

Arab Christian Hospital Receives Rare Israeli Parliament Prize

A hospital in Nazareth, owned and operated by United Kingdom Christian charity, The Nazareth Trust, has become the first non-Jewish organization since the creation of the State of Israel to receive the annual Chairman of the Knesset Award (Knesset is the Parliament of Israel).

The hospital, known locally as 'The English Hospital', received the award for demonstrating a positive, national impact on the country, its cross-community cultural sensitivity, educational outreach and contribution to Arab healthcare. Based in Nazareth, in the Northern Galilee region of Israel, it serves the local population (who are predominantly Arab) without distinction, regardless of religion, community or political affiliation. It operates a 24-hour accident and emergency department and delivers a full range of hospital and community based services.

Owned and managed by UK charity, The Nazareth Trust Chairman Ian Lyall and CEO Joseph Main joined Dr. Bishara Bisharat, head of the hospital, in Jerusalem Wednesday at a ceremony in the Knesset where they accepted the award from Reuven Rivlin, Chairman of the Knesset. Rivlin remarked in his opening speech that the "English" hospital has served the whole of Israel by also serving as a bridge between the Jewish and Arab communities in the country.

The Nazareth Hospital was founded 150 years ago by P.K. Vartan. He and his Scottish wife, Mary Anne Stewart, established a simple four-bed clinic within their home. Today the hospital has 146 beds, treats 50,000 within its emergency department each year and delivers 2,000 babies annually.

"We are truly honored to accept this award, which crowns the year of celebration for our 150-year anniversary," Bisharat said. "When asked how we have continued for so long in this region, our answer is that we have remained true to the mission and values upon which we were founded."

The hospital, which is fully integrated into the Israeli health system, is the second-largest employer in the city and is part of the Scottish Christian Charity, The Nazareth Trust, which also owns and operates a nursing school and international volunteering program called SERVE.

"The Hospital has a remarkable history and against all odds, has continued to have a real impact on the healthcare of this community, by seeking to serve all as part of our foundational mission," Lyall said. "Its ability to operate in such difficult circumstances has enabled it to attract continued support from around the world and we are indebted to that.

This award is significant for our staff, volunteers and supporters."

The Chairman of the Knesset Award is presented annually to recognize organizations that have made a contribution of national importance to communities and the wider society.

"At a time when the world is focused on conflict and its aftermath in the Middle East, it is significant for an organization such as ours to be honored by the Israeli Parliamentary body in this way," said Joseph R. Main, CEO, The Nazareth Trust. It is significant because the services we provide, our motivations, methods and aspirations have been recognized by the nation as vehicles for peace, co-operation and the building of bridges between peoples."