demonstrating strong interest and engagement across the community.

Following this success, a second semester launched in January 2025, offering the Level 1 course again for first-time learners, as well as a Level 2: Intermediate course for returning students. A third option—a Conversational Arabic—was introduced to help busy adults gain competence in everyday Arabic dialogue, with an emphasis on cultural relevance and proper usage of the Palestinian dialect.

The program will continue following an academic calendar, offering structured Fall and Spring semesters. In addition, a Summer 2025 session was introduced this year to accommodate growing demand and provide more flexibility for learners.

Through the AFRP Arabic Language Program, participants are rediscovering their ancestral language, strengthening community ties, and deepening their personal connection to Palestine. As one participant shared:

*“Arabic is not just a language; it is a homeland. Every word in Arabic carries the scent of jasmine and the cry of a rebel.”*

— Nizar Qabbani



*“This was an amazing class! My reading and writing skills have greatly improved. The teacher was not only an excellent one, but she also fostered a spirit of camaraderie and caring for each other. Please keep up this very important work!”*

The program has become more than a language course—it is a living bridge to cultural preservation. The AFRP is committed to growing this effort, bringing the Arabic language into more homes, and helping our community stay connected to its roots in an authentic and lasting way.





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