



## Day 1:

After a 2 year hiatus because of the pandemic, we resumed our annual Homeland Project. This year we did things a little differently by sending our very own staff. Our goal behind this was to build contacts, plan for future trips, foster relationships, refocus our work and improve team morale. We are happy to say that this trip was a success on all fronts. We are very excited to start our new and improved Homeland Project next summer. We want to take you all on our journey, share what we saw, and amplify the stories that we heard. We hope that by coming on this virtual photo journey next year you will be encouraged to join us in Palestine.

The first day of the trip was focused on setting the stage for the rest of the trip and giving a holistic picture of the Palestinian struggle. We started our day with a visit to and tour of Inash Alusra which is a non-profit organization that aims to empower Palestinian women, preserve Palestinian culture and heritage, and serve various sectors of the community. Afterward, we went to Mahmoud Darwish Museum where we were surrounded by the powerful words and history of a true Palestinian Icon. Next, we went to the Yasser Arafat Museum where we went through the history of the Palestinian struggle from the Balfour Declaration to Modern Day history and occupation. Lastly, we visited Jalazone Camp and met with the volunteer team that handles all of their social, community, and recreational activities in the camp. PACC is proud to have contributed to their backpack drive and helped them buy school kits for the children of the camp.



## Day 2:

On day 2 of the trip we went to Bethlehem and Khalil. We started the morning in Bethlehem University where we heard from various students from all over the West Bank and the daily struggles they endure while commuting to school. We also heard about the West Bank and Jerusalem hawiyas and how that limits their movement further. We then took a tour through the Old City of Bethlehem followed by a tour of the Nativity Church where it is said that Jesus was born. Afterward, we went to Khalil where we saw the first-hand effect of settler colonialism where Israelis can roam freely under the protection of military forces while Palestinians have to go through a checkpoint just to enter Masjid Al-Ibrahimi. We walked through the Old City of Khalil where we were told that certain homes can only be reached by rooftops because Palestinian are forbidden on certain roads. And as a result of the occupation and the constant threat of settlers attacking, many of the stores in the Old City were forced to shut their doors. In some areas of the Old City, the ground floor belongs to the Palestinians while the second floor is occupied by Israeli Settlers. Palestinians put netting in place to protect them from the garbage that settlers throw down on them. We ended our day in the world's last standing original kuffiyeh factory.



## Day 3:

On day 3 we spent the day in Nablus where one of our very own interns, Waseem Shakhshar, set us up a tour of his home city. We started in Bayt Falasteen where we were able to see some historic artifacts and get a comprehensive view of the city that was ethnically cleansed from 1948 until today. Afterward, we took a tour of Najah University's campuses and learned about the struggles that students under occupation endure in order to get an education. Then we took a tour of the Old City where we saw how Kanafa, the hallmark dessert of Palestine that originated in Nablus, and the Nabulsi soap, a staple in Palestine, are made. Lastly, we ended the day with a visit to Askar Refugee Camp and were able to see the tight and sometimes unlivable conditions that people in refugee camps have to endure. Due to the chronic stress that they endure, many of them have developed early onset diabetes.



## Day 4:

On day 4 we visited the capital of Palestine, Jerusalem! We started our day first hand experiencing the difficulties that Palestinians have to endure in order to enter Jerusalem. Afterward, we took a tour of the old city starting with the trail of tears and ending with Masjid Alaqsa. The Old City encompassed so many years of history and we got a small glimpse of the many years this area has seen. We entered a house in the old city where Israeli Settlers acquired the neighboring house for 10 million dollars. Throughout the tour, we saw the countless settler colonial ways that Jerusalem is slowly being ethnically cleansed of any Palestinians. We ended the day by visiting an Afro-Palestinian home and organization where they epitomized sumood and steadfastness against Israeli oppression.

## Day 5:

On day 5 we went to Ras Alnaqoor, Akka, and Haifa





## Day 6:

On day 6 we visited Aree7a (Jericho) where we went on a political tour that showed the effects of the deal of the century. We saw the direct effect of Israel controlling resources like water and electricity. We visited a bedouin camp where Israeli pipes and electricity run through the camps and Palestinians are forbidden access to it. We learned about the settler colonial invasion of the Jordan Valley. There is a free-running spring that runs through Aree7a and is the last source of water for the Palestinians, despite that we saw Israeli settlers (under the protection of the Israeli military) there. They have control over all of the water on the land, but they had to come to this area invade that space and take it over for the day. Afterward, we went on the sky fairy and visited the mountain of temptation followed by Hisham's palace. As we were going home, we passed by the dead sea from afar.

## Day 7:

On day 7 we had a free day where everyone could explore where they wanted in Palestine.

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## Day 8:

On day 8 we started our day by visiting an organization called Riwaq or Center for Architectural Conservation. They do the important work of preserving and restoring the architectural heritage in the West Bank. They took us on a tour of the Old Kufr 3aqab where we saw the effects of their work firsthand. They took dilapidated architectural buildings, renovated and restored them, and worked with community partners to make the space home to many grassroots and local organizations. Afterward, we met with Qaddoura Faris the head of the Palestinian Prisoner Society (PPS), a prisoners' advocacy group, where we learned about the realities of the prisoners and what administrative detention means. Lastly, we visited UMake the leading space for entrepreneurship and innovation in Palestine that houses everything from inspiring talks to coworking space, to acceleration.

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## Day 9:

On day 9 we started the day with a tour of Ramallah and learned about the effect the occupation had on the rise of Ramallah as a center for many Palestinians. We then went to Beirzeit University where we heard from students in the Right to Educate initiative at the university. We learned about the dangers that Israel has imposed on the students for participating in any school elections or clubs including but not limited to jail time and intimidation of friends and family. Once someone is involved in any of the major school clubs, they automatically have a target on their back and many students preemptively leave their homes in an attempt to stay involved and not get jailed. Israel has raided the university on many occasions and has threatened students that get involved (even vote) in school elections. The new COGAT rule proposes an extreme limitation on foreign students or academics. If implemented, it will only allow 100 people (for all universities in Palestine) to enter a year for an even more limited time. We ended the day at Amer Zahr's annual comedy festival in Ramallah where he showcased various Palestinian American Comedians - many of them doing comedy in Palestine for the first time.

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## Day 10:

On day 10 we visited Battir and The Walled Off Hotel. Battir is the only place where the apartheid wall does not run through because they were able to acquire Unesco's World Heritage Center's protection of the natural beauty that Battir encompasses. If the wall were built, it would have destroyed the beautiful landscape and would have divided the village as it has to countless other villages. We explored the landscape and took in the beauty of Palestine while enjoying Battiri Eggplants, figs, and grapes. We also were immersed in Palestine folklore and song. We ended the day with a visit to the Walled Off Hotel in Bethlehem where Banksy put together a powerful exhibition illustrating the effects of the occupation and apartheid.