**The Palestinian Museum Launches New Specialist Facilities for the Storage and Restoration of Heritage Textiles with an accompanying Public Awareness programme**

Birzeit-Wednesday July 26/2023: The Palestinian Museum launched its new specialist facilities for the storage and restoration of textiles and Palestinian embroidery (*Tatreez*), including traditional dresses (*thobes*). The project is borne out of the Museum’s mission to professionalise the care and display of Palestinian cultural heritage.

The facilities include a professionally equipped space devoted to textiles storage and a heritage textiles conservation studio managed by the newly trained Museum’s Collections team. These facilities will meet the maintenance needs of the Museum’s permanent collection and the private collections of other institutions and individuals.

The climate-controlled cold storage is stocked with acid-free packaging and museum-suitable furnishings, while the conservation studio is equipped with air conditioning, sterilisation, and preservation materials.

These two facilities will be run by a specialist team from the Palestinian Museum Collections Unit, which in 2022 received a month-long hands-on technical training on the restoration of historical textiles and *thobes* at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), one of the world's largest museums of art and design. There the unit team had the opportunity to handle diverse types of textiles, dye and prepare chemical restoration materials, and began restoring garments from the Palestinian Museum collection, to be completed as part of the ongoing collaboration with V&A.

The launch of the new facilities is accompanied by a public awareness programme to provide guidance and hands-on training to institutions and individuals from the Palestinian heritage textile community. Aiming to raise awareness of best practices for the preservation of ethnographic collections and *Tatreez,* the outreach will include workshops, lectures, tours, and the publication of a textile restoration guide for collection owners.

The opening ceremony began with a speech by Palestinian Museum Director General Adila Laïdi-Hanieh, PhD. She expressed her happiness at this project launch which will preserve the sustainability of Palestinian embroidered *thobes*, a key component of tangible and intangible Palestinian heritage. She also thanked the International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH) for its generous support in protecting endangered Palestinian heritage; the V&A, the Museum’s partner, for its technical support in building the Museum's new capacities; and the Spanish Costume Museum, Museo del Traje, for years of technical advice in the field of textile storage.

During the ceremony, Palestinian Museum Collections Unit Manager Baha Jubeh gave a presentation on the stages of equipping the storage and conservation units, and the accompanying technical training. He also affirmed the readiness of the new facilities to receive and treat external institutions and individuals’ private collections in the latter half of 2024.

The V&A’s International Programmes Manager Evgeniya Ravtsova added that ‘The V&A is thrilled to have supported The Palestinian Museum over the course of this project. This has been a memorable and rewarding collaboration for all those involved. We look forward to further conversations and research collaboration in the future.’

The launch of these new facilities reinforces UNESCO’s 2022 resolution to add *Tatreez* to its Intangible Cultural Heritage List. It also fulfils the Museum’s objective to document and protect Palestinian cultural heritage and make it more widely accessible to local communities and the wider public.

This builds on the Museum’s previous work on exhibiting and knowledge production on *Tatreez*, beginning with the exhibition in Beirut in 2016 of ‘At the Seams: A Political History of Palestinian Embroidery’. In 2018, an expanded version opened in the Museum’s headquarters in Birzeit, titled ‘Labour of Love: New Approaches to Palestinian Embroidery.’ In 2022, a further updated version was exhibited in Qatar, titled ‘Labour of Love: Embroidering Palestinian History’.

The Palestinian Museum was able to form its permanent collection of *thobes* in 2021 thanks to the success of its crowdfunding campaign ’80 *Thobes* and Stories Make it Home from the Diaspora’, which repatriated from the United States a rare collection of *thobes*. These underwent condition analyses to identify their restoration needs and were also photographed and documented for inclusion in the Museum’s collection database and uploaded to the Museum’s website to guarantee public access.

In early 2022, the Palestinian Museum completed a field survey of collections of heritage pieces that totalled over 5,000 *thobes* in Palestine, Jordan, the Gulf, and Lebanon. They were entered into a database of heritage collections held by individuals and private institutions in the Arab region. This database will make possible the implementation of future projects to produce, disseminate, restore, and share knowledge on Palestinian thobes.

The Palestinian Museum-Non-Governmental Association is an independent cultural NGO dedicated to supporting an open and vibrant Palestinian culture locally and internationally. The Museum presents and contributes to narratives on Palestinian history, culture, and society from a new perspective. It also offers spaces for creative ventures, educational programmes, and innovative research. It is one of the most significant contemporary cultural projects in Palestine.

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