

Humans without Borders: Annual Report – 2017

In 2017, the core activities of Humans without Borders – assisting Palestine families with children requiring medical attention in Israeli hospitals – increased significantly. The total number of trips was more than 3900. We supported children requiring a wide variety of treatments, from those coming for dialysis on a daily basis to those needing periodic chemotherapy or radiation.

All of our activities originate at the military checkpoints around Jerusalem, especially Qalandia and the Bethlehem crossing points, with trips to many hospitals in Jerusalem – the Hadassah Medical Centers at Ein Karem and Mt. Scopus, the Shaarei Zedek Medical Center, the Alyn-Orthopedic Hospital and Rehabilitation Center, Al Mukassed Hospital, Augusta Victoria Hospital, St. John's Eye Hospital, and the Francais Saint Louis Hospital, in Tel Aviv – Ichilov General Hospital, Petah Tikva – the Beilinson Medical Center and Schneider Children's Medical Center, Tel Hashomer – the Sheba Medical Center, and Holon – the Wolfson Medical Center.

The number of active volunteers also increased. In 2017, about 80 people regularly assisted the Palestinian families without receiving any compensation for their time or vehicle use.

Thanks to the assistance of an anonymous donor, funds were available for the use of a taxi service when volunteers were unavailable. Some 290 trips to hospitals, mainly outside the Jerusalem area, were made in 2016 using these funds. Thus we can proudly state that we were able to meet 99% of all requests for transportation.

In addition, HWB volunteers took upon themselves to assist Amir's family who was flown to Istanbul in July by the Palestinian Authority for a liver transplant. Amir underwent dialysis from the age of six months old. Transplants were delayed several times for health and political reasons. Members of Humans Without Borders, who regularly drove the family for more than five years, decided to help them financially because the Palestinian Authority was not willing to support the parents during their stay in Istanbul.

Surgery and post-surgery treatment were supposed to involve about one month but due to several life-threatening infections that Amir contracted they spent more than 5 months in Turkey. Amir was hospitalized frequently from his return in October and never really recovered from the surgery. He died in February 2018.

A deep and cherished friendship exists between Amir's family and the volunteers and this is an amazing product of a willingness to sidestep the occupation and strive for reconciliation.

In January 2017, with the gracious assistance of the **Prelude Foundation**, Humans without Borders held its annual *khafila* (fun day) for the extended families of 55 of the chronically sick West Bank children regularly transported by HWB volunteers. Our members, together with teenagers from Jerusalem's bilingual (Arabic-Hebrew) Hand-In-Hand School, had children joyously waving giant soap bubbles in the air and being very creative with all sorts of arts and crafts. Two clowns cajoled and teased until even the shyest children joined in their games, and all to exuberant rhythms from two East Jerusalem musicians. One volunteer quietly noted it was the first time since the last fun day that she had seen a smile on the face of one young boy.

In mid-August 2017, about 85 Palestinian children and their parents celebrated the freedom and endless vista of sea and sky. Instead of travelling to a hospital for dialysis, chemotherapy or radiation, they arrived at the Tel Baruch beach in Tel Aviv where they were welcomed by an enthusiastic group of Humans without Borders volunteers and young people from the Hand-in-Hand school.

This was the fourth trip to the sea that Humans Without Borders has organized and the third supported by **Children of Peace**.

It is not always obvious just how important it is for these families – with children decimated by life-threatening diseases – to be able to cut themselves off from the dreary and oppressed lives they live, even for half a day.

On 9 March, Humans without Borders, in an already established tradition, screened the movie "Disturbing the Peace" for our volunteers and their families. This is a film about Combatants for Peace – Israelis and Palestinians who were born into conflict, sworn to be enemies, but who challenge their fate. The film follows everyday people who took extraordinary actions by standing for what they believe in – Israeli soldiers from elite units and Palestinian fighters, many of whom served years in prison – who have joined together to challenge the status quo and say "enough." After the screening the evening culminated in an invigorating discussion between Palestinian and Israeli members of the organization and the audience.