



Humans without Borders: Annual Report – 2023

Transportation

Life in Israel in general, and with respect to our organization as well, can be very clearly divided between the pre-October 7 reality and the very different and extremely difficult circumstances we are currently dealing with.

During 2023, we enlisted several new volunteers, some of whom immediately became very active. Since October 7, a number of volunteers have notified us that they are no longer able to volunteer, some for reasons related to the war and others due to personal circumstances, and there are volunteers who have simply stopped driving. On the other hand, four or five new volunteers have joined us and are quite active in taking rides. The addition of new volunteers not only helps us meet the demand for transportation but is extremely encouraging to all of us.

For about the first month after the war started, there was a marked decrease in the number of families coming to Jerusalem for treatment. The children on dialysis continued their treatment, most of them three days a week and several, five to six days a week, and children undergoing treatment for cancer were still coming, but appointments for periodic assessments and any appointments for care deemed non-essential were canceled.

The checkpoints into Jerusalem were mostly closed during that time and most of the families coming to Augusta Victoria for treatment (mainly kidney dialysis) came and returned on a bus that the hospital provided.

Because travel within the West Bank has become very difficult, some of the children

undergoing treatment at Sha'arei Zedek Medical Center have been provided with accommodations in hotels in East Jerusalem. In view of the tensions in the city and in order not to endanger our volunteers, we have arranged with a few cab drivers who work with us on a regular basis and who are Palestinian, to drive the families from the hotels to the hospital and back. In addition, due to safety concerns, we decided not to list rides to the Hussan Junction located within the West Bank. However, because there is now security there at all times, as of the last week of January, 2024, we have resumed those rides.

At this point (January, 2024), the checkpoints are open for a few hours in the morning for people with medical entry permits, although the Bethlehem checkpoint is frequently closed due to manpower shortages. We therefore encourage families coming to Augusta Victoria to continue to use the hospital bus service in the morning.



After about a month, we started driving families who complete treatment mid-morning back to the Bethlehem checkpoint (the hospital bus returns late afternoon, and it is very difficult for the families to wait for four or five hours to embark on their return trip). We then became aware that it had become difficult for them to find transportation for the onward journey from Bethlehem to the Hebron area, where most of the families live. The best option was a private cab which was, of course, prohibitively expensive. When we shared this problem with the staff of Project Rozana, they came up with the idea of very generously providing a minibus that would take families from Augusta Victoria Hospital to Hebron, with stops in Bethlehem and the Hussan junction, for about six families each day who finish treatment at the hospital by 11:00. This has been hugely successful, providing the families with the most efficient way to reach their homes.

In 2023, we assisted 112 families, up from 97 in 2022. Ten families, needing transportation more than three times a week, account for 50% of the trips. We made a total of 5955 trips, an increase of nearly 500 trips as compared to 2022. The number of trips in the fourth quarter of 2023 was considerably lower than in any previous quarter of the year, due to the war. It can be assumed that were it not for that factor, there would have been an increase of approximately 1,000 trips as compared to 2022.

Eighty-four volunteers carried out trips this year, a decrease of 22 volunteers as compared to last year. We continue to make substantial use of taxis in order to provide transportation to every family who requests our assistance. 1774 trips, representing 30% of the total number of trips this year were carried out by taxis, as compared to 29% of the total trips in 2022. However, this includes the families who have been traveling on the minibus that operates six days a week from Augusta Victoria to Hebron with stops along the way, so that the actual use of taxis is less than this figure would

seem to indicate. In other words, in spite of the increased demand for transportation, our use of taxis has remained relatively steady, and has perhaps even decreased due to the decreased demand in the final quarter of the year.

The vast majority of the trips we make are to hospitals in Jerusalem, however, we do make some trips to hospitals in the Tel Aviv area such as Ichilov Medical Center in Tel Avivi and the Sheba Medical Center in Tel HaShomer. Because we are a Jerusalem-based organization, we generally do not have volunteers who are able to take these trips and we rely on taxis.

We have been fortunate to have added four more coordinators to our team. The coordinators ensure that all requests are properly handled, including emergencies, sometimes in the middle of the night. Without their devotion and dedication it would be impossible to carry out the functions of the organization. Since the war, the job has become more complicated, requiring coordination with social workers at the hospitals to ensure that families have the necessary permits and with the checkpoints to ascertain when they are open.

Bazaar

On June 9, 2023, we held a bazaar, enjoying the warm hospitality and partnership of the Hand in Hand Bilingual School in Jerusalem. The bazaar was the initiative of one of our devoted volunteers and she put together a team of volunteers who took care of every imaginable detail, with the assistance and cooperation of equally dedicated staff from the school.

Volunteers donated items such as handmade ceramic pieces, gently worn clothing and home-baked goods. A mother from the school, who is also a professional cook of Palestinian delicacies, donated stuffed grape leaves which sold out as soon as they were put on the table. A pop-up café operated, serving tea, coffee and delicious cakes. There were activities for children and entertainment for everyone. All of

the various stations were manned by our volunteers.

A few new volunteers signed up as a result of the bazaar and one hundred percent of the proceeds from the day were donated to Humans Without Borders. The day was a huge success, all who attended enjoyed and we hope to make it an annual event.

Fun Day

On 23 June 2023 volunteers from Humans without Borders and about 50 families that we assist (around 130 people in all) met for a fun day at the Tisch Family Biblical Zoo. Many of the children had never been to a zoo and families often ask if it would be possible to take them. The families who attended greatly enjoyed the outing, which included bus transportation to and from the major cities in the West Bank, a beautiful catered breakfast and lunch and a tour of the zoo.



We consider the annual fun day to be an important part of our operation. The children who are ill, together with siblings and parents, have a chance to get out and spend a day of relaxation, something that is a rare luxury in their very difficult lives, which tend to revolve around the needs of the seriously ill child (sometimes more than one child in a family) with all of the difficulties of traveling between the West Bank and Israel for treatment. The presence of some of the volunteers also provides an opportunity for interaction in a relaxed setting, strengthening bonds between the families and the volunteers.

Humans without Borders provides a good deal of practical assistance along with a dose of pure joy.

Volunteers Evening

On 29 June 2023, about 75 volunteers of Humans without Borders gathered in the Courtyard Theater in Nataf for an evening of entertainment and mingling, enjoying the hospitality of the Jacobs family. Hadassah is a dedicated volunteer. At the initiative of Dror Rotem, part of the evening was dedicated to meeting for discussions in small groups around tables, enjoying the refreshments provided by Hadassah and a few other volunteers, discussing issues related to our activities and how we can attract new volunteers and improve the work of the organization. The second part of the evening was musical entertainment, enjoyed by all.

The evening was very successful, bringing together a group of like-minded people who seldom have the opportunity to get together, along with people who came to learn about the splendid work done by the volunteers of Humans without Borders.

Medical Issues

Since mid-2020, the Ministry of Health of the Palestinian Authority has failed to meet its commitments to the general population. As a result, Humans without Borders has expanded its activities in the medical domain, paying directly to hospitals for life-saving medical procedures, and purchasing medications and equipment.

Our medical committee, composed of a physician, several other health-care professionals and some additional volunteers, reviews each case and consults with relevant professionals before making a definitive decision about providing assistance.



Below are brief descriptions of some of the cases we dealt with in 2023, some of which we will continue dealing with in 2024.

Remas

Remas is a nine-year girl. She and her brother are both on kidney dialysis. In August, her family approached us with a request to help her. The shunt that delivers the dialysis medication had collapsed and the Palestinian hospital in Jerusalem that normally deals with these matters was unable to remedy the problem. We made arrangements for her to be treated at Sha'arei Zedek Medical Center and paid for the treatment, with the help of generous individuals both in Israel and abroad who responded to an appeal for donations to cover the costs of her treatment. The medical team repaired the wall of the vein permitting the insertion of a new shunt.

Maria

Maria is an eight year old girl who suffers from a congenital very large vascular abnormality in her mouth and on her lip that is painful and causes a malformation of the area between her lip and her nose. The condition is complicated and requires repeated interventions. She underwent surgery three years ago at the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem and recently Humans without Borders financed an injection treatment that proved to be helpful for a period of time.

She again needs to undergo invasive radiology treatment. It is a rather expensive procedure and the family has asked us for assistance. We are trying to raise the funds needed for the procedure.

Shahed

Shahed is a lovely 17-year-old teenager who, due to complications during her mother's pregnancy, was born with non-functioning kidneys and a neuropathic bladder (does not empty or store urine properly). Her left arm is also deformed.

Over the years, surgeons have inserted hemodialysis shunts (that provide vascular access for dialysis) into so many veins that, in 2022, after the most recent line had collapsed, surgeons at the al-Mukasad Hospital in East Jerusalem were unable to insert a new one and dialysis could not be performed.

Humans without Borders immediately approached the Angiogram Department in the Shaare Zedek Medical Center and arranged for a bypass with a shunt to be inserted into her arm.

Unfortunately, that line collapsed and in January, 2023, Shahed repeated the treatment at Sha'arei Zedek, which we again arranged and paid for. Since that time we have taken her for consultations to try to find a more optimal solution, assuming we are able to solicit the funds to cover the cost.

Our on-going activities in 2023 would not have been possible without the generous assistance of BSST (British Shalom-Salaam Trust), the DEAR Foundation (Zurich), Jim and Debby Stein Sharpe (Canton, MA), Mehra and David Rimer (Geneva), Project Rozana (international), Schocken Foundation (Philadelphia), Two Roses (Tel Aviv), and many Israeli contributors. We humbly thank them for their support.