

The Year 2017 in Review

Our mission

Today, amid one of the most deeply-rooted political and cultural conflicts in the Middle East, the “Road to Recovery” (RTR) organization is bridging the divide with an initiative of hope, placing humanity before politics. Ours is a not-for-profit 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 1,450 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.



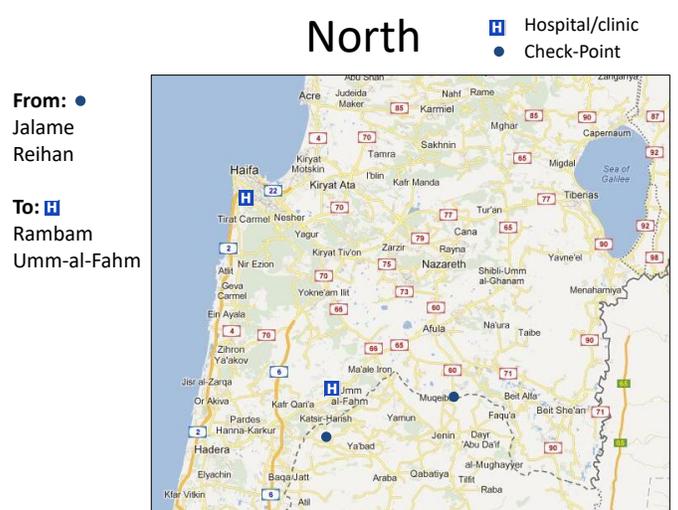
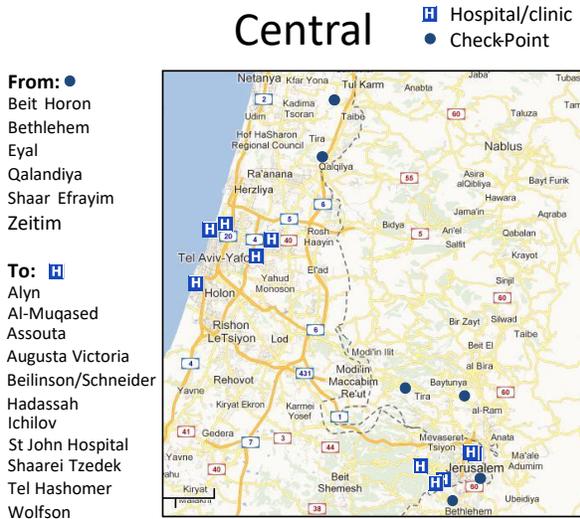
Our nation-wide information, referral and collaboration network includes Palestinian field volunteers, hospitals, and fellow non-profit Israeli and Palestinian organizations. Our activity involves transportation of Palestinian patients to Israeli hospitals all over Israel.

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

We have received countless thanks and heart-warming gestures of gratitude from the patients and their families. Since our organization’s founding in 2006, we have brought about countless person-hours of interaction between Palestinians and Israelis, thereby forging special and personal bonds on an unparalleled scale in the context of every-day life. As Yuval Roth, founder of RTR, has said: **for a few hours during every hospital trip, we make our own “mini-peace” with our Palestinian neighbors.** 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



In 2017 there was a marked growth in the amount of activity undertaken by “Road to Recovery”. The total distance travelled was about 1,050,000 km, encompassing 8150 trips catering to 15,200 patients, mostly children. We took the patients to Rambam hospital in the north; Ichilov, Schneider, Sheba-Tel Hashomer, Beilinson, Wolfson and Assuta hospitals in the center; and Alyn, Hadassa, Shaare Zedek, Al Maqassid, Augusta Victoria and St John hospitals in Jerusalem.

We are continuing our regular fortnightly transportation of three babies and their escorts to and from Erez crossing to Shaare Zedek for dialysis treatments.

Our circle of volunteers has also grown. This year we received an additional 338 volunteers.

In addition, the number of requests for help increased. In the north (for Palestinians from the Western Bank), we were able to meet nearly 100% of the demand for trips,

while in the center and south we successfully met the demands of 95% of the patients living south of the Hebron area and the Gaza Strip.

A minibus transports patients from the Erez crossing to hospitals in Jerusalem four times a week. This is mainly funded by “[Global Giving](#)”, the ongoing crowdfunding project initiated and run by **Smadar Shiffman**, our representative in the US.

Regional co-ordinators

All the regional coordinators changed. We farewelled **Amalia Wiesel**, who coordinated the trips from Gaza for over six years with incredible devotion and who forged excellent connections with all the army and civilian authorities in the region. It was Amalia’s remarkable dedication and concern, her rare devotedness and fighting spirit that was able to work wonders in bringing in patients from Gaza, in contrast to other organizations. Because of the sensitivity involved, we are unable to give more details here. We also said goodbye to two other coordinators – to **Shlomit Gal**, the first of the coordinators of the northern region to volunteer to extend her job to two years, who performed her task with dedication, perseverance and geniality, as well as to Miriam Shayish, our devoted coordinator of the very complex central region.

Yael Noy, who began coordinating transport in the south in October 2016, continued working throughout 2017, while Amalia is continuing the task of coordinating projects and the special operations involved with respect to bringing in patients from Gaza. **Yoni Asher** has successfully taken over coordination of the northern region. We have been blessed with coordinators with extremely proficient coordination and organization skills who are also humane and compassionate, thereby facilitating the daily activities of such a large and complex organization.

Coordination of the central region has been taken over by Palestinian **Naeem Al-Bayda**. Naeem works full-time coordinating transport to and from the West Bank under the auspices of the Palestinian organization “Greenland”, which is situated in Hebron. Besides carrying out coordination services, Naeem will also initiate a system of transport within the Palestinian Authority to help patients arrive at the various crossings. Naeem will also be the official representative of the organization to deal with the Palestinian Authority, so that a patient receiving permission from the Authority for treatment in Israel will receive reliable information about the transport services provided by our organization. Until now, such information was relayed by happenstance. Naeem’s employment was enabled by a significant grant to “Greenland” made by “[Project Rozana](#)”.

Personal relationships

At the end of 2017 we hosted a delegation of “Rozana” representatives from Australia, the US and Canada. “**Project Rozana**” aids health services in the Palestinian Authority by enabling qualification of medical teams, funding medical treatment and supporting the transport services offered by our organization.

Unfortunately, we were saddened by the deaths of several girls and boys, as well as teenagers and adults, whom our volunteers had been driving for treatments and medical

checks over long periods of time. Groups of volunteers went to the homes of the grieving families to extend their condolences. These visits, which highlighted time and again the close web of relationships between the volunteers and the families of the patients, enabled the families to express their great appreciation of the help extended and of the deep significance of the volunteering activity.

We also mourn the passing of two of our devoted volunteers – **Miguel Sittner** and **Aharon Sheriff** – who drove for the organization for many years.

Medical assistance

In 2017, we continued to provide support for orthopedic medical equipment to Mary Samar, a 10-year-old girl from Yamon in the West Bank, whose lower body is paralyzed by Spina Bifida. In addition, our organization helped fund operation expenses for a youth from Gaza, as well as expenses incurred in a cochlear implant for a girl living in the Qalqilya region.

All decisions regarding requests for aid were made by the “Medical Expense Underwriting Committee”, which receives applications for financial support from Palestinian patients to cover their medical equipment and medical service expenses. The Committee, headed by RTR volunteer **Dr. Ron Alfandari**, recommends disbursements of available funds based on meritorious causes and expert medical advice provided by RTR volunteer **Dr. Dana Seligman**.

Organizational activities

2017 was very active, and we only managed to deal with the large volume of activities thanks to the aid and recruitment of volunteers.

The “Special Events” team headed by **Alona Abt** initiated another Fun Day for patients and their families from the Western Bank (see details further on), and orientation meetings for new volunteers. Several meetings for new volunteers were arranged by **Tali Fefferman**.

The “Fundraising” team, headed by **Eli Sahar**, is responsible for funding all the activities carried out by “Road to Recovery”.

Naomi Gorali has volunteered to see to the monthly reimbursement of petrol costs incurred by volunteer drivers.

Tsvi Goren has volunteered to deal with receipts and thank-you notes for donations.

Shelly Barlev makes sure volunteer drivers have safety seats.

Another volunteer, **Hela Yaniv**, has taken responsibility for communications and public relations. She is in touch with journalists and media producers who are interested in publicizing the organization or individual volunteers.

On the matter of publicity: There was a report on Channel 10 News regarding **Yair Noy** and **Moshe Etsion**, who drive patients from Gaza, and on Channel 11 Weekly Diary there was a report by Shirli Berkowitz regarding **Naeem Al-Bayda**, coordinator of the central region, who leads an agenda of discussion and reconciliation. Articles were also written about the organization in English, French and German. All the publicity appears on the [website](#).

A team of industrious volunteers takes care of translation requirements – articles on the social media, letters of appreciation to donors, and publication of activities: **Batya Fonda** – into English, **Dan Weinblum** – into French, **Adam Ron** – into German, and **Sergio Koussevitsky** – into Spanish.

A “Branding and Graphic Design” team headed by **Ayelet Sadeh** and **Tovi Peled** continues to deal with all the organization’s graphic requirements. This year, they designed the flag and sticker which were produced by volunteers **Ada Ganzach**, and **Shlomo and Miriam Shayish**.

An “Applications” team headed by volunteers **Amir Adar** and **Danny Noam** is pushing on with attempts to optimize a system to be used for trip scheduling, routing and assignments. **Benny Borenstein**, a lecturer in Computer Sciences at Rupin College, has been recruited to develop an app in 2018 which will help the coordinators and make a significant difference to the efficiency of the system.

Thanks to volunteer **Johnny Eytan**, we have received recognition as a “public transport dispatcher”, thereby enabling the organization to insure its volunteer drivers. Johnny has also promised to organize “round-up for good” (credit-card transactions are rounded up to the nearest shekel, with the change going to nominated charities) and he is currently dealing with this.

At the end of 2017, our newsletter was upgraded, with the kind help of **Roi Gold**. Updates of our activities continue to be sent to the mailing list of volunteers every week. A new section entitled “Volunteers Share” was added, in which volunteers write about their stories and experiences while on the road. At the suggestion of volunteer driver **Dubi Schwartz**, a conversation manual containing basic phrases in spoken Arabic has been appended to the newsletter.

Recreational activities

“**Nice to meet you**” (“Naeem lehakir”) is a project which has been running since 2017. Once a month, groups of volunteers with family and friends are taken by Naeem Al-Bayda, coordinator of the central region, on a short trip in the vicinity of the separation fence near Qalqilya, followed by lunch at his house in the village of Jayyous. The aim of the initiative is to meet the Palestinians face-to-face in the hope that getting to know each other will counteract the fear that underlies the conflict between the two sides. As a result, a close relationship has been forged between Naeem and the volunteers.

In January and July of 2017, two respective groups of 35 children from Gaza with accompanying parents were taken for a holiday at Nehar HaYarden Youth Village. This has become an annual tradition. As always, the week of the vacation was marked by a remission of tension, an enjoyable treat that will be remembered for a long time.

At the end of July, we organized a “Joy and Health” day outing at the Sdot Yam Kibbutz Beach near Caesarea for 200 Palestinian patients and their families from the south and center of the West Bank. We were helped by “Beach Fun”, an organization run by the kibbutz youth. A similar outing to the beach at Kibbutz Ma’agan Michael was held at the end of August for a second group of 200 Palestinian patients and their families from the northern part of the West Bank. Activities included rowing on the kibbutz lake, beach and recreational activities, as well as lunch, all facilitated by members of the kibbutz. Clowns Jihan and Malak entertained the children. As in previous years, our volunteers received generous support from Arab youth organizations (“Giving” and “Thinking of the Other”), from donors and benefactors in the Israeli Arab sector, and from our own volunteers. These fun days have been a great success, leaving everyone with feelings of reconciliation and hope.

At the beginning of September, in honor of “Eid al-Adha”, **Amalia Wiesel** organized a group of 80 patients and accompanying families to be taken to Jerusalem for prayers at the “Al Aqsa” mosque. It was heartwarming to see the happiness and excitement of the children and their parents. They said that it was a very special experience, and wished to thank the volunteers.

Volunteer meetings

A meeting of volunteers from the north was held at “Beit Gefen” in October, initiated and organized by **Susie Shapira**, and a meeting of volunteers from the central region was held in November at the Kibbutz Har’el clubhouse, organized by **Miriam and Shlomo Shayish** and **Eli Mor-Yosef**. The meetings included greetings and refreshments, a performance in the north and a lecture by Shlomo Bruce in the center. These events emphasize once again the need and importance for encounters between members of an organization where the volunteering is of an individual and isolating nature.

Our deep appreciation

We are continuing our effort to spread the message of our organization in the west of the US. We thank members **Smadar Shiffman**, and **Revital and Ran Katznelson**, who have featured our activities at a number of events in the US. This year, membership drives were also conducted at Negba, Nir Banim, Gat, Yad Mordechai, Gan Yoshia, and Saad.

We are grateful to our regular anchor kibbutzim: Nir Oz, Magen, Hatzerim, Ein Shemer, Gan Shmuel, Mishmar HaEmek, Ma’agan Michael, Yisre’el, Tzuba, and Be’eri. These kibbutzim regularly support the expenses of their members who volunteer to transport patients every week.

Warm thanks, once again, are conveyed to **Shlomo and Miriam Shayish**, **Yoni Asher**, **Naeem Al-Bayda** and **Yael Noy**, our dedicated coordinators who work day and night on

aligning patients with drivers, and to the “**Basmat Al-Amal**” organization, which coordinates trips in Gaza.

Many thanks to all those who have donated towards the organization: to volunteer drivers who have covered their own petrol and associated costs, and to generous friends who have chosen to donate anonymously.

We gratefully acknowledge the following organizations: **Friends of Israel from Germany** (via **Danny Walter**), the **Blichtenstein Estate** (via **Johnny Eytan**), the **Tolkien Foundation** in England (via **Miri Karchi**), **Project Rozana** in Australia, headed by **Ron Finkel**, the **Schoken Fund** (via Lili Shtern). We thank the following organizations for significant donations: **Heritage Legacy Fund**, the **Jewish Federation of St Louis**, **Migdal** (via Renan Doron), **Bonei Ha’Arets** (via **Naama Goral**), **Ganir** (via **Nirit Gendelman and Amatsia Choneni**), **Kibbutz Maabarot** (via **Yaakov Avnet**), the Italian **Conforti** organization, and **Western Digital** (via **Noa Eliav**).

Special thanks are due to services rendered charitably by our volunteers **Ohad Richmond**, Esq. for legal services, accountant **Ofer Davidowitz** for accounting services, **Amir Cohen–Dreman** for media and social-network management, **Kulu Orr** for maintaining our website and managing our email communications, **Rotem Gur** for her general assistance, and **Eyal Ofek**, advisor for Arabic language and culture.

We also wish to thank and acknowledge the invaluable cooperation of the following organizations: **El Shafaa el Rahma** for loaning medical equipment; **Salamatcom** of Abu Gosh for their in-hospital patient support; **Jamal Knaani** for maintaining communications with donors in the Arab sector; and to the women of **Machsom Watch** for their dedicated support and availability to help patient families.

And, of course, to you, the volunteers, warm thanks for your dedication and for spreading goodness!

The families of the patients repeatedly express their appreciation of your help in driving them to the hospitals for treatment.

We believe that this activity brings neighbours together and leads to mutual reconciliation.