

2023–2024  
ANNUAL REPORT

# ARAVA INSTITUTE

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES





Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present to you the 2023–2024 Annual Report of the Friends of the Arava Institute and the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies. This has been an exceedingly difficult year for Israelis, Palestinians, and everyone in the Middle East. Yet, over the past year, the Institute's model of building trust through dialogue, engagement, and action has instilled hope in our students, alumni, and regional partners. In fact, the Institute's model has proven resilient and continues to engage Israelis and Palestinians on a human level and provides an alternative path forward.

We are proud that throughout the year, our academic program remained open. Our Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian alumni reached out across borders and launched new environmental cooperation and peacebuilding efforts. Our research relationships have grown, as Arava Institute researchers worked creatively despite the barriers. These are the seeds that build trust.

Our work, grounded in environmental cooperation, offers a path of sustainable growth. Today, our work continues. We hope that you are inspired by our report on the highlights and challenges of the past year. With your generous support, the Arava Institute is working to meet these challenges head-on to secure a peaceful future for the Middle East.



**Rachel Kalikow**

*Chief Executive Officer  
Friends of the Arava Institute*



**Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed**

*Executive Director  
Arava Institute  
for Environmental Studies*



**Karen Schapiro**

*Chair, Board of Directors  
Friends of the Arava Institute*





## LAST YEAR AT A GLANCE

Despite the heartbreak of the war and its tremendous obstacles to peacebuilding, the Institute held strong in the three pillars of our mission:

- ▶ We piloted and hosted workshops on **cutting-edge green technologies for off-grid communities**, including unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev.
- ▶ Our **grassroots environmental diplomacy** grew across borders and our partnerships enabled us to stay strong; we have not lost any Palestinian or Jordanian partners.
- ▶ Our **students and interns remained on campus and persevered** in learning together despite their fears and losses. Our **alumni applied the peacebuilding skills** they learned at the Institute to uniting people throughout the region.



## The Arava Institute and Friends of the Arava Institute are proud to have celebrated distinct successes this past year:

- We set up the **first solar-powered classroom in Israel** with an unrecognized off-grid Bedouin village in the Negev.
- Institute staff participated in the **United Nations Climate Change conference in Dubai**, where they forged connections and presented in the Israel pavilion. This was the first year that the Institute had its own delegation under our official NGO observer status.
- A sold-out event **honoring the immeasurable impact of Friends of the Arava Institute's CEO emerita, Miriam May**, raised over \$300,000 for the Institute with special guest Mandy Patinkin.
- Responding to the war in Gaza, the Institute launched **Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza** to supply lifesaving off-grid water, sanitation, and energy technology to civilians affected by the war.



# International Recognition of Our Leadership

Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed, Executive Director of the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, received the **2024 AAAS David and Betty Hamburg Award for Science Diplomacy** for his leadership in using science to build relationships across the Middle East, particularly between Israelis and Palestinians.

First established in 1992 as the International Scientific Cooperation Award, the award recognizes an individual or a small group working together in the scientific, engineering, or foreign affairs communities that are making an outstanding contribution to furthering science diplomacy.

The Arava Institute was also honored to have its transboundary work in environmental diplomacy recognized with a **Nobel Peace Prize nomination** this year. A group of international academics nominated the Institute for its contributions to regional cooperation, education, and environmental diplomacy in the Middle East for the last twenty-eight years.



Dr. Abu Hamed receives the 2024 AAAS David and Betty Hamburg Award for Science Diplomacy.

“Our fates are connected. At the Institute, we believe that a different future, one that embraces cycles of trust, justice, empathy, and compassion, is possible and achievable for Palestinians and Israelis,” read a statement after October 7th.



## Wartime Challenges of Environmental Peacebuilding

Executive Director Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed emphasized to the Jerusalem Press Club earlier this year that **no one wins in a war**. The only way to stop this cycle of violence—this cycle of war—he said, is to hold dialogue for understanding and to build trust to find the just peace that we all seek.

Recruitment of students from the Middle East became increasingly difficult. To expand our reach, the Institute recently hired a full-time recruiter focusing specifically on outreach to Palestinian Israeli citizens. The unpredictable nature of the war also impacted international recruitment efforts as universities limited study abroad in Israel. Yet, each semester, the Institute continued to attract applicants from the region and the world and hosted geographically diverse cohorts.

Initially, cross-border research was on pause but our communication lines remained open, if strained. We were unable to host conferences in person in Israel, but we adapted and held conferences in Cyprus, enabling us to bring together international and regional partners.

# Academic Program

**Israeli, Palestinian, American, Kenyan, Guatemalan, German, South African and Moroccan students joined us during the 2023–2024 academic year.**

The fall 2023 semester of our university-accredited program began a month before the war. We paused the program only for a few days and most of the students chose to remain on campus, where they continued to learn and support each other.

**Fall semester trips** took students to environmental research and development centers as well as to local Bedouin communities. During the spring semester, the three-day trip included a Bedouin school in the Negev, the Jewish/Arab communal village

Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam, and Jerusalem. As always, these

trips broadened student experiences. Several of our Jewish students had never visited East Jerusalem or the Muslim quarter of the Old City and while initially apprehensive, they came away believing it deepened their understanding of their friends.



The **Dialogue Forum**, a required non-credited weekly seminar, provided a safe space for our students to develop skills to engage in civil dialogue and compassionate

listening. During the fall graduation program, the students performed an emotional song about peace, delivered in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, written by two participants who were called up for reserve duty and returned to their friends on campus.







“This moment is giving us the push for something new. Even though it’s so painful, it pushes us forward to something different. Let’s radically imagine something else.”

MARIAM, Palestinian Israeli student, fall 2023

“ To have an opportunity to take part in this program, especially when the whole system is built to keep you away from this, does really change the future for a lot of us.”



JAWDAT, a spring 2024 Palestinian Israeli student from Nazareth, was so energized by his experience during the Fall 2023 semester that he decided to return for a second semester to take more courses, experience, and learn. A lawyer, he returned to the Institute this fall to work with the student life program.



“

Teaching Israelis, Palestinians, and internationals who continue to gather together to learn with open, thoughtful minds has taught me so much. **We've created a little fortress where we protect our shared humanity.**”

– DR. MIRI LAVI-NEEMAN  
POLITICAL ECOLOGY LECTURER AT THE ARAVA INSTITUTE,  
SPEAKING JUST WEEKS AFTER THE ATTACKS OF OCTOBER 7, 2023



# Teaching Peace

The academic program staff found that students were thirsty for the opportunity to continue to learn. They came to the Institute with hope for a better tomorrow.

In the midst of this, the Institute's rigorous academic curriculum added three new courses and reintroduced one to the spring semester curriculum:

- **Changing the Intellectual Climate:** A journey into the new vocabularies of global environmental change
- **Conflict and Cooperation:** An interdisciplinary exploration of environmental relations in the Middle East
- **Green Building & Socio-Economic Values**
- **Water and Economics:** Applying the Multi-Year Water Allocation System (MYWAS) model



# Working Regionally for Climate Resilience

## The New Center for Climate Change Policy & Research

Our new Center for Climate Change Policy and Research, led by Dr. Elise Machline, integrates the Arava Institute's various research disciplines using a multidisciplinary approach to face the challenges posed by climate change. The Center's working groups include researchers from throughout the region pursuing food security, public health, eco-districts, and transboundary water management research. Under the leadership of Dr. Machline, the Center worked to organize region-wide responses to the impact of climate change, despite the challenges of meeting during the war.

*We are grateful for the generous support of the Diane and Guilford Glazer Foundation, the Isidore and Penny Myers Foundation and Marc Friedman.*





## Applied Environmental Diplomacy

The Arava Institute applies the lessons of cross-border environmental cooperation to facilitate practical, on-the-ground projects through civil society cooperation between Israel, Palestine, and Jordan to improve lives, protect the environment, and support sustainable resolution of conflict. During this past year, this Center began to work on:

- **Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza**, launched and led with Palestinian partner Damour for Community Development. They are an international multi-sector coalition, working to bring our environmental expertise to rapidly deploy water and wastewater treatment, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) solutions, as well as energy solutions, providing immediate relief to Gazan civilians in Green Refugee Shelters while long-term strategies are in development.
- **Harvesting Cooperation**, funded by USAID, is an initiative to bring Water, Energy, Food and Ecosystems (WEFE) pilot projects and training programs to Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian communities concurrently.



# Partnering with Unrecognized Bedouin Villages

Off-grid technologies use renewable energy and are not reliant on an electrical grid or sewage systems. In Israel, roughly 1/3 of the 300,000 Bedouin in Israel live off-grid and do not have access to clean drinking water or electricity. The Institute's applied research centers are developing off-grid technologies to bring environmental solutions to communities like the Bedouin. We also provide capacity-building training so that communities understand their value and learn how to use and maintain these technologies.



**“The days on the kibbutz were like therapy. I was depressed and this was the best treatment. We need to return to nature and to our traditions, and we need to invest in solar power.”**

**- FATIMA, participant in the renewable energy workshop at Kibbutz Ketura**

- **Solar Energy for Bedouins** | The Arava Institute hosted a seminar in August on “Solar energy as a catalyst for regional development in the Bedouin community” in cooperation with the Bedouin Society for Off-Grid and Unrecognized Villages in the Eastern Negev region. This seminar is part of a series of lectures, trainings, and capacity building activities run by the Institute since January 2023. The series aims to provide sustainable solutions for renewable energy, water conservation and production, wastewater treatment, agriculture, and a circular economy.
- **The first Bedouin Climate Justice conference** in December in Segev Shalom discussed renewable energy solutions in Bedouin settlements and covered issues of safety during the war for the Bedouin community. This work is led by Fareed Mahameed, who is an alum and the Assistant Director of the Institute's Center for Transboundary Water Management.
- In May, a **Solar Program for Women**, a first-ever workshop for Israeli Bedouin and Palestinian women interested in exploring the fundamentals of practical and theoretical aspects of solar energy, covered topics including sources to acquire necessary permissions and funding to implement solar power for their home, as well as hands-on workshops to enhance their practical skills.
- **The Off-Grid Hub for Climate Resiliency** is a pedagogical hub at a Bedouin high-school in al-Furaa that serves 1,200 students and will be a model for off-grid communities that lack wastewater treatment infrastructure. These are the first and only off-grid classrooms in Israel. Students will learn about hi-tech innovative sustainability through 5 technologies: wastewater treatment, solar power, conversion of waste into energy for cooking and heating (biodigesters), atmospheric water generation to create drinking water from moisture in the air, and community gardens using recycled water.



## Environmental Research

**Agrivoltaics** | Our Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation, led by Dr. Tali Zohar, is piloting the harvesting of crops using an Agrivoltaic system (AgriPV), where crops are grown directly under solar panels. New AgriPV plots were installed on the Arava Institute campus, where we harvested crops including tomatoes and sweet potatoes. This technology may help farmers at risk of losing their farms due to increased droughts.

*We are grateful for the generous support of the FS Foundation, the Ronald S. Roadburg Foundation and the Isidore and Bertha Gudelsky Foundation for this work.*

**Supplying Wastewater Treatment Technology in the West Bank** | The Institute is partnering to supply our patented wastewater treatment and reuse system, Laguna Innovation, as well as large-scale biogas digesters, to support a dairy operation in the West Bank. This system treats the sewage from the milking parlor for reuse. It also uses cow manure to extract biogas, which produces electricity to run the boilers in the dairy.

**Ancient Judaeen Dates** | In August, we harvested our world famous ancient dates for the 4th year. Hannah is our only fruit-bearing Ancient Judaeen date tree as of now. The tree was sprouted from a 2,000 year-old seed, and pollinated by Methuselah, another Ancient Judaeen date tree. This harvest of these ancient dates is the continuation of an ambitious, decades-long experiment to raise the biblical-era *Phoenix dactylifera* – date palm – from the dead.



# International Partnerships and Conferences

**The Arava Institute participates regionally and globally as we continue to expand and develop our international partnerships beyond the United Nations:**

In September 2023, the Arava Institute partnered with the **Environmental Change Institute of the University of Oxford** on a joint project to build resilience to climate change through citizen-led energy transition in Israel and the UK, generously supported by the British Council Wohl Clean Growth Alliance Grants.

The Arava Institute's Center for Climate Change Policy and Research held its first convening at the **Cyprus Institute**, launching a partnership with the Cyprus Institute's Eastern Mediterranean Middle East Climate Change Initiative.

The Arava Institute's Center for Transboundary Water Management completed its partnership with **GREENinMED**, an EU-funded transboundary project with partners from Spain, France, and Israel that aimed to increase water and energy efficiency and sustainability in the Mediterranean tourism industry. Eleven hotels

in Israel were selected to receive free consultations on how to improve their water and energy efficiency.



The Arava Institute  
**BOASTS OVER**  
**1,900**  
**ALUMNI**  
WORLDWIDE

## Alumni Programs

Alumni engagement is an integral part of our mission. The Institute recently established the Fund for Entrepreneurship and Creativity. Through seed grants, the Institute provides financial and capacity building support for alumni to harness the skills they develop at the Institute to launch new endeavors. These funds enable alumni to start cross-cultural business and social initiatives and to create a network of relationships that support sustainability and stability in the Middle East.

- **Mazra'ah Community** | Promoting Jewish - Bedouin friendship and cooperation around environmental sustainability
- **Fostering Israeli-Palestinian Cross-Border Environmental Cooperation and Innovation** | Empowering activists navigating tumultuous times, fostering resilience, and providing practical tools for personal growth
- **Thayalu** | Teaching Arabic language and culture to Jewish Israeli children
- **Masafer Sustainable Footwear** | Supporting the artisan Palestinian shoemaking market

*This program is made possible by support from Ethan Grossman and the United States Institute of Peace.*

- During the **Alumni Palooza** held at the Institute in May, 15 alumni came back to the campus to meet with the current students and interns and share their experiences, expertise, and projects over the years. Many work in environmental and peacebuilding fields. During these challenging times, their commitment to transboundary environmental cooperation and activism shows there are true partners for peace in the Middle East.
- A group of Palestinian and Israeli Arava Institute alumni created the **Whatsapp group “Voices of Solidarity”** in the fall to share messages promoting peace and solidarity during the ongoing war. The goal of the group is to “work together to change the current violent and segregated discourse around us, to one of protection of innocent civilians, and dialogue, and to amplify the voices of those who want to live together, know how to live together, and are learning to live together.”



## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES BEYOND THE REGION

Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed and Institute faculty visited communities throughout the United States and spoke both virtually and in person. For those unable to meet in person, Friends of the Arava Institute continued its series of online programs called "Voices on the Ground," discussing the challenges of environmental peacebuilding during wartime:

- **Teaching during Times of War**, with Arava Institute faculty member Dr. Miri Lavi-Neeman and Academic Director Dr. Jessica Schackermann.
- **Institute Briefing**, with Dr. David Lehrer, who spoke about the current situation on the ground and how the Institute envisions the possibility of future cooperation through our applied environmental diplomacy work.
- **Cultivating Coexistence and Hope through Environmental Dialogue**, with Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed at Central Synagogue in New York.
- **Communities of Hope: The Hostage and Missing Families Forum and the Arava Institute**, with Ambassador Daniel Shek, Arava Institute Board member.





Dr. Abu Hamed at the Sparta Symposium of Ideas.

## Scholarly Output

Despite the challenges of the war, faculty members and research staff presented at conferences and seminars and kept publishing in 2023–4. Highlights include:

- **International Environmental Leadership |** Executive Director Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed presented in Greece at the Sparta Symposia of Ideas in August: “Towards a sustainable ecosystem.” Dr. Abu Hamed presented on the role of environmental diplomacy in advancing regional Water–Energy–Food nexus initiatives.
- **Viral Presence of Covid in Wastewater |** Wastewater can be an important resource for passively detecting viruses like SARS-CoV-2. Researchers from the Arava Institute’s Center for Transboundary Water Management, including Director of the Center, Dr. Clive Lipchin, and Assistant Director Fareed Mahameed, and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev took advantage of this fact for a research study along the Hebron Stream in the Negev. Their recently published paper concluded that under-testing and asymptomatic transmission in Bedouin communities led to a mismatch between reported coronavirus cases and viral presence in wastewater.

## MEDIA RECOGNITION

**The Arava Institute became a sought after thought partner as news outlets looked for information on the environmental impact of the war and were eager to find stories of Israeli/Palestinian continued engagement.**

A few of the Institute's features in news outlets and podcasts follow here. For a complete list, please visit [arava.org/about-our-community/in-the-news/](http://arava.org/about-our-community/in-the-news/)

***Collaborative water management can be a building block for peace between Israelis and Palestinians***, by Clive Lipchin & Richard Friend – *The Conversation*, October 30, 2023

***Amid Israel-Hamas War, Some Still See a Path to Coexistence***, by Marc Champion (Bloomberg) – *Washington Post*, October 29, 2023, quotes Dr. David Lehrer

***Climate unites us***, by Laura Lynch – *CBC*, October 29, 2023, Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed is interviewed

***In Palestine and Israel, De-Escalating Conflict Through Environmental Action***, by Daphne Chouliaraki Milner – *Atmos*, October 24th, 2023, featuring Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed



# Visit the Middle East with Us!

## 2025 ISRAEL RIDE

OCTOBER 28-NOVEMBER 3, 2025

Embark on an unforgettable cycling journey from Jerusalem to Eilat in support of the Arava Institute. Enjoy five glorious days of biking, with route options for recreational, experienced, and non-riders. All routes are fully supported with plentiful local food, wonderful crew and mechanics, and great overnight locations.



LEARN MORE ON THE [ISRAEL RIDE WEBSITE!](https://www.israelride.org)

## CULTIVATING HOPE STUDY TOUR

This curated small group journey through Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank gives participants exclusive on-the-ground access to the culture, politics, and environment of the Middle East. Led by regional experts in environmental peacebuilding, this trip takes you off the beaten track to delve into the complex realities of the region. Throughout the Study Tour, participants will be joined by Arava Institute Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian alumni engaged in environmental and coexistence efforts.

VISIT [ARAVA.ORG/CULTIVATING-HOPE](https://www.arava.org/cultivating-hope) TO LEARN MORE.





# THE WORK AHEAD

The tragic events of October 7 and the ongoing war in Gaza have only reinforced the critical need for the Institute's work to advance environmental cooperation in the Middle East.

As Tareq said in *Atmos* magazine, "I have no doubt that both sides, Palestinians and Israelis, will have a very difficult time overcoming this trauma. As someone who has been involved in peacebuilding and transboundary work for many years, I [believe] this one will be a different one. Grief, anger, stress, feelings for revenge are everywhere." Despite this, Tareq emphasizes that we must press on—that we don't have the luxury to wait for peace.

Our students, alumni, and partners continue with us towards a vision of a peaceful future. The Institute offers not only hope but a platform for *action*. In the year ahead, we will advance our work in environmental diplomacy by leveraging our regional and increasingly global partnerships to build climate resilience through policy and research. We will use our environmental expertise to support humanitarian relief across borders.

We thank you for your generous support, which will improve the lives of so many in our region and help build a future beyond this war.



Hersh and  
Betsy Richman

## Why We Support the Institute

**Hersh and Betsy Richman** have been dedicated supporters of the Arava Institute since their first Israel Ride in 2007. Hersh, a retired environmental lawyer and current trustee member of Friends of the Arava Institute, is drawn to the Institute's focus on environmental research in the region. Betsy, a retired psychologist, values the transformative power of dialogue among diverse participants. Their shared commitment to peace and understanding drives their involvement.

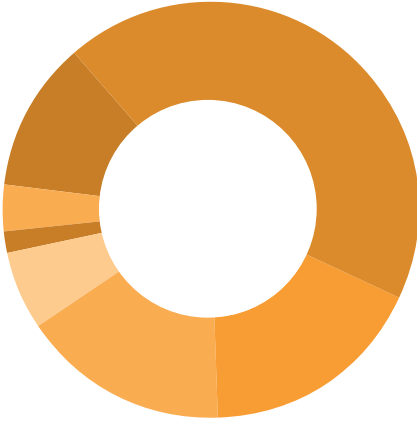
During their recent trip to the Institute and Israel in May 2024, Hersh and Betsy were inspired by the determination and collaboration evident within the Institute's community. They noted that engaging with current projects and conversing with students reinforced their belief in the possibility of positive change, even in challenging times. **"It's easy to feel disheartened by the news, but we must remember that there are those who strive for hope and understanding. We should hold on to that thread of optimism,"** says Betsy. They returned with a renewed belief of the potential for cooperation and understanding in the region.

Hersh and Betsy believe that fostering connections through dialogue is essential for lasting change, and they view the Arava Institute as a powerful example of this principle. They appreciate how individuals from diverse backgrounds and differing histories can come together to listen, discuss, and appreciate each other's perspectives. By supporting the Institute, they hope to demonstrate that cooperation can thrive even in challenging circumstances.

# FINANCIALS

ARAVA INSTITUTE (1/1/23-12/31/23)

## REVENUE \$4,491,000



US CONTRIBUTIONS	\$2,217,000	49%
US GRANTS	\$1,118,000	20%
INTERNATIONAL GRANTS	\$586,000	18%
INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS & TUITION	\$307,000	7%
NORTH AMERICAN TUITION	\$82,000	2%
SHORT TERM PROGRAMS	\$181,000	4%

## EXPENSES \$4,329,000



RESEARCH & PROJECTS	\$1,225,000	28%
ACADEMICS	\$1,227,000	28%
ADMINISTRATION	\$948,000	22%
FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT	\$108,000	2%
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	\$821,000	19%



FRIENDS OF THE ARAVA INSTITUTE (7/1/23-6/30/24)

# REVENUE \$4,681,000



GRANTS	\$1,893,000	41%
INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS	\$2,067,000	44%
INVESTMENTS & OTHER INCOME	\$308,000	7%
SPECIAL EVENT REVENUE - NET	\$306,000	7%
TUITION REVENUE	\$81,000	2%

**JEWISH NATIONAL FUND\*  
AFFILIATE FUNDRAISING**

**\$914,000**

*\*JNF is no longer a partner as of 1/1/24*



# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

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WHO MADE GIFTS BETWEEN JULY 1, 2023 AND JUNE 30, 2024

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