

Israeli Humanitarian Organization Sows Seeds of Peace

Save a Child's Heart (SACH) is an Israeli humanitarian organization that has provided life-saving heart surgeries to more than 3,000 children from 44 developing countries in Israel that otherwise would not receive them. The organization works to save the lives of children worldwide, regardless of whether or not those children hail from countries that are at peace with Israel. SACH has helped children from the Palestinian Authority, Haiti, Angola, Tanzania, China and Russia.

Recently, the organization brought three Iraqi children, ages 1, 3 and 6, to Israel to receive life-saving medical treatment. According to SACH, the youngest child, Yousef, was diagnosed with a heart condition the day he was born and needed to visit a hospital five times per week in Iraqi Kurdistan in order to get the oxygen he needed to breathe. His heart condition delayed his development.

The oldest child, Kawyer, used to get exhausted very easily due to her disease, while the third child, Yasna, has undergone shunt procedures since 2011 and is about to enter the final phase of her recovery. Since 2004, 180 Iraqi children have received medical treatment in Israel, 50 of them within the past two years.

"This work produces a sense of fulfillment that is hard to put into words," Dr. Lior Sasson says in *Yedioth Achronot*, himself the son of Iraqi Jewish immigrants and the project's lead surgeon. "We save children who would otherwise not have made it, because they could not get treatment. The ability to help parents from countries defined as enemy countries and restore

their hope after they lost it is not at all obvious. We are in fact sowing seeds of peace with the country that my parents left.”

Sasson claims that during the Second Intifada, Israel kept the “door open” to provide medical treatment to needy children, even if they hailed from the Palestinian Authority. Founded in 1996, SACH funds operations through a combination of donations and a special budget provided by Minister Silvan Shalom.

“I shall continue to support the activities of Save a Child’s Heart. It is essential that we continue to send out the message that Israel is a humane state,” Shalom told the *Jerusalem Post*. “The humanitarian treatment that we grant to children is in essence the difference between us and some of our neighbors. I’m proud to be a partner in this project which brings hearts together and promotes fraternity among nations.”

Simon Fisher, executive director of SACH, says in *Yedioth Achronot*, “The complexities of bringing in children from countries defined as ‘enemy countries’ depend on the cooperation between the medical staff and the government, but in the end it all proves that human life is above everything.”

In reference to the staff members working for SACH, Fisher says: “They build bridges and break stereotypes.”

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