



Humans without Borders: Annual Report – 2021

In 2021, the pandemic continued to batter the activities of Humans without Borders. Some of our drivers contracted Covid-19, others, due to their age or the vulnerability of members of their households, elected to reduce or cease their volunteering. Notwithstanding, since the government decided that repeating the national lockdowns of 2020 was untenable, it became possible for a solid group of volunteer drivers to meet most of the transportation needs of our children and their parents.

People have learned how to live alongside the virus – windows open no matter what the weather, full masking, serious distancing. To the best of our knowledge neither volunteers nor family members contracted the disease during HWB activities. Every volunteer has, of course, been vaccinated including the first booster shot. This was a point on which we refused to be flexible and lost at least one volunteer who held to her principles, whatever they may be.

During 2021, several people who had temporarily ceased volunteering, returned to activities. They worried about the well-being of the children more than other factors. They are wonderful souls.

All being said, we again in 2021 made substantial use of taxis. There was no alternative and the two drivers we mainly rely upon are unsung heroes with few knowing how they scramble to successfully perform the most complex trips. They have both become part of our team of volunteers and often are able to provide information regarding a child's condition or special needs of a family. Where called for, they are also able to pick up or return families directly to their homes rather than leaving them off at the check points.

In 2021, we managed almost 5,800 trips, involving about 110 children, some five times a week, some once every few months. A little more than 1,000 of these trips were handled by our taxi drivers and about 80 volunteers completed the remaining 4,800. Almost all of the trips were to hospitals in the Jerusalem area with a few dozen to hospitals such as Ichilov Medical Center in Tel Aviv and the Sheba Medical Center in Tel HaShomer.

All of this would not have been possible without the sterling efforts of our four coordinators who have not missed a single

shift and, day and night, handle the requests of the Palestinian families.

Commencing with the outbreak of Covid-19 there has been a basic breakdown in the provisioning of medical services by the Ministry of Health of the Palestinian Authority. The situation has continued to deteriorate, and children are dying for lack of treatment.



Beginning in mid-2020, Humans without Borders began expanded its activities by paying for the purchase of medical supplies that the Palestinian Authority no longer agrees to provide – medicines and medical equipment - and paying directly to hospitals for life-saving medical procedures.

The requests are remarkably varied and have involved the purchase of items as minor as batteries for a child's hearing aid, medication that retards bone damage caused by long-term daily dialysis, all the way to life-saving surgery that the PA has termed as "cosmetic" and unnecessary.

We have supported surgery for several children at Jordan Hospital in Amman. In the case of kidney transplants, the PA only covers expenses related to surgery and hospitalization and requires that the family bear the cost of most medications, post-surgical testing and even lodgings for the father while the mother (the donor) and daughter are hospitalized. In such cases we step in and assist the family that could not possibly cover the expenses involved.

The board of HWB set up a medical committee, including a retired registered nurse and a retired physician, which

established firm rules for the provisioning of assistance. The committee handles requests from the families and consults with Israeli physicians about appropriate steps to be taken.

On a Wednesday evening in October, prior to the eruption of the Omicron variant, we maintained a tradition going back seven years – screening movies for our volunteers that deal with the daily reality in Palestine. HWB volunteers met at the open-air theatre Teatron Bahatzer in Nataf, a small village in the Jerusalem hills. Our hosts, Hadassah and Eitan, in addition to all their cultural activities, are enthusiastic members of our NGO. The event provided volunteers – who have few chances to meet – with the opportunity to chat about the Palestinian families they aid, the health of the children, struggling with the checkpoints, traffic in Jerusalem, and a host of other subjects. The main event of the evening was the screening of the movie *The Inner Tour*, directed by Raanan Alexandrowicz.

Aner Preminger, director, producer, professor of cinematography (and partner of one of our active coordinators) introduced the film and provided an in-depth overview of the goals and methodology of Alexandrowicz. The movie, his talk, and the following discussions with the audience, were fascinating and enlightening.

Recently several of our volunteers have been supporting older brothers and sisters of children we assist who are studying in Palestinian colleges and universities. These young people often are unable to cover expenses, forcing them to drop out of their studies. One of the issues is notebook computers which are too expensive for the average Palestinian family. Members have donated used computers which we have had refurbished prior to distribution. Education is one of the few tools available for these young people to break out of the strictures of poverty.



Some time ago a small group of our volunteers decided to renew workshops for Palestinian mothers held while the children undergo daily dialysis. In the past, the subjects discussed were related to women and their bodies. This series of workshops was a great success but, unfortunately, there was no follow-up.

Alexandra, a recent and very devoted volunteer, negotiated with the management of Augusta Victoria hospital in order to establish a framework for the renewal of such activities and several very successful sessions were held in November and December. A psychologist from Beit Lehem spoke with the mothers about their lives, expectations, even mundane issues such as physical exercise and yoga.

There is a distinct lack of cooperation on the part of the management of the hospital but we hope that we will be able to continue these activities which are to the ultimate benefit of everyone concerned.

Our on-going activities in 2021 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), and many Israeli contributors. We humbly thank them for their support.

