

The Year 2015 in Review

Our mission

Today, amid one of the most deeply-rooted political and cultural conflicts in the Middle East, *The Road to Recovery* organization is bridging the divide with an initiative of hope, placing humanity before politics. Ours is a nonprofit organization of volunteers who believe that peace among Israelis and Palestinians should come about through engagement and personal interaction. Motivated to render humanitarian services, our volunteers break down the barriers of conflict by engaging on a personal level, transporting Palestinian patients on round-trips from the West Bank and Gaza to hospitals throughout Israel for treatment, hospitalization and check-ups.

Who we are and what we do

We are about 700 volunteers donating time and the use of our own vehicles on a regular basis to transport Palestinian patients and their family guardians between the government checkpoints and the Israeli hospitals. Our service is provided mainly for Palestinian children with severe ailments who require medical treatment or procedures that are unavailable in the West Bank or Gaza. For these children and their families, logistics and travel costs to Israeli hospitals are prohibitive, particularly for those patients requiring regular and recurring treatment.



Our nation-wide information, referral and collaboration network includes Palestinian field volunteers, hospitals, and fellow non-profit Israeli and Palestinian organizations such as Doctors for Human Rights, Salametcom, Basmat el Amal, and Rabbis for Human Rights. Our activity involves transportation to Israeli hospitals all over Israel.

In addition to transporting Palestinian patients, we also assist those among them having limited means in the acquisition of specialized outpatient medical equipment. We also organize special rehabilitation and retreat days for Palestinian patients and their families in Israeli recreation destinations.

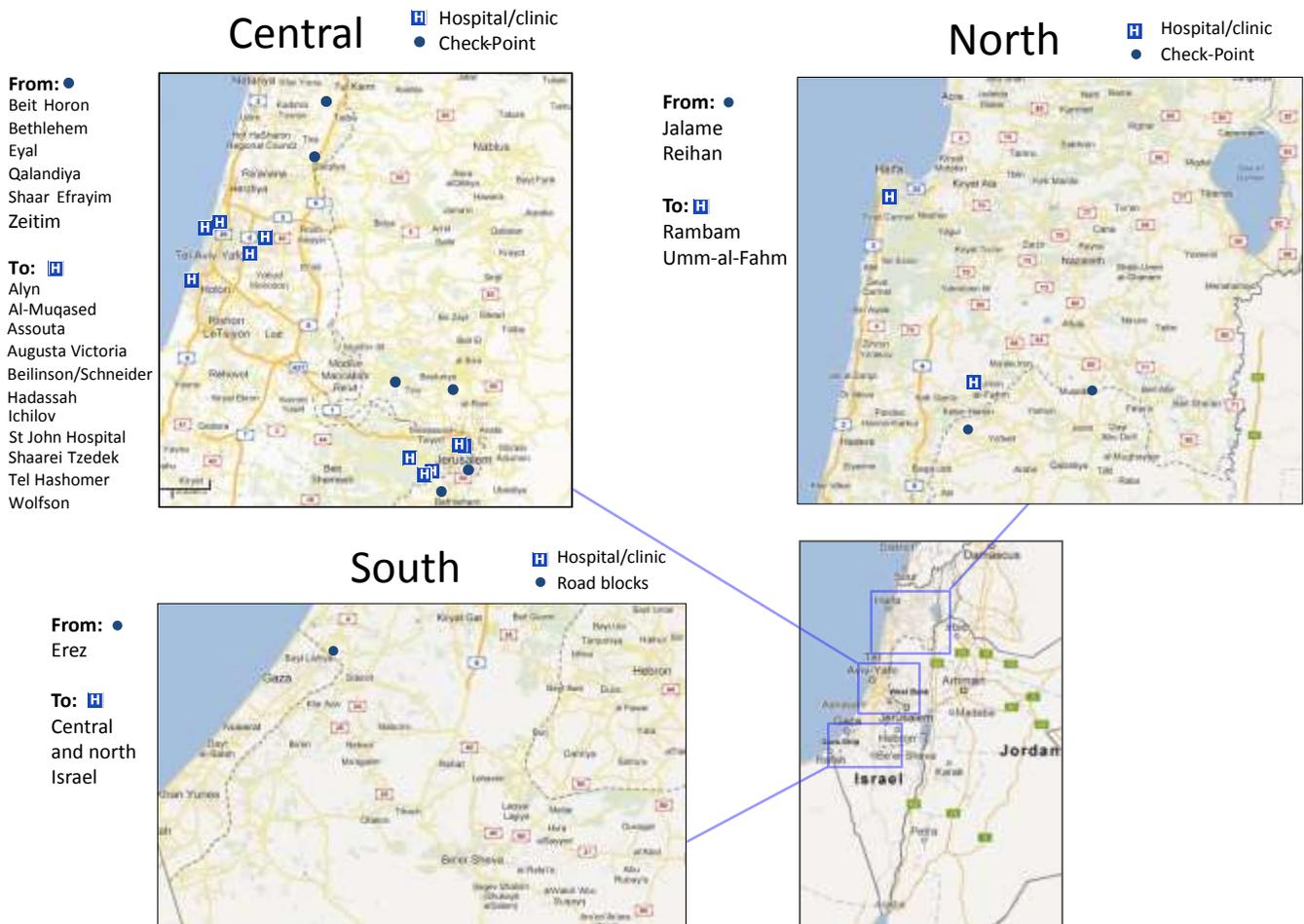
We have received countless thanks and heart-warming gestures of gratitude from the patients and their families. Since our organization's founding over 7 years ago, we have brought about an estimated 38,000 person-hours of interaction between Palestinians and Israelis, thereby forging special and personal bonds at unparalleled scale in the context of every-day life. *The Road to Recovery* is as much about the recovery of mutual respect, trust, dialog and friendship among Israelis and Palestinians as it is about individual patients' physical recovery.

This year's highlights

Patient Transportation Services

Thanks to our donors, in 2015 we were able to reimburse our volunteers for most of their gasoline expenses, a fact that enabled more volunteers to join our ranks. As of 2015, our ranks grew to over 700 volunteer drivers. In 2015 alone, our volunteers provided about 9,800 patient-trips (in about 4,300 hospital trips), mostly for children, covering over 362,500 miles.

As in previous years, in 2015 demand for our services grew substantially, especially for trips from Gaza to hospitals in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. In 2015, we were able to meet nearly 100 percent of trip demand from the Northern West Bank, but only about 80 percent of the demand from the Southern West Bank and Gaza. Despite our on-going efforts to recruit additional volunteers, we are still having difficulties assigning volunteers to transport patients from Gaza. In 2015 we secured additional funding to meet the growing demand for patient transportation from Gaza after the armed conflict in the summer of 2014. In 2014 we have started operating weekly chartered minibus trips, and in 2015 we doubled the frequency of the minibus trips after receiving donations via our project page on the Global Giving crowd-funding web site (see <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/transport-patients-from-gaza-to-israeli-hospitals>). Since the inception of our Global Giving project in June 2015, we raised over \$21,000 for funding additional minibus trips from Gaza to hospitals in Jerusalem



Since June we have been transporting three babies and their escorts from the Erez crossing to Shaaret Tzedek hospital for dialysis. Since July, our volunteers have been transporting the Dawabsheh family, who has been severely hurt by an Israeli terrorist. The only survivor of the terror attack, 5 year old Ahmad, received in Israel numerous treatments and transplants that involved pain and much suffering. Ahmad's grandfather, Hussein, did not leave Ahmad's bed and our volunteers help transport other family members who visited and supported Ahmad and Hussein.

Medical Assistance

In 2015, we continued to provide support for orthopedic medical equipment to **Mary Samar**, a 9-year-old girl from Gaza, whose lower body is paralyzed by Spina Bifida. In addition, our organization helped a family from the Palestinian **village of Idna** to obtain bone-marrow for their 15 year-old son's future bone-marrow transplant.

Recreational Patient Activities

In January, we arranged a week's stay for 35 Gaza Palestinian patients and their parents at the Jordan Village camp for sick children, where they rested and enjoyed fun activities. A second recreation week that began in June was interrupted (due to one child's chicken-pox diagnosis) and postponed to January 2016.

In May we hosted 16 members of Basmat el Amal (the organization that handles the logistics associated with patients' exit from Gaza for medical care in Israel) for a two day visit in Israel. The visit included praying at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, a trip to Jaffa, and a hotel stay in Nazareth. In August we organized a recreation day for 180 West Bank Palestinian patients and their families in kibbutz Maagan Michael. The day included sailing, beach games and workshops, lunch on the beach sponsored by Victor's Catering Service, and a performance of Shukri the clown. We thank members of kibbutz Maagan Michael, kibbutz Gan Shmuel, and many of our volunteers for their contribution to the success of the event.

Annual meeting

We had two volunteer meetings this year. The meeting for volunteers from southern Israel took place in May. It was organized by volunteers from kibbutz Be'eri, and included a visit to the wind-chime vista and the sulfur mines in the area and to the water structures of Grar creek. Following the tour volunteers participated in group discussions and got to know each other and share their experience transporting patients. Refreshments at the kibbutz concluded the event.

The meeting for volunteers from northern and central Israel took place in June in the community center of Kafr Qara. The meeting included group discussions and a show by Sancho, a medical clown. We thank the residents of Kfar Qara for providing the venue and refreshments for the event.

Supporting Activities

In the United States, we continue to operate the site at www.roadtorecovery-usa.org, and to hold a booth at the annual Israel's Independence Day festival in Palo Alto. In 2015 we participated in an open challenge of the Global Giving crowd-funding site. Thanks to the help of many donors we successfully met the open challenge and earned a permanent spot (and international visibility) on the site, as well as the ability to have donations in the US recognized for tax-deduction.



A new initiative this year, by Amir Adar, concentrated on improving the operational efficiency in all aspect of our growing organization. Air establish a forum with special-purpose teams in the following areas: organizing special-events, media and advertising, public relations and social media, operations, fund raising, recruiting and retaining volunteers, and branding and graphic design. We have seen considerable activities in these areas by the teams throughout the year.

In February, Amalia Wiesel represented The Road to Recovery in a publicity tour organized by Confronti, an Italian magazine focused on reconciliation in conflict regions. Later in the year, Confronti representatives visited Israel and spent two days with us, so that we all could learn more about our respective organizations and work to strengthen the ties between the two organizations. This was the third year of our Arabic language course in Tel Aviv, instructed by our volunteer Eyal Ofek. These courses help participants improve communications with our patient-passengers and their families.

Communication and scheduling system

Our scheduling, routing and communication “cloud-based” online portal is currently used by virtually all our volunteers. This indispensable system captures trip schedules by regions and contains member contact information database to facilitate coordination.

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Special Thanks and Acknowledgement

This year two new kibbutzim, **Nir-Oz** and **Magen**, joined the kibbutzim from which we receive extensive support on a routine bases: . **Hatzerim, Ein Shemer, Gan Shmuel, Mishmar Haemek, Ma'agan Michael, Yisre'el, Tsuba** , and **Be'eri** Members of these kibbutzim transport patients every week (and cover the associated gas expenses). We are grateful for this support.

We also wish to thank and acknowledge the invaluable cooperation of the following organizations: **El Shafaa el Rahma** for loaning medical equipment; **Basmat el Amal** for referring Gaza patients and coordinating their trips; **Salametcom** of Abu Gosh for their in-hospital patient support; **Jamal Knaani** for maintaining communications with donors in the Wadi Ara region; and to the women of **Machsomwatch** for their dedicated support and availability to help patient families.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our regional coordinators who make our mission possible: **Nurit Shelef** and Shlomit Gal (Northern region), **Ali Blatman, Rina Hanegbi and Efrat Shir** (Central region), **Amalia Weisel** and Michal Haramati (Southern region), and our Palestinian coordinators **Naim El Baida** (Central region) and the Basmat el Amal organization (Gaza)

We thank all our donors: our volunteers that fund all the expenses associated with transporting patients, and several private donors who would like to remain anonymous. We thank the following organizations for their significant donations: The Friends of Israel from Germany (via Danny Walter) and the Tolkien Fund from England (via Miri Karchi).

Special thanks are due to **Ohad Richmond, Esq.** for legal advice, accountant **Ofer Davidovich** for accounting services, Amir Cohen-Dreman for media and social-network management, **Kulu Orr** for maintaining our web site and managing our email communications, and **Rotem Gur** for her general assistance. We wish to thank **Eyal Ofek** for his instruction of the Arabic language courses for our members, **Eli Sahar** for fundraising, Eilat Sadeh for graphic design, and Alona Abet and Albert Amit, for organing events

We are also grateful for the communication and fundraising work done this year in the United States on our behalf by **Smadar Shiffman, Revital Katznelson, and Ron Katznelson**. Finally, we wish to thank our founder **Yuval Roth** for his hard work, leadership, dedication and inspiration. We also thank his wife **Yael Roth Barkai** for her tireless efforts in national coordination, communications and in helping bringing us all together.