

**2024-2025**  
ANNUAL REPORT

# Arava Institute for Environmental Studies

## Friends of the Arava Institute





Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present the 2024–2025 Annual Report for **Friends of the Arava Institute** and the **Arava Institute for Environmental Studies**. Although the past two years have been difficult, the Arava Institute's track record and strong relationships yielded meaningful results this year, as the Institute's academic program brought together students from around the world, and flourishing environmental partnerships delivered life-saving water, sanitation, and energy technologies to Palestinian and Bedouin communities.

Amid the ongoing challenges imposed by the war last year, the Institute experienced a further blow when its USAID funding was terminated earlier in 2025. This loss represented nearly 25% of the 2025 budget and may impact student scholarships, special academic modules, cross-border environmental research, and more. While some research has been temporarily paused as new funding is pursued, the Arava Institute remains committed to maintaining its academic and core programs.

Despite these hurdles, the Institute convened regional conferences, bringing together Palestinian, Israeli, and Jordanian environmental experts for the first time in two years. Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza, a partnership with Damour for Community Development, built a coalition of international NGOs to bring environmental humanitarian aid to displaced civilians. The Institute also expanded its MENA partner network, strengthening collaboration and regional impact, and continues to lead efforts linking climate resilience with public health, sustainable urbanism, and environmental sustainability.

Friends of the Arava Institute continued to offer opportunities to connect with the Institute through virtual programs, local events, and the Arava Institute Mission. These experiences provide a window into applied environmental diplomacy and the Institute's impact. Your generous support ensures that Friends of the Arava Institute remains a steadfast partner, helping the Institute stay a place of hope and a hub of action.

**Rachel Kalikow**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
*Friends of the*  
*Arava Institute*

**Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed**  
*Executive Director*  
*Arava Institute*  
*for Environmental Studies*

**Steven Sanderson**  
*Chair, Board of Trustees*  
*Friends of the*  
*Arava Institute*

## LAST YEAR AT A GLANCE

Despite the ongoing challenges of war, the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies continued to bring together Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians in pursuit of partnership to build a sustainable and peaceful future. We welcomed students and interns to our diverse programs, concretely creating impact together and demonstrating the strength of the Institute's approach.

✳️ **Sustainability in action:** Institute staff, students, interns, and partner organizations installed WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) technologies across the region, including in the West Bank's Jericho Valley. The stations address critical issues like food security, public health, and water management, while advancing sustainable urbanism and a circular economy.

✳️ **Academic program and alumni network:** The Institute welcomed students and interns from around the world to campus, where they lived, learned, and grew together in the face of uncertainty. More than half of the 2024-2025 students chose to stay for a second semester, and for the first time since before October 2023, alumni gatherings were held in both the Middle East and North America, helping to achieve continuity of the Institute's signature bridge-building efforts.

✳️ **Regional cooperation:** We hosted conferences in Cyprus and Athens, bringing together Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, Moroccan, and European environmental experts to share knowledge and address possible solutions for water, energy, food security, and climate challenges.

✳️ **Maintaining Palestinian-Israeli partnerships:** Through multiple on-the-ground and academic research programs, the Arava Institute has maintained all our Palestinian partnerships since October 7, 2023. For example, our collaboration with Palestinian NGO Damour for Community Development remains strong through Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza and other initiatives, supporting environmental humanitarian aid for displaced civilians in refugee camps.

## Academic Program

During the 2024-2025 academic year, our university-accredited program welcomed Palestinian, Israeli, Sudanese, Rwandan, American, and European students. Funding cuts from USAID unfortunately led to the cancellation of a special course for Palestinian and Israeli students that was set to be hybrid and conclude together in-person in Cyprus.

Students studied with renowned faculty and skilled facilitators on today's most pressing environmental challenges, combining classroom and experiential learning with hands-on application:

- **Immersive learning:** Courses like Dr. David Lehrer's Global Resource Geopolitics encouraged students to analyze how energy, minerals, and other resources influence development, security, and peacebuilding.
- **Community engagement:** Semester trips included visits to unrecognized Bedouin communities in the Negev, giving students direct exposure to environmental and social realities in the region.
- **Dialogue Forum:** The weekly seminar created a safe space for open, civil discourse, where students developed compassionate listening tools and built skills for civil engagement across differences.
- **Zahra Artist Residency:** During spring 2025, students and artists worked together to connect artistic expression with the Institute's mission, using creative projects to engage the community in dialogue around sustainability and cross-border collaboration.



“ We have to start thinking differently. The Middle East is changing, and we have to choose how to live together.”

– DR. SHADDAD ATTILI, FORMER PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY WATER MINISTER, AT THE ARAVA INSTITUTE'S EXPERTS CONFERENCE, ATHENS

## Driving Change Across Borders

In 2024, the Arava Institute was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, recognizing its groundbreaking work in cross-border environmental cooperation. That same year, Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed showcased the Institute's leadership as the keynote speaker at Israeli President Herzog's Spring Climate Forum, where he also co-chairs the Task Force on Regional Cooperation and Security.

The Institute continued to be a *do*-tank, driving science diplomacy regionally, as seen in two key conferences:

- Sixty Palestinian, Israeli, and Jordanian experts in water, energy, food security, and the environment met for three days, tackling shared challenges in natural resource management and sustainability through collaborative problem-solving.
- The Institute convened regional researchers to advance joint research, dialogue, and practical solutions for climate resilience.

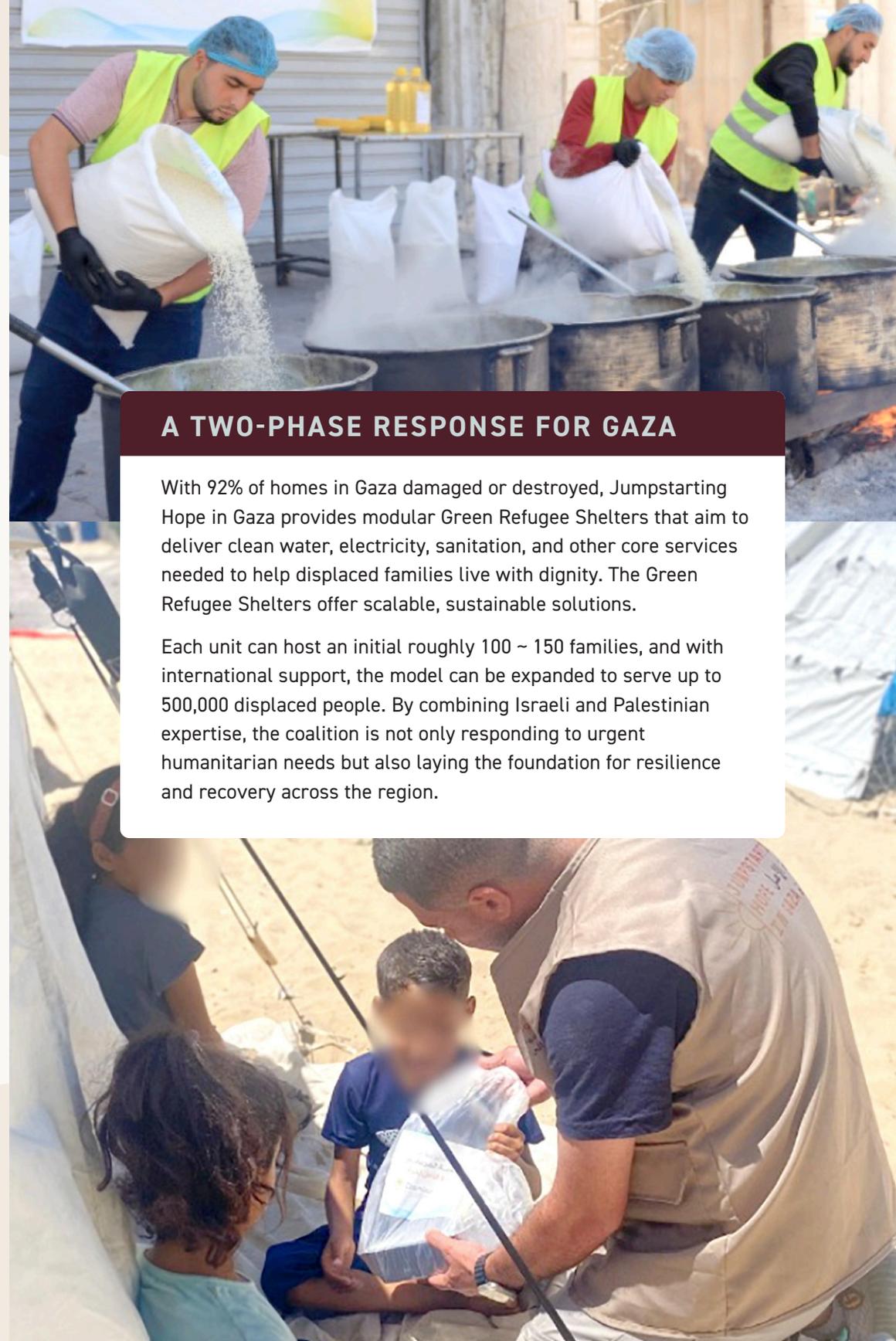
Efforts such as these continue to bring the Institute recognition for our leadership in fostering regional cooperation, advancing science and environmental diplomacy, and training the next generation of experts committed to building sustainable and peaceful communities.



## Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza

In spring 2024, the Arava Institute partnered with Palestinian civil society organization Damour for Community Development to launch the Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza coalition. This effort builds on a long-standing partnership, sustained even through the challenges and trauma experienced by communities on both sides of the conflict. By maintaining trust, the two organizations were able to harness their expertise to respond quickly and effectively to deliver essential aid for displaced families.

In its first year, the coalition supported the establishment of three displaced persons shelters. The shelters provided families with environmental humanitarian aid, alongside infrastructure for water storage, supply, sanitation, and waste management. While the numbers of beneficiaries expanded, decreased, and expanded again between ceasefires, displacements, and intensified fighting, thousands of families in Gaza received lifesaving services through Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza. At the time that this report went to print, one shelter housed more than 4,500 residents, while two others housed between 500 and 2,000 people.



### A TWO-PHASE RESPONSE FOR GAZA

With 92% of homes in Gaza damaged or destroyed, Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza provides modular Green Refugee Shelters that aim to deliver clean water, electricity, sanitation, and other core services needed to help displaced families live with dignity. The Green Refugee Shelters offer scalable, sustainable solutions.

Each unit can host an initial roughly 100 ~ 150 families, and with international support, the model can be expanded to serve up to 500,000 displaced people. By combining Israeli and Palestinian expertise, the coalition is not only responding to urgent humanitarian needs but also laying the foundation for resilience and recovery across the region.

# Applied Research and Development – Nature Knows No Borders

Across the region, the Arava Institute turns environmental research into real-world impact. From developing renewable energy systems and sustainable agriculture methods to managing shared water resources, the Institute's applied research connects scientists, policymakers, and communities working to solve common challenges together.

Through projects led by the Arava Institute and its regional partners, we support farmers and local communities in adapting to water scarcity and climate stress.



## INNOVATION IN ACTION

### The Off-Grid Hub of al-Fura'a

The Institute bridges the gap between research and real-world impact by connecting communities with solutions. A striking example is the Off-Grid Technology Hub in the unrecognized Bedouin village of al-Fura'a.

Created in partnership with the Council of Unrecognized Bedouin Villages and led by Institute staff member and alumnus Fared Mahameed, the hub is hosted at the regional Bedouin high school. It brings innovation directly to students, addressing chronic challenges like limited access to fresh water and electricity and the constant threat of demolition.

Today, a micro-grid provides reliable renewable energy for four classrooms. A decentralized wastewater treatment system and research station allow students and researchers to explore agricultural solutions firsthand.

The hub is more than technology. It is a place where students experiment, learn, and imagine what is possible. By supporting the community's growth and stability and by fostering cross-cultural engagement with neighboring Jewish schools, we demonstrate that practical solutions, combined with community engagement, spark change that stretches far beyond one classroom.

During times of conflict, unrecognized villages are especially vulnerable due to the absence of reinforced shelters. Working with the regional school, the Arava Institute identified an urgent need—and an opportunity. **Thanks to the generosity of Sara and Howard Metzenberg, al-Fura'a now has the first Ministry of Education approved shelter in any unrecognized Bedouin village.**



## WELCOMING ISRAELI PRESIDENT ISAAC HERZOG

In March, al-Fura'a made history as the first unrecognized village ever visited by an Israeli president when President Isaac Herzog officially opened the Off-Grid Technology Hub at a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

For the people of al-Fura'a, the President's presence was more than ceremonial; it was a moment of visibility, acknowledgment, and hope.



## Alumni

Upon completing their time at the Arava Institute, students and interns join a dynamic alumni community supported through regional convenings, seed grants, mentoring, and professional development. Alumni gatherings in Cyprus, on campus, and in Amman fostered connection and cooperation across borders.

This year, Arava Institute alumni achieved remarkable milestones:

- **Noa** organized *Woodstock for Peace*, bringing together 3,500 people in Israel for three days of dialogue, music, and art in Arabic and Hebrew.
- **Ebby** won best presentation at Ben-Gurion University for her research on desert wildflowers as a natural pest management tool in date plantations.
- **Jawdat** received the **Victor J. Goldberg Prize for Peace in the Middle East** for his leadership in advancing regional cooperation.



“When there is so much darkness, any light shines brightly. It takes time and work to heal, but offering a better alternative can inspire people to choose it.”

-EVE, HAIFA, ISRAEL

## Alumni Speaking Tour

In fall 2024, Friends of the Arava Institute brought two Arava Institute alumni—Eve, a 30-year-old peace activist, environmental educator, and urban planner from Haifa, and Omar\*, a 29-year-old civil and environmental engineer from Bethlehem—on a tour across the United States to share their personal journeys of resilience and cross-border engagement.

Eve studied at the Institute in 2017–18, living alongside Palestinian students and discovering new perspectives that shaped her work in human and civil rights. Today, she continues to pursue efforts for an updated political solution to the conflict while mentoring others in peacebuilding.

Omar, who attended the Institute in Spring 2022, faced significant hurdles just to join the program. As a young Palestinian navigating complex permit restrictions, he managed to secure entry for educational purposes, even while planning to work to support himself and his family. His semester at the Institute opened doors to ongoing cross-border programs and inspired his pursuit of a master's degree in water engineering, alongside active work fostering cooperation and understanding in his community.

Over ten days, Eve and Omar traveled to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Princeton, and Washington, D.C. to speak with students, faculty, and supporters, inspiring others to create relationships and facilitate conversations to foster understanding and cooperation.

*\*A pseudonym has been used at his request.*

## REGIONAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Climate resilience and mitigation is integral to the Arava Institute's regional strategy. The Institute strengthens regional climate resilience through research, innovation, and cross-border collaboration. Two key initiatives exemplify this work:

- **EcoFuture: Building Climate Resilience in the Jordan Valley** – Led by Dr. David Lehrer, the EcoFuture project addresses urgent climate challenges in the Mediterranean by focusing on the water, energy and food ecosystem. Activities include demonstration pilots, capacity building, and cross-border dialogue to create scalable solutions.
- **Climate Change Policy and Research** – Led by Dr. Elise Machline, the Institute conducts multidisciplinary research exploring the interactions between society, economy, and environment. This research informs comprehensive strategies and practical solutions for climate change and is carried out in collaboration with partners across Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Morocco, and beyond.



# Engaging North American Communities

Friends of the Arava Institute is proud to support the Arava Institute's transformative work through generous support raised from donors throughout North America. In addition to the Alumni Speaking Tour, Friends of the Arava Institute has brought the Arava Institute to communities through educational and public programming including:

- **Virtual learning:** Virtual "mini-classes" brought Institute faculty and leaders to audiences across North America, with sessions ranging from how climate change affects vulnerable communities to offering a behind-the-scenes look at the Dialogue Forum, one of the Institute's cornerstone student seminars on identity and conflict.
- **Public speaking events:** Friends of the Arava Institute hosted in-person events across the US to engage audiences with stories of—and lessons from—cross-border cooperation and innovation.
- **Tour opportunities:** Participants joined the Institute's Executive Director Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed and Friends of Arava's Chief Executive Officer Rachel Kalikow for a meaningful journey from Tel Aviv to the Arava, meeting alumni and students, visiting partner sites, and meeting with Palestinian and Israeli partners.



Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed shares perspectives on environmental diplomacy at The Kitchen in San Francisco



## Experience the Arava Institute in Action

AN INVITATION

*Friends of the Arava Institute is delighted to invite you to join us*

**OCTOBER 11-21, 2026**  
*for the*

## BEYOND BORDERS STUDY TOUR

This exclusive, small-group journey through Israel, Jordan, and Palestine is a rare opportunity to see firsthand how cross-border cooperation is transforming communities and the environment.

Guided by regional experts in environmental diplomacy, you'll meet Arava Institute alumni and partners, visit groundbreaking sustainability projects, and witness the real-world impact of collaboration across borders.

For those seeking to explore further, there is an optional post-trip to Morocco.



Visit [arava.org/beyond-borders](https://arava.org/beyond-borders) to learn more and request information to sign up.



## Scholarly Output

Arava Institute researchers publish and present their work regularly. A few recent highlights include:

- **Energy storage in the Southern Arava:** A team including the Institute's Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed, Jozsef Kadar and Dr. Tali Zohar, and others researchers explored the social and policy hurdles to adopting energy storage, showing how community perspectives shape a sustainable energy future in Israel's southern Arava region.
- **Green building, real impact:** Dr. Elise Machline and collaborators examined how eco-certifications influence housing costs, highlighting how to achieve the balance between sustainability goals and affordability.
- **Cross-border cooperation in action:** Dr. Rina Kedem, Dr. Suleiman Halasah, and other researchers developed a typology for environmental cooperation in post-conflict settings, demonstrating how shared ecological challenges can foster collaboration between Jordan and Israel.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

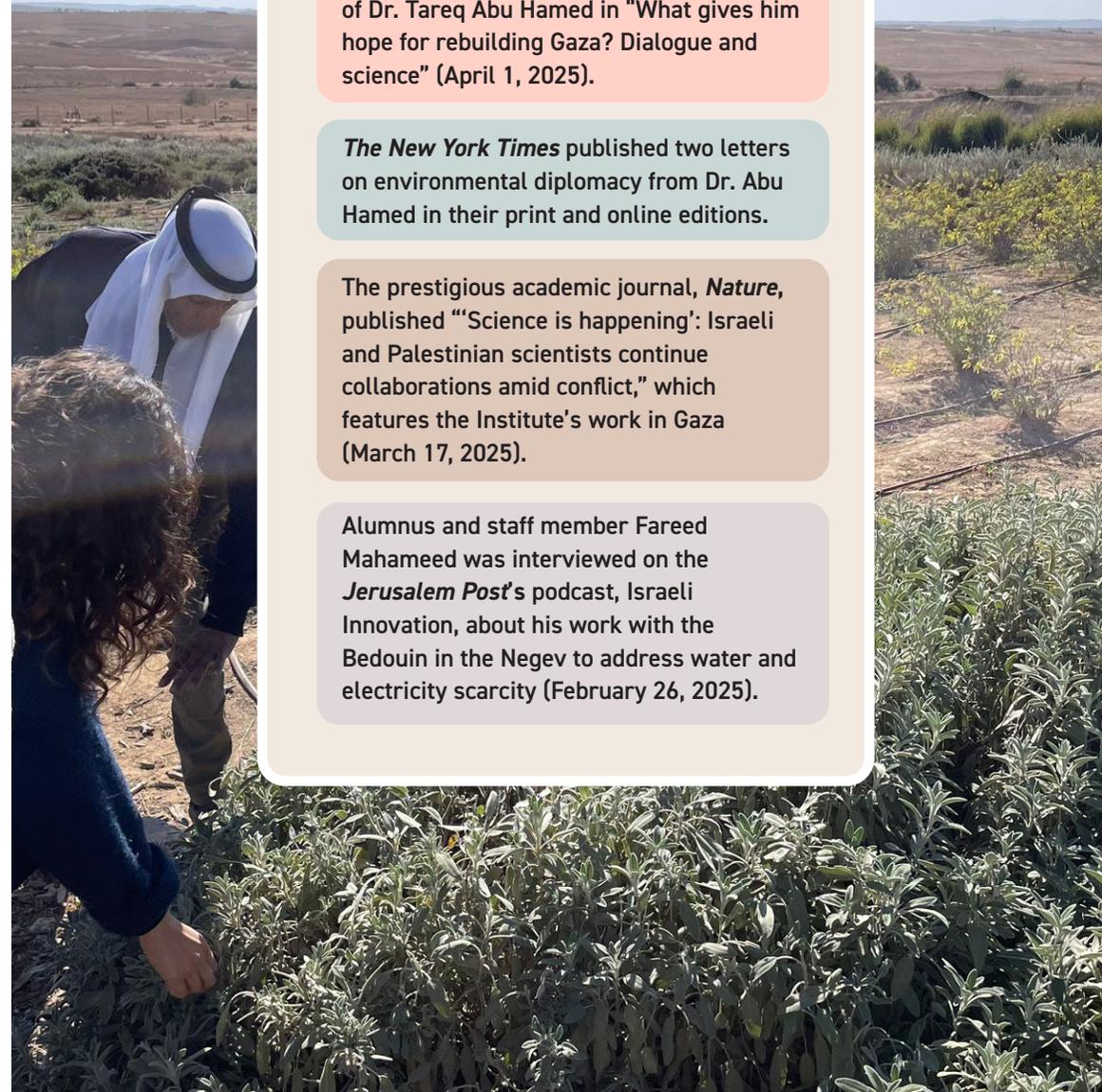
Over the past year, the Arava Institute's work has been spotlighted in a range of media. Below is a sampling; for the complete list, please see our website: [arava.org](http://arava.org).

*The Christian Science Monitor* ran a profile of Dr. Tareq Abu Hamed in "What gives him hope for rebuilding Gaza? Dialogue and science" (April 1, 2025).

*The New York Times* published two letters on environmental diplomacy from Dr. Abu Hamed in their print and online editions.

The prestigious academic journal, *Nature*, published "'Science is happening': Israeli and Palestinian scientists continue collaborations amid conflict," which features the Institute's work in Gaza (March 17, 2025).

Alumnus and staff member Fareed Mahameed was interviewed on the *Jerusalem Post's* podcast, Israeli Innovation, about his work with the Bedouin in the Negev to address water and electricity scarcity (February 26, 2025).



“Environmental diplomacy is the only tool that we have to solve the region’s environmental and climate challenges. We see it working every day.”

- DR. TAREQ ABU HAMED



## LOOKING AHEAD

The environment can be either a driver or impediment of peace. The escalating challenges posed by climate change, alongside the environmental impact of war, require regional cooperation.

As we look into the future, the Institute continues to train and mentor the next generation of environmental peacebuilders. Students and interns gain valuable expertise and training during their time as students, and they go on to be leaders equipped to bridge divides and implement practical solutions. Alumni are part of a broad community leading environmental peacebuilding efforts locally, regionally, and globally.

The Institute will build on its applied environmental diplomacy efforts, bringing pragmatic, decentralized environmental solutions to regional communities at risk. The Institute’s cross-border cooperation will foster the research and development necessary to address climate mitigation. Through applied research, field-based projects, and regional partnerships, we turn knowledge into action to address urgent issues such as water scarcity, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture.

### SCIENCE DIPLOMACY REMAINS AT THE HEART OF OUR WORK.

As Dr. Abu Hamed said in a recent interview, “Environmental diplomacy is the only tool that we have to solve the region’s environmental and climate challenges. We see it working every day.”

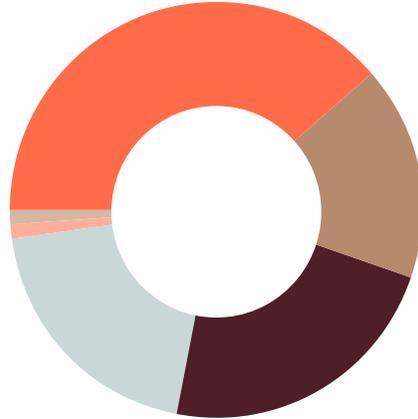
With your support, the Arava Institute will continue equipping students, alumni, and partners with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities needed to build a sustainable and peaceful future for the region.

# FINANCIALS

## ARAVA INSTITUTE (1/1/24-12/31/24)

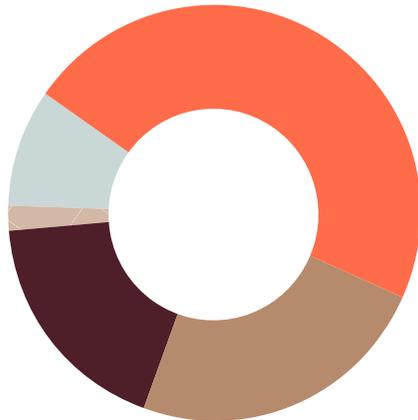
### REVENUE \$5,293,000

US CONTRIBUTIONS	\$2,068,000	39%
US GRANTS	\$919,000	17%
INTERNATIONAL GRANTS	\$1,198,000	23%
INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$1,035,000	20%
NORTH AMERICAN & INTERNATIONAL TUITION	\$39,000	1%
SHORT TERM PROGRAMS	\$34,000	1%



### EXPENSES \$4,267,000

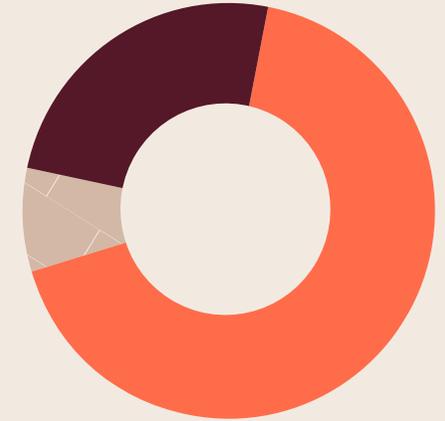
RESEARCH & PROJECTS	\$2,020,000	47%
ACADEMICS	\$1,035,000	24%
ADMINISTRATION	\$747,000	18%
FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT	\$81,000	2%
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	\$384,000	9%



## FRIENDS OF THE ARAVA INSTITUTE (7/1/24-6/30/25)

### REVENUE \$3,640,000

GRANTS	\$893,000	25%
INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS	\$2,484,000	68%
INVESTMENTS & OTHER INCOME	\$291,000	8%
SPECIAL EVENT REVENUE - NET	(\$28,000)	-1%



DONOR GIFTS DIRECTED THROUGH THE JNF-USA AND SENT DIRECTLY TO THE ARAVA INSTITUTE.

**\$519,140**

Friends of Arava Institute's audited financial statements, including a detailed breakdown of revenues and expenses, are available on our website at [arava.org](http://arava.org).





# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

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