



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 1,250 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 at unparalleled scale in the context of every-day life. Our Founder said it best: **for a few hours during every hospital trip, we make with our Palestinian neighbors our own “mini-peace.”** *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

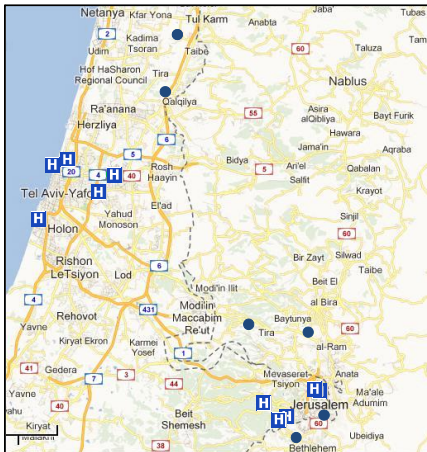
Our volunteers serve Palestinians (mostly children) in need of hospital treatments in Israel. Thanks to our donors and benefactors, in 2017 we continued to reimburse our volunteers for most of their gasoline expenses, a fact that enabled more volunteers to join our ranks. In 2017 our ranks grew from about 1,150 to 1,250 volunteer drivers. In 2017, our volunteers drove about 15,200 patient-trips (in about 8,150 hospital trips) to 13 hospitals, covering a total of about 656,250 miles.

Central

- H Hospital/clinic
- CheckPoint

From: ●
Beit Horon
Bethlehem
Eyal
Qalandiya
Shaar Efrayim
Zeitim

To: H
Alyn
Al-Muqased
Assouta
Augusta Victoria
Beilinson/Schneider
Hadassah
Ichilov
St John Hospital
Shaarei Tzedek
Tel Hashomer
Wolfson

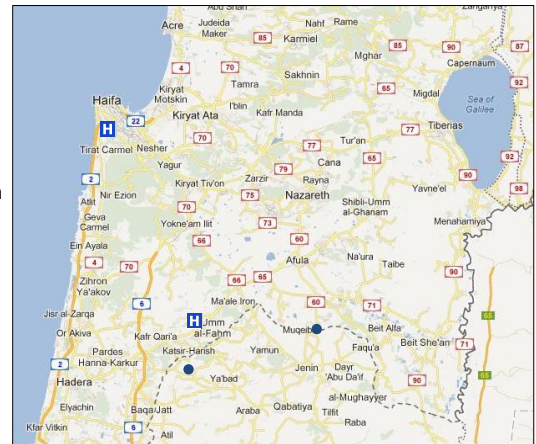


North

- H Hospital/clinic
- Check-Point

From: ●
Jalame
Reihan

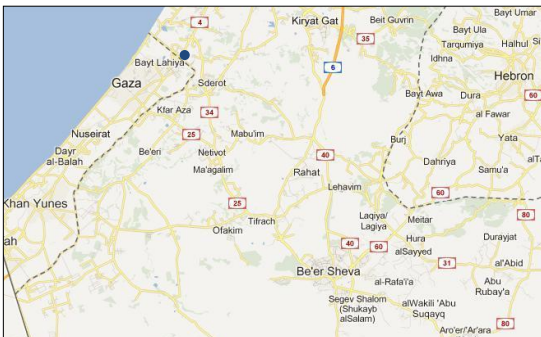
To: H
Rambam
Umm-al-Fahm



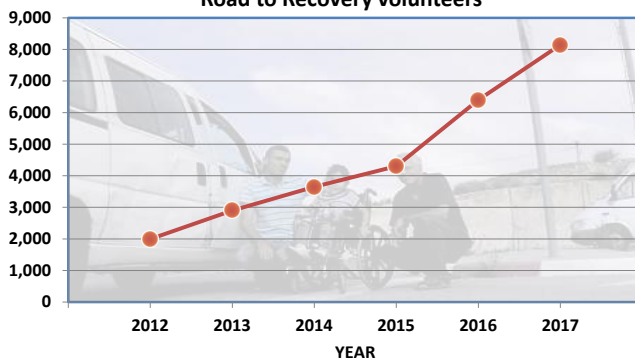
South

From: ●
Erez

To: H
Central
and north
Israel



Growth in the number of hospital trips driven by The Road to Recovery volunteers



Our larger volunteer driver force and additional resources allowed us to meet a larger fraction of the growing demand for hospital trips. In 2017 we were able to meet nearly 100 percent of the demand for trips from the northern West Bank, while meeting nearly 95 percent of the demand for trips from Gaza and south of Mount Hebron to hospitals in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. In 2014 we have started operating weekly chartered

minibus trips, and in 2017 we maintained this minibus service at a frequency of four times per week thanks to ongoing donations via our project page on the Global Giving crowd-funding web site (see <http://j.mp/RTR-Donation>). As in 2016, we have continued in 2017 to transport three Palestinian toddlers and their escorts every two weeks from the Erez Crossing to the Shaarey Tzedek hospital for dialysis.

Medical Assistance

In 2017, we continued to provide support for orthopedic medical equipment to **Mary Samar**, an 11-year-old girl from **Yamon** in the West Bank, whose lower body is paralyzed by Spina Bifida. In addition, our organization helped fund surgery expenses for a youth from Gaza and a cochlear implant procedure for a girl from the **Qalqilya** region.

2017 marks the second year during which our Medical Expense Underwriting Committee considered 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**.

Regional Coordinators

This year, new members took on the regional coordinator roles. We bid a fond farewell to **Amalia Wiesel**, who coordinated the trips from Gaza for over six years with incredible devotion, and who forged excellent connections with all the military and civilian authorities in the region. Amalia's remarkable dedication, care, and high spirits worked wonders in bringing in patients from Gaza. We also parted ways with coordinator **Shlomit Gal**, our first coordinator in the northern region to graciously extend her service to two years, who performed her task with dedication, perseverance and geniality. We are also grateful to **Miriam Shayish**, our devoted coordinator of the logistically-complex central region, who has now handed over the role to her successor, **Naeem Al-Bayda**.

Yael Noy, who began coordinating patient transport in the southern region in October 2016, continued working throughout 2017, while Amalia has continued coordinating special projects involving patients from Gaza. **Yoni Asher** has successfully taken over coordination of the northern region. Fortunately, we have been blessed with proficient, well organized, and compassionate coordinators, who are indispensable for facilitating the daily activities of our growing 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 "Greenland", the Hebron-based Palestinian organization. In addition to coordinating trips to Israeli hospitals, Naeem will establish an affiliated transportation network within the Palestinian Authority to help patients arrive at border crossings. Naeem will also be the official representative of our organization for dealing with the Palestinian Authority, so that a patient who received permission from the Authority to be treated in Israel will get reliable information about the transport services that we provide. Naeem's employment is underwritten 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" supports health services in the Palestinian Authority by enabling qualification of medical teams, funding medical treatment and supporting the transport services offered by our organization.

We were saddened by the unfortunate deaths of several children, teenagers and adults, whom our volunteers had driven for treatment and medical checkups over long periods. Groups of RTR volunteers visited the homes of the grieving families to extend their condolences. These visits, which underscored the close personal relationships between our volunteers and patients' families, enabled these families to express their great appreciation for the help extended by our volunteers.

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

Recreational Patient Activities

In January and July of 2017, we hosted two separate groups of 35 child patients from Gaza and their parents at the Jordan Village camp for children, where they rested and enjoyed fun activities. In July, we organized a “Joy & Health” day outing at the Sdot Yam Beach near Caesarea for 200 Palestinian patients and members of their families from the West Bank. A similar outing for a second group of 200 Palestinian patients and members of their families was organized in August, on this occasion, at the beach in Kibutz Ma’agan Michael. As in previous years, our volunteers received generous support for holding these recreational days from Arab youth organizations and from donors and benefactors in the Israeli Arab sector.



This year we initiated the “**Nice to Meet You**” project, where, 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 goal of the initiative is to have Israelis and Palestinians meet in person in the hope of establishing personal friendships to allay anxieties that underlie the conflict.

At the beginning of September, in observance of the Muslim holiday “Eid al-Adha”, **Amalia Wiesel** organized a tour for a group of 80 patients and accompanying families 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 exulted over the special experience, and thanked the volunteers that helped out during the event.

Annual Meetings

In October 2017 a meeting of volunteers from the north was held at “**Beit Gefen**,” 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 central region. These events mark the importance of having members of the organization meet to share their rich personal experiences in transporting patients.

Fundraising Events



Since the inception of our Global Giving project in June 2015, as of the end of 2017, we have raised over \$51,000 from 151 donors to help fund our operations. Our [project website](#) is run year-round by RTR volunteer **Smadar Shiffman**, who updates its content and maintains communications with individual donors.

Operations and Organizational Structure

2017 marks the third year that our Organizational Efficiency Forum initiated by **Amir Adar** helped grow the scope of our operations. The Forum comprises special-purpose teams:

- *Special-Events* headed by **Alona Abt** and **Albert Amit**, organized the beach recreational events for patients and their families (described above) and the orientation meetings of new RTR volunteer recruits; **Tali Fefferman** also hosted a meeting for new recruits.
- *Fundraising* led by **Eli Sahar** and **Alona Abt**, worked on raising funds to support all RTR activities.
- *Social Media* directed by **Amir Cohen-Dreman**, supported and maintained our Facebook page.
- *Communication & Public Relation* overseen by **Hela Yaniv** communicated with journalists and media producers who publicize the organization or activities of its individual volunteers. Channel 10 News ran a story about **Yair Noy** and **Moshe Etsion**, who drive patients from Gaza. Channel 11 Weekly Diary aired a report by **Shirli Berkowitz** about **Naeem Al-Bayda**, coordinator of the central region, who leads an agenda of discussion and reconciliation. Articles about the organization were also written in English, French and German. Links to all these publications appear on our [website](#).
- *Applications* initiated by **Amir Adar** and **Dan Noam** is working on a system for optimal trip scheduling, routing and assignments. **Benny Borenstein**, a lecturer in Computer Sciences at the Rupin College, has been recruited to develop an app in 2018 which will help make trip coordination more efficient.
- *Branding & Graphic Design* spearheaded by **Ayelet Sadé** and **Tovi Peled**, continues to handle all the organization's graphics needs. This year, they designed a flag to be used as insignia for identifying our volunteers at border crossings, and a sticker which was produced by volunteers **Ada Ganzach**, and **Shlomo and Miriam Shayish**.

Thanks to our volunteers, we handled a large volume of activities in 2017. **Naomi Goral** has volunteered to oversee the monthly reimbursement of our volunteer drivers for their gas expenses. **Tsvi Goren** has volunteered to handle receipts and thank-you notes for donors. **Shelly Barlev** made sure volunteer drivers are equipped with safety seats for child patients. **Johnny Eytan** has volunteered to set up a “round-up for good” donation system in which credit-card transactions are rounded up to the nearest shekel, with the change going to designated charities.

At the end of 2017, our newsletter was upgraded, with the kind help of **Roi Gold**. Updates about our activities are sent to the volunteer mailing list once a 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.

Supporting Activities

In the United States of America, we continue to hold a booth set up by RTR volunteer **Smadar Shiffman** at the annual Israel Independence Day festival in Palo Alto, California. The traffic we received in May 2017 helped spread the word and increase donations.

Special Thanks and Acknowledgement

We wish to thank our volunteers who spent tireless hours in translating our material into: Arabic – **Eyal Ofek**, **Liran Ossi**, **Lauren Eghbaria**, **Wagi Sidawi**; English – **Batya Fonda**; French – **Dan Weinblum**; German – **Adam Ron**, and into Spanish – **Sergio Koussevitsky**.

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

We thank **Shlomo and Miriam Shayish**, **Yoni Asher**, **Naeem Al-Bayda** and **Yael Noy**, our dedicated coordinators who work day and night on matching patients with drivers, and to the “**Basmat Al-Amal**” organization, which coordinates trips in Gaza.

Many thanks to all those who have made donations to the organization: to volunteer drivers who have covered their gas and related expenses, 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 also 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 Gorali**), **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 *pro-bono* 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; **Salametcom** 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 neighbors together and leads to mutual reconciliation.

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.

