



## Introduction

The year 2017 came to commemorate another year of violations to the human rights of Palestinians amidst global silence and poor will to affect changes on the ground. The year 2017 marks 100 years since the Balfour Declaration, 70 years since the United Nations General Assembly “Partition” Resolution 181, 50 years of the Israeli occupation to the West Bank and Gaza, and 10 years of the illegal siege and blockade on Gaza Strip. Decades of a fruitless peace process could not stop the Israeli occupation from downplaying the human rights of Palestinians.

The Israeli occupation continued implementing its inhumane practices, which have been systematically pursued and repeated over the past year, that have violated a range of detainees’ rights as stipulated under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. These policies included but were not limited to the following: arbitrary arrest, arbitrary arrest of children, administrative detention, arrest of members of the Legislative Council, punishment and collective punishment, excessive use of force during detention and extrajudicial executions, arrest based on the use of social media, arrest of women and minors, arrest of journalists, etc. Israel’s abusive and offensive practices have for so long been carried out in the name of ‘security’, although Israelis and Palestinians have never been equal counterparts and for sure Palestinians have never been a strong opponent. “Israel today maintains an entrenched system of institutionalized discrimination against Palestinians in the occupied territory – repression that extends far beyond any security rationale.” said the Middle East Director at Human Rights Watch, Ms. Sarah Leah Whitson. <sup>1</sup>

In this bulletin, the YMCA summarizes its successes in 2017 towards achieving its main objectives through the devotion of its teams and the support of its partners and donors. The YMCA remains faithful to the rights of the marginalized groups of persons with disability and survivors of political violence in Palestine, because it believes they deserve to live a better life and for that aim it will remain persistent. All the efforts unveiled in the coming pages are witnesses to the YMCA’s dedication to restore hope for better life.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/04/israel-50-years-occupation-abuses>, Human Rights Watch, June 2017

### Objective 1: To enhance the targeted individuals' and groups' access to psychosocial support and counseling services and promote the supportive role of the families and communities towards their affected members

#### Facts:

1. 8216 individual and group counselling sessions were provided to persons with disability and traumatized.
2. 921 individual and group counselling sessions were provided to the needy immediate family members of the participants.
3. 724 direct participants were reached; 43.23% were persons with disabilities, 49.03% were survivors of the political violence, and 7.74% having both situations, 74.87% were youth (12-25 years old), 56.63% came from villages and remote areas where several locations cannot be reached by vehicles and where services are limited or non-existent, 26.52% were females.



#### Impact:

1. 93.5% of persons with disability and traumatized who received psychosocial support and counselling services have an increased ability to cope with their disability and have developed a more positive perspective towards their situation, and are more reintegrated into the Palestinian community.
2. 92.5% of family members of participants are more aware of the needs of their affected children and know how to deal with them and the community at large have a more positive attitude towards persons with disability.

#### Stories to tell:

*M.AY. is a 15 years old ex-detainee boy, from a village within the Bethlehem District, who received psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation services upon experiencing a brutal arrest and interrogation which incorporated using all forms of torture, denial of his basic human rights and the violation of his right to treatment. "They broke my arm during arrest... I fear that the soldiers would come to arrest me again, and I am afraid to leave the house." M.AY. told the YMCA counselor. The hard experience he went through negatively affected his psychological wellness and resulted in PTSD. M.AY. received counselling sessions to help him release the harmful emotions he had and to enhance his coping mechanisms. In order to enable him to plan for the future, he received career counselling sessions and was referred to vocational assessment at the Vocational Assessment Unit of the YMCA. Based on the assessment results, a vocational training in vehicle electronics was arranged for him. The intervention with M.AY. was life-changing in terms of enabling the disposal of the painful and agonizing images resulting from the traumatizing experience as well as restoring hope and aspiration for a bright future that is free from fear and anxiety. M.AY, expressed "I owe this change and transformation in my life to the YMCA... Soon I will complete the final training stage to become an independent productive individual again."*

*From Qalqiliya, the parents of Y.AS, a 17 year old boy suffering from early aging and weakness in the lower and upper limbs told us: "Before knowing you we felt hopeless, we were worried about our son's future since he had no life, no profession, his psychological situation was very bad. We became tired of not knowing what to do for him or how to care for him. We were alone. After the intervention, and all the support and encouragement you gave us, and seeing how you transformed the life of our son and improved his psychological wellness and enabled him to socialize with people and make friends, we feel that we are not alone and we are confident that our son will be able to continue his life and overcome his difficulties, we have become a happier family."*

## Objective 2: To enhance the targeted groups and communities' physical and economic independency

### Facts:

1. 71 medical urgent assistive aids were provided to needy persons with disabilities.
2. 52 adaptations to add disabled access facilities in residential units and 3 schools were conducted.
3. 378 participants received 870 sessions of academic and career counselling, while 266 participants received vocational assessment, of whom 145 were reached through the mobile unit.
4. 128 academic rehabilitation services were rendered to support participants.
5. 95 vocational training programs for participants above 15 years old were supported.
6. 25 self-employment projects were supported.
7. Facilitation of employment of 42 persons with disabilities.



### Impact:

1. 94.9% of persons with disability (participants of the Program) have better access to their residences, schools, and public buildings, as well as to job market.
2. 92.9% of the participants are more able to participate in the economic life and more economically independent.

### Stories to tell:

*I.M. a 27 years old young woman from a village in the District of Jenin, who lives with hemiplegia and received support to establish a grocery in the village, said: "for so long, I lived my life without having a goal to pursue or run after. Today, I wake up every morning to go to work and manage my grocery. I meet new people every day, I make friends, people know me and I feel that they love me and support me. Time had no value in the past but now every minute counts for me."*

*J.A. a seven years old girl from a village in Hebron, who lives with congenital amputation, was unable to go out walk or play with the rest of the children in her village, and she could not attend school either. After supporting her with artificial limbs, she started attending school, and she made friends and became able to play and socialize with her peers. Her mother said: "The support my family received from the YMCA enabled my daughter to live her childhood, and depend on herself. I rest assured that she is fine and I can go out to work and help improve my family's income." J.A. continued: "I go to school on my own and without the help of anyone. I can be at home alone. I can manage by myself. The limbs that I have enabled me to live my life just like others and live happily."*



### Objective 3: To upgrade the skills of the Palestinian social workers and counsellors

#### Facts:

1. 17 trainings were provided to 325 participants from local NGOs and GOs.
2. 6 trainings were attended by 89 staff of the YMCA.
3. 25 University students completed their internships at the YMCA.
4. At the international level, 5 psychologists received a Training of Trainers program in EMDR – level 1 in Lebanon, while 31 psychologists received training in EMDR – level 1 in the same country by the YMCA.
5. The Research and Training Department succeeded in updating the mapping of the mental health and psychosocial service providers in the West Bank, ([www.mhpss.org](http://www.mhpss.org)).
6. An assessment of the internal procedures of 33 CBOs in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in terms of acquiring and enforcing child protection protocols in their interventions was conducted.



#### Impact:

96.6% of the trained social workers and counsellors who received training have an increased capacity particularly in the sphere of counselling and rehabilitation and use advanced constructive counselling methodologies and approaches with their participants.

### Objective 4: To promote community responsibility towards persons with disability and traumatized through networking within the rehabilitation and disability organizations

#### Facts:

1. 12437 persons were targeted by advocacy and awareness activities during 2017.
2. 430 coordination meetings were held with the different organizations working in the spheres of psychosocial rehabilitation, mental health, emergency interventions, and vocational rehabilitation on the local level.
3. 34 workshops, lectures and meetings were held to affect societal understanding and attitude towards persons with disability and survivors of political violence
4. 32 activities were organized with either schools or universities within the different districts of the West Bank.
5. 85 recreational / ventilation activities were organized in all West Bank districts including East Jerusalem, which targeted marginalized groups of survivors of political violence and PWDs, children and their caregivers.
6. 13 celebratory events were implemented in the different areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
7. Several meetings targeting key governmental agencies at the national and district levels were held.
8. 7 media activities were organized targeting local media agencies, national as well as regional ones.
9. Forming 11 friendship committees in schools to support PWDs.
10. 2 groups of 20 potential leaders from ex-detainee youth were formed in Hebron and Bethlehem to develop themselves to become leaders and a nucleus of change in their own communities. They received support to start thinking on issues concerning human rights, positive thinking, conflict transformation, and nonviolent opposition, etc.



#### Impact:

70.4% of the organizations with whom the East Jerusalem YMCA – Rehabilitation Program coordinated efforts have an increased responsibility towards persons with disability, traumatized, and have become more involved in coordinating efforts for the sake of these groups.

### Making a difference to live 'a better life'

J.H. is a 17 year old young boy living in a village within Ramallah district- with his family of eight members. In March 2017, he got shot by the Israeli military when passing by a military checkpoint near his village. After falling down, a group of soldiers immediately reached out to him and started ferociously beating him causing a fracture in his skull. He was then transferred to an Israeli hospital under a very critical condition.

The YMCA counselor visited J.H. at his house upon being released from the hospital, where he stayed for 45 days, to introduce the services available and make an initial assessment of his condition. J.H. described with great sorrow how he got shot and beaten by the military inhumanely, lost consciousness and then woke up in a hospital with his hands cuffed, his legs shackled, and surrounded by a bunch of military. J.H. was desperate as he felt he was losing his life when he found out that the bone on top of his head was totally smashed leaving only the skin to cover his brain. He waited painfully to undergo a very critical surgery to cultivate bone to his skull. He suffered from severe weight loss following the injury, and his legs and arms became too weak to support his body. It was until June that he got the chance to do the surgery.

The tragic incident left J.H. with immense fear that prevented him from sleeping at night, nightmares strangling him, making him a desperate person longing for a moment of peace and tranquility. He would not go to any place where soldiers might be present. Upon making the initial assessment with the beneficiary, the counselor found a good partner in J.H.'s father, and planned a rehabilitation intervention that would enhance the psychosocial wellness of J.H. with the support of a caring and compassionate father.

J.H. received counselling sessions to help him get rid of the feelings of melancholy, despair, weakness, and fear, and thus overcoming PTSD that resulted from the hard experience he went through. The sessions focused on enhancing his coping mechanisms, empowering him, highlighting his self-worth, and enabling him to look for a brighter future. The fact that the surgery was operated successfully, affected his psychological status immensely because he felt that his body would recover and that he would have the chance to live normally. Upon reaching that stage, the counselors felt it was time to start working with him at the vocational rehabilitation level. And thus he received career counselling sessions as well as a vocational assessment at the Vocational Assessment Unit of the YMCA in Beit Sahour. The assessment entailed examining his physical and mental abilities as well as his inclinations in regards with the current labor market. Based on the assessment report as well as discussions with the counselor and the family, J.H. chose to receive training in carpentry which the counselor facilitated for him at a certified training center. The Centre's staff are continuously expressing their content with the level of commitment J.H. shows to attending the classes.

J.H. father told us: *"It is obvious to all of us that my son has passed this tragic event and that his psychological wellness is restored. His health status is also stable now after the success of the surgery and this had a big impact on his capacity to look to the future with optimism. I will always be grateful to the YMCA's support for my son."*

J.H. expressed: *"I always talk about how you made me feel and how you changed me.... You planted in me seeds of hope and a will to live a better life, and in appreciation to that I wanted to challenge myself and reach that point."*