

## Humans without Borders: Annual Report – 2020

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In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic obviously had a major effect on the activities of Humans without Borders in almost every aspect of our activities. Our volunteers, young and old alike, were at serious risk when leaving home and driving families. And the danger was significantly greater for people over the age of 60. We therefore encouraged our older volunteers to take a break until the situation improved.

Like many other organizations, large and small, we scrambled to comply with governmental regulations and ensure the safety of our volunteers.

Many people temporarily ceased volunteering, and this substantially increased the need for the use of taxis. To meet the extra costs, we held an internal fund-raising drive among volunteers, and supporters which saved the day. But these ongoing needs almost drained our coffers.

In addition, a group of young volunteers joined our forces. Most of them were referred to us by "The Road to Recovery", which ceased operations at the time. The new volunteers picked up the gauntlet to help us out.

It was quite amazing to see how volunteers returned so quickly to activities and, by the end of 2020, they covered the vast majority of trips.

From mid-March, following the rapid spread of Covid-19, the Palestinian areas were placed under closure. First the Bethlehem checkpoint (300) was sealed. All of the patients whom we assist, and who normally enter Israel through this checkpoint, were required to use the Husan checkpoint. Later on, as the virus spread through the rest of the West Bank, the Qalandiya checkpoint was also closed.

All the regular entry permits for the children and their families were cancelled. Hospitals had to request from the Civil Administration Health Coordinator a special permit for each family for each appointment. To circumvent this huge obstacle and to prevent possible infection, the Augusta Victoria Hospital accommodated, at a hotel in East Jerusalem, all the children undergoing dialysis treatment. The hospital used a minibus to shuttle back and forth between the hotel and the hospital. This arrangement was in place until mid-May when the restrictions were eased.

HWB assisted in this effort as well. We purchased toys, games and arts and crafts materials that were received with great joy by the children who were closeted in the hotel.

In preparation for Eid al-Fitr, several of our volunteers, in keeping with the holiday tradition of charity and helping those in need, raised funds for the families we assist. The pandemic has plunged many families into dire financial distress. A generous sum was given to 21 families which certainly brightened their holiday.

In 2020, about 100 volunteers completed about 4,200, involving about 90 children. Almost all of the trips were to hospitals in the Jerusalem area.

Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, HWB's managed to hold its annual festive gathering for volunteers at the Cinematheque. As has become the tradition, we watched a documentary: this time "The Hurdle", a movie about two young Palestinian men, Sammy from the Old City, coach of the Jerusalem Parkour Team, and Muhammad from Bethlehem, who teaches filmmaking and storytelling to children. The movie focuses on their attitudes towards the occupation, and their efforts to empower youth who have dropped out of society.

The film was sad, difficult, challenging, too long, and provoked considerable criticism and questions amongst members of the audience.

In 2020, Humans without Borders also expanded its activities by funding medical supplies that the Palestinian Authority no longer agrees to provide-- purchasing certain medicines and medical equipment and paying directly to hospitals for life-saving medical procedures.

We have been scrambling to cover these expenses which, a year ago, were totally unexpected and unbudgeted.

Our on-going activities 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), Project Rozana (international), the Rinat family (Rehovot), and several other Israeli contributors. We humbly thank them for their support.