

Staying Healthy in Palestine

Readers' Opinions

The last question we asked had to do with the environment. To be honest, we are proud of our readers, and we respect all of you; but we have profound respect for our local Palestinian readers who are conscientious about the environment despite the daily challenges that are too numerous to count. A huge thank you nevertheless goes to Morgan Cooper, who lives in Ramallah for her beautiful reply which you can read below.

Question: Do you contribute to creating a healthy environment? If so, how?

Yes, by talking about it and setting an example.

Hani Mourad, Bethlehem

Yes, I do. I do not smoke, and I try to convince my friends and relatives to stop smoking.

Mkhaimar Abusada, Gaza

Yes! Very often I do not use the car in town, I separate the garbage (glass, bio-waste, paper, etc.), and we eat only seasonal fruits and vegetables. We also try to save water and have reduced our heating.

Martin Ohlen, Germany

Maybe. I make simple contributions within my nearest social group.

Ayman Safi, Ramallah

Yes, by recycling and being very careful not to litter.

Daoud Kuttab, Jerusalem, Amman

I'm very conscience of our environment and keep warning people about the waste and damage to our lands.

Liana Badr, Ramallah

I stopped smoking and using the argileh! Also, through my work at Qader for Community Development, we have a partnership with the Ministry of Health, we are institutionalizing advanced policies and protocols.

Lana Bandak, Jerusalem

By volunteering at Mashjar Juthour. I've always been interested in subjects related to health and the environment. In school, I was part of the environment club, in the university I undertook projects to make students aware that taking care of their health is part of taking care of their surrounding environment and vice versa. And currently, I continually open up discussions with friends and family about the world's environment and how small actions can lead to enhancing and saving our environment.

Majdi Habash, Ramallah

Yes. I recycle, I garden, and I do not smoke.

Athar Joseph, Hebron/Chicago

My contribution is limited to me and my family's style of living.

Adnan Abdelrazek, Jerusalem

I recycle and only buy environmentally friendly products.

Antoine Raffoul, Italy

I consciously try to avoid using plastic and producing or consuming CO2. I try to reduce the consumption of baked food. I avoid using transportation to reduce energy but also to exercise.

Yara Sharif, Ramallah/London

I am working in education (Arab Educational Institute, AEI), and this is one element of the extracurricular projects that my organization/NGO is involved in.

Toine van Teeffelen, Bethlehem/Holland

Yes, definitely; cleanliness, good practices, and implementing safety measures will ensure a healthy environment.


Najah Osaily, Hebron

LOVE THIS QUESTION! We plant hundreds of trees a year so that our environment has more oxygen. We conserve wildflowers and trees, and create healthy spaces for wildlife through Mashjar Juthour. We also plant trees around our neighborhood and care for them. We clean up trash and even pick up tree prunings from the streets so that we can make Hügelskultur (a type of composting by building hills from tree branches) and cut down on Ramallah Municipality's solid waste. We have an organic rooftop garden and thus support ecosystems that are essential for a healthy environment. We plant borage and other flowers especially for bees and always leave fruit on the trees we harvest so that the birds can also have nourishing foods. Our café uses stainless steel straws; and we compost, cutting our waste in half. We cloth-diapered our son, and we grey-water flush our toilet. At home, we use reusable bags rather than plastic and use canvas bags when grocery shopping. We do not use chemicals to clean in order not to pollute water that then must be cleaned for agricultural production. These are some of the many things we do to try to contribute to a healthier environment. Even so, I in no way believe this is enough. We do not take the threat to our future, one that we are daily making greater, seriously enough. And frankly, Palestine's environment (and the greater world's) is in grave danger. I'm very happy to write more if you like.

Morgan Cooper, Ramallah

I produce healthy baked goods free of health-threatening additives. I educate people, especially the young, on how to care for the environment even in the midst of the difficult situation in Palestine.

Ramzi Sansur, Ramallah



Trying my best. In the company I work for, smoking has been banned inside the company premises since day one more than 20 years ago. I will be happy to contribute more for a cleaner Palestine.

Yahya Al-Salqan, El-Bireh

I try my best to contribute to creating a healthy environment. I never throw trash on the roads but hold on to it until I can dispose of it in a trash bin. Whenever I notice school children littering the road, I talk to them rationally and advise them not to do that. This is not always well accepted, most unfortunately. Whenever, a discussion at a social gathering hovers over the subject of food and health issues, I try to chip in with the advice to avoid unnecessary dieting or to follow the strict diets publicized for commercial gains. I am sure that people should consume all available varieties of healthy foods yet avoid all excesses. I tell people that the human body needs all natural foods in reasonable quantities. Avoid canned and processed foods. Avoid all fast foods as well, unless you are forced to eat them.

Antoine Nesnas, Jerusalem

Going vegan is an ethical reason to be kind to animals as well as a way to save the environment.

Ahlam Tarayra, Hebron

I recycle, and I'm conscientious about the need for a clean environment.

Rami Meo, Sydney

I do not throw garbage in the streets. This is one of our worst habits that creates eyesores, exacerbating the harm to the environment that arises due to the constraints of the occupation. I also make sure my car's exhaust is never faulty. Sometimes I walk rather than take the car, particularly during rush hour.

Fida Jiryis, Fassouta, the Galilee

I try to drive as little as possible, walk as much as possible, never litter, and use water conscientiously. Since I am a "white collar" international employee, I don't have much opportunity to have a significant effect on the environment.

Paul Parker, Chicago

A healthy environment is a very broad concept. However, I try to recycle as much as I can, if the circumstances allow it. Also, I try to talk to people about the importance of maintaining a somewhat healthy lifestyle and of being disciplined somehow! This will definitely reflect on their environment too. I'm very conscious about water consumption and waste management!

Doha Al-Wazany, Nablus

Yes, at the professional level given my role at St John Eye Hospital.

David Dahdal, Jerusalem

If buying organic vegetables is considered to be contributing to creating a healthy environment, then yes. By buying organic vegetables and telling people about it, we encourage the farmers who engage in organic farming to grow more organic fruits and vegetables.

Haneen Battrawi

I try not to use plastic bags.

Rajiah Abu Sway, Jerusalem

I never smoked inside my house or in anybody's residence. I do not smoke in private or public transportation. I encourage my kids to eat fruits and veggies, and minimize the number of times we eat out. I do not use gas-based heating. I try to use less plastic and more paper-based material. I also use recycling boxes for paper at work.

Nader Dagher, Ramallah

I can say that I contribute to a healthy environment by cooking healthy food for the guests I invite to my house, by preparing healthy snacks for my grandchildren, by not smoking, by exercising, by avoiding buying junk food, and by leading by example.

Mona Halaby, USA

In every way I'm able to.

Wasef Daher, Jerusalem

As much as I can. I do not use plastic cups or plates, and I am economical when it comes to using water.

Terry Boullata, Jerusalem

In Gaza, yes. Now it is about a healthy environment for the small children of mine.

Bo Schack, Norway (previous director of UNRWA in Gaza)

On a small scale. I help family and friends build healthy habits, and I try my best to reduce waste.

Bisan Samamreh, Hebron

Yes, in a number of ways: not throwing away food; cooking exactly enough for the number of people who will be eating; recycling; and making my own compost.

Basema Spijkerman, The Netherlands.

Through prevention and awareness.

Ibtisam Husary, Ramallah

I try my best to exhale as much CO₂ as possible with every breath to allow nature to flourish.

Sam Bahour