

Spreading Joy and Laughter in Palestinian Hospitals



By Yazan Al-Zubaidy

areq Zboun, the artistic director and a “clowndoctor” for RED NOSES Palestine - Clowndoctors International, shared the following story.

The Blind Leading the Blind

The Huda Al Masri Pediatric Cancer Ward is one of our regular stops. A little girl named Ghazal had been there for a while. We had visited her many times, but it had always been difficult to get her to join in our fun. On one particular visit, we made it our mission to make her laugh. Dr. Mosquito, my clown partner, and I entered her room and tried to make contact with her, but she didn't even look at us. We started to work only with each other, ignoring her as if she weren't in the room. Dr. Mosquito

RED NOSES Palestine and RED NOSES Lithuania at The Huda Al Masri Pediatric Cancer Department with the Lithuanian Representative in Palestine, Ms. Nida Dalmantaitė.



took my glasses and I acted as though I couldn't see anything. I lost my balance, and Dr. Mosquito had to guide me to keep me from bumping into things. Eventually, Ghazal started to look at us; we had found something to catch her attention.

When Ghazal sat up with interest, I took away Dr. Mosquito's glasses and now we were both stumbling around the room, the blind leading the blind. At this point, Ghazal was laughing out loud. She then took the glasses from both of us and the game began. In the end, Ghazal and her mother were laughing so hard that they were crying. We had completed our mission. From now on, Ghazal looked forward to our visits, always running down the hall to greet us when we entered the ward.

This story is just one among tens of others that unfold during the visits of RED NOSES Clowndoctors Palestine, a program co-funded by the Austrian Development Agency. A young team of professional clowns regularly visits six Palestinian hospitals in five cities. They are well trained and follow high standards. They aim to make laughter an inseparable part of treatment and of the local health-care system. Joy and laughter are essential for sick children in Palestinian hospitals. They aid healing, especially for these children who must live through difficult situations.

In 2015, RED NOSES Lithuania participated in an exchange program funded by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During this exchange, children in five hospitals were enchanted by the Clowndoctors' visits, and hundreds of giggles permeated the atmosphere. Furthermore, this exchange provided an opportunity for both the Lithuanian and Palestinian teams to catch a glimpse into a different culture. Lithuanians gained insight into Palestinian culture and were able to experience the daily life of Palestinian youth. There are plans for more exchange visits and further cooperation between the two teams in the future. After all, joy and laughter are universal.

Yazan Al-Zubaidy is the program director of RED NOSES Palestine.



Dr. Lily and Dr. Mosquito.



Spreading joy and laughter in the Huda Al Masri Pediatric Cancer Department play room.