



humanitycrew

Annual Report 2016



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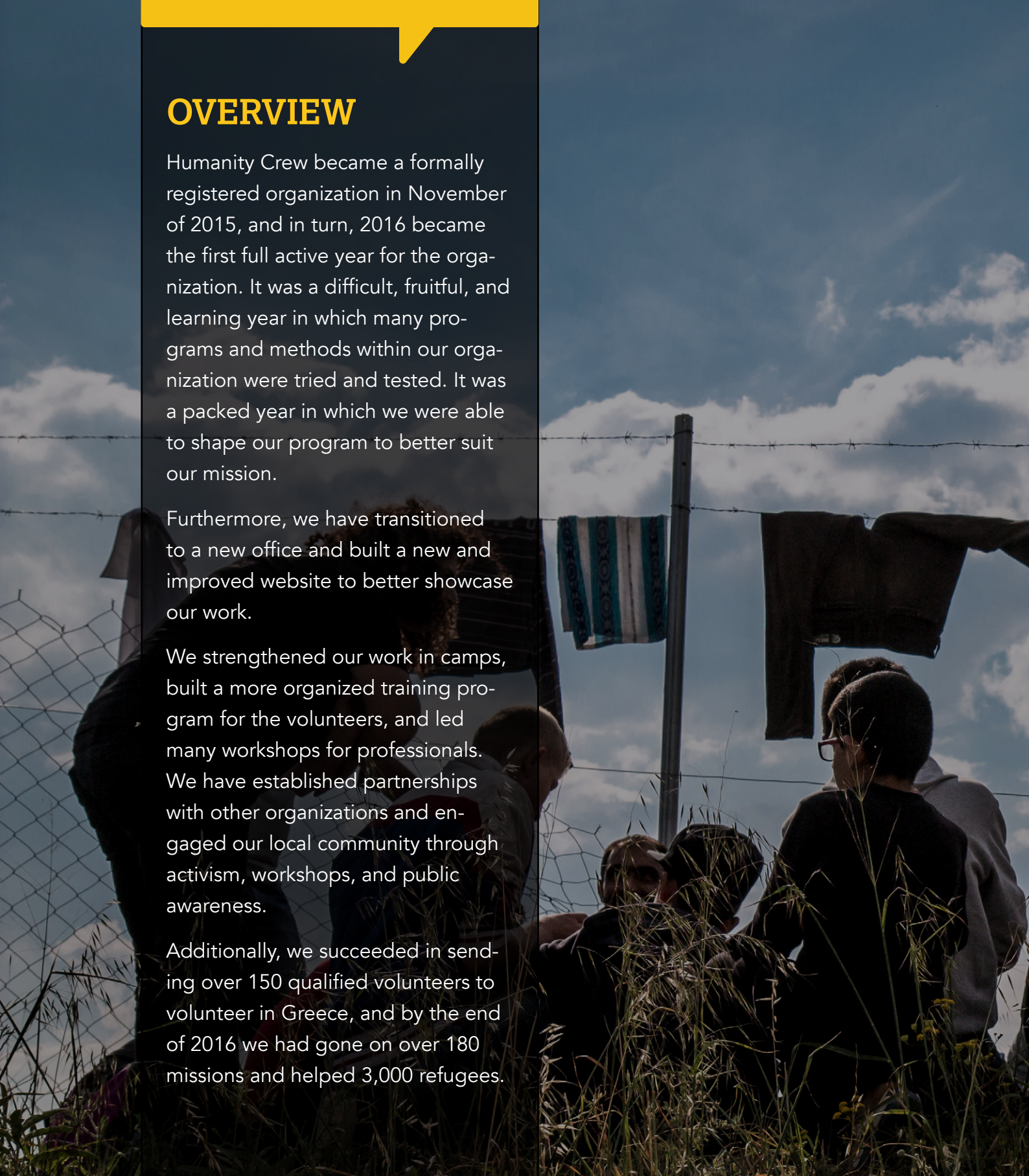
OVERVIEW

Humanity Crew became a formally registered organization in November of 2015, and in turn, 2016 became the first full active year for the organization. It was a difficult, fruitful, and learning year in which many programs and methods within our organization were tried and tested. It was a packed year in which we were able to shape our program to better suit our mission.

Furthermore, we have transitioned to a new office and built a new and improved website to better showcase our work.

We strengthened our work in camps, built a more organized training program for the volunteers, and led many workshops for professionals. We have established partnerships with other organizations and engaged our local community through activism, workshops, and public awareness.

Additionally, we succeeded in sending over 150 qualified volunteers to volunteer in Greece, and by the end of 2016 we had gone on over 180 missions and helped 3,000 refugees.





MISSION

We are an international aid organization specializing in the provision of psychological aid to refugees and people in crises. We work to deploy mental health and psychosocial support to displaced populations in order to improve their wellbeing, to restore order in their lives, and to prevent further psychological escalation. We seek to create a world in which mental health support is a fundamental component in all emergency efforts for victims of humanitarian crises.



HOW IT ALL STARTED

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Humanity Crew was founded by Adv. Maria Jammal and her husband Dr. Essam Daod, alongside psychologist Mohammad Mansur and other professional volunteers when they had all travelled together to the island of Lesbos in November 2015 at the height of the Syrian refugee crisis. Each day they saw thousands of people fleeing their homeland and making the dangerous journey through sea

to Europe. Working on the shores of Lesbos as a doctor, Essam focused on providing urgent lifesaving treatment and psychological first aid to refugees arriving on boats, while Maria and Mohammad worked in hospitals and camps trying to reunite family members separated during the journey and help people cope with their new reality. Hundreds of people were drowning each week and survivors of this ordeal



were placed in temporary camps on the islands. People were in dire need of help and local authorities and government agencies were overwhelmed by the influx. On their return to Haifa, they were determined to go back to Lesbos to help as soon as possible, but this time to return with force and mobilize more people, funds and equipment. A large and rapid grassroots campaign was

launched in Haifa and the Galilee to raise awareness, gather funds and most importantly recruit and train volunteers and mental health professionals to provide help. After being registered as an organization, Humanity Crew began its first mission on the island of Lesbos in November 2015 and worked continuously throughout 2016.

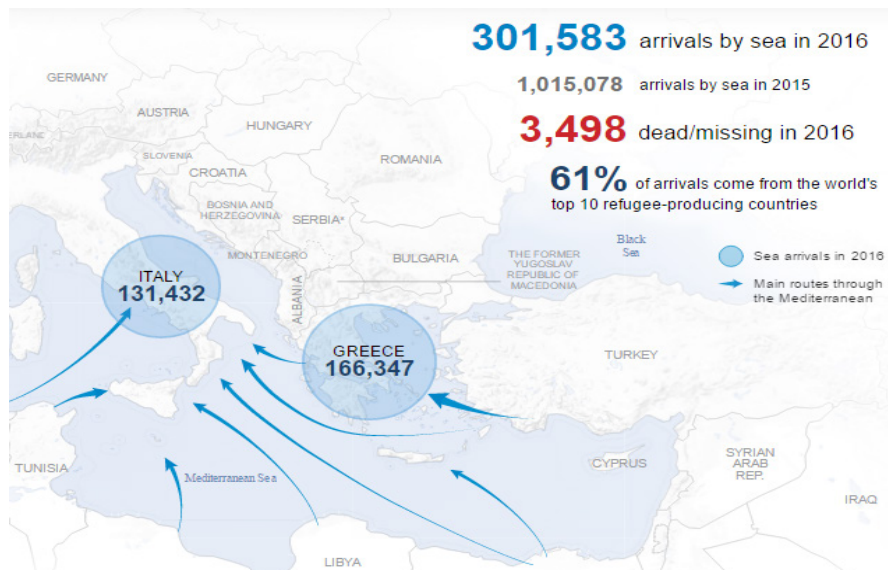


THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN GREECE IN 2016

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[According to a report by Mercy Crops](#) and echoed by many, Syria's civil war has created the worst humanitarian crisis in modern time. Half the country's pre-war population — more than 11 million people — have been killed or forced to flee their homes. Families are struggling to survive inside Syria, or make a new

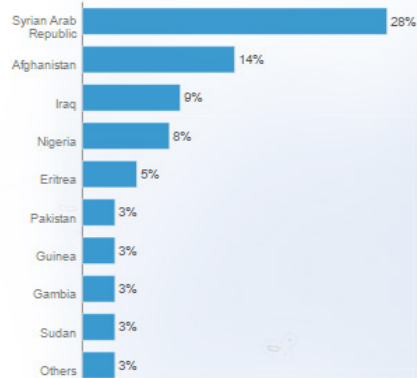
home in neighbouring countries. Others are risking their lives on the way to Europe. Harsh winters and hot summers make life as a refugee even more difficult. According to the U.N., \$4.5 billion was required to meet the urgent needs of the most vulnerable Syrians in 2016 — but only \$2.9 billion was received.




Increasing numbers of refugees and migrants take their chances aboard unseaworthy boats and dinghies in a desperate bid to reach Europe. The vast majority of those attempting this dangerous crossing are in need of international protection, fleeing war, violence and persecution in their country of origin. Every year these movements continue to exact a devastating toll on human life.

Top-10 nationalities of Mediterranean sea arrivals

Top-10 nationalities represent **79%** of the sea arrivals
based on arrivals since 1 Jan 2016



Source: data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean



WHY PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT?

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Whilst refugees were receiving essential medical aid, it became quickly evident that many suffered trauma and that there was nobody there to provide them with any mental support and reassurance. In the words of Dr. Daod:

“We realized that there was no one who really understood these people, understood their language. A child lying in bed after being rescued at sea, having lost his parents and having no one to speak



to, having no one to tell him where he is and what is happening with him or where his parents are. A child is lying in bed as if he were dead, as if he separated his soul from his body, in order to survive.

// Many people can provide emergency medical aid, but we can give something else: we can reconnect the body and the soul, we can support and embrace. We decided to be a safe haven for them, to try and see them, to ask them how they feel, to call out for their soul to come back.”

Humanity Crew thus set out its mission to focus solely on mental health support. We based our work on trained and qualified volunteers and mental health professionals who underwent specialized training sessions targeted at preparing them for work at refugee camps and equipping them with the essentials of working with vulnerable cases. In addition, we emphasised our advantage of using common language and cultural context with the refugees. Coming from similar social and cultural backgrounds as the refugees, and communicating in the same language (Arabic), our trained volunteers and professionals were in a unique position to provide in-depth and sustained support in ways that other international organizations struggled to deliver.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

IN 2016

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Overview of our work in Greece

Since November 2015 we have worked in camps, shorelines, ports, and the local hospital in the city of Mytilene, and mainly at Lesvos Solidarity - PIK-PA Camp, which became the core of our fieldwork activity in 2016. Later, as a response to the EU-Turkey deal,

we expanded our work to the north to Diavata Camp, Elpída Center, and Floxenia Housing Project on the outskirts of Thessaloniki in mainland Greece. In addition to our work at the camps, we ran significant emergency work during the height of the refugee crisis. We also initiated several emergency operations. These included work on-board rescue boats of our partners [Proactiva Open](#)



[Arms](#), mental health mobile clinics on shores and ports, and our work with hospital staff once refugees were referred there.

Our work in Greece included activities we held for children and adults. We tailored detailed activities to contribute to the resilience of the refugees, prevent the deterioration of their mental health,

and enhance the communal empathy and support mechanisms. The activities, implemented by a team of native Arabic speaking mental health professionals and well-trained volunteers, support the refugees' recovery by empowering them with tools and skills to cope with the traumas they have endured. They conducted daily activities for children that included recreational activities and non-formal educational activities. We led weekly activities for adults that included crisis intervention for individuals and families in need, as well as support group sessions which included gender and age sensitive groups for men, women and teenagers. From these group sessions, we were then able to earmark particularly vulnerable cases which we later treated on an individual case by case basis. We also conducted dyadic activities for infants and their primary caregivers. Furthermore, our team often assisted with translation and interpretation between other professionals and the refugees since our culture and language gave us an added benefit.



CAMPS & SHELTERS

Lesvos Solidarity – PIKPA Camp

PIKPA is an open refugee camp in Mytilene, Lesvos. It is a self-organised, autonomous space run by volunteers and is built on the principle of solidarity. PIKPA houses special vulnerable cases and seemed especially suitable for our work due to its nature and the fact that it is an independent camp rather than a governmental one. The camp had a real

need for mental health professionals. After initial Psychological First Aid (PFA) at the shore, port or rescue boat, we referred the most vulnerable individuals or families to PIKPA. Our mental health professionals supported the refugees to alleviate their pain and suffering and provide them with real tools to help them recover and regain the ability to resume and function normally.

Diavata Camp

In response to the consequences of the EU-Turkey deal we were one of the first NGOs to establish a base in northern Greece to assist and support thousands of refugees who were stuck in Greece, mainly in the northern border. In March, we decided to open a base in Diavata Camp near Thessaloniki, where we provided a more in-depth intervention for psychological cases and further psychosocial support in the camp. In addition, through activities of drama, arts and music for both adults and children we tried to enhance the sense of stability and normalcy among the community. One of the most important interventions we accomplished was to create a makeshift school in which enabled the kids to learn and be more aware of their surroundings, and simultaneously giving the parents a sense of responsibility. We gathered 120 children every day.

Elpída Center

Elpída Center is an abandoned 6,000-square-foot textile factory that was repurposed to serve as a housing and medical facility for refugees and can host up to 700 refugees at full capacity. Our team offered cultural mediation



sessions, support in the medical clinic, and recreational activities based on professional methods at the center.

Flozenia Housing Project

Flozenia is a housing project in Thessaloniki that at the time of our work in 2016 was made up of 64 individuals, mostly women and children. We worked there for two months where our professional volunteers offered psycho-education and psychosocial support to adults and children in the building.

Moria Camp and Kara Tape Camp

In both camps, Humanity Crew provided psychological first aid and emergency intervention upon request. Our volunteers were called almost daily to the camps to offer our work.



MORE ABOUT OUR WORK ON THE EMERGENCY RESCUE BOATS

On board rescue boats our work focused on two main steps: PFA that is given immediately upon arrival, and a second more thorough intervention at a later stage at camp. Early on we teamed up with Proactiva Open Arms, a Spanish organization of lifeguards, who operate

rescue boats in the Aegean Sea. We started our treatment immediately on board their boats when the refugees boarded mid-sea. Any delay in treatment, involving such traumatic experiences, can later lead to severe psychological/psychiatric damage, which if left unaddressed can resurface weeks, months or years later as post-traumatic stress disorder and other major psychiatric disorders.

MORE ABOUT OUR WORK IN THE HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

Very much like our work on the shores, ports and rescue boats, many of the worst cases arrive to Lesbos's main hospital in the capital, Mytilene. We worked with medical and support staff there to identify vulnerable cases that require urgent psychological intervention. In many cases we help people by simply speaking their language and assuaging their fears, or connecting them to relatives or missing family members. Our main aim was to reassure patients and induce in them a feeling of control, and reduce their feelings of helplessness and uncertainty. We also assisted in translating and in cultural mediation between the patients and the staff members at the hospital. We also accompanied patients to medical tests, and provided psychosocial support to hospitalized refugees and outpatient referrals.

Furthermore, we initiated our "New Born Baby" project which aimed to improve the bonding and the early attachment of new born babies and their mothers in exceptional circumstances.

We provided baby basket for new-borns which included new clothes for the baby and clean new bottles for feeding. We also gave special care for new mothers by assisting them with their baby, helping them bond, and providing her with tools and tips in how to care for her new child which is important in strengthening the bond between mother and child and prevention of attachment disorder in the future.

MORE ABOUT OUR WORK WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Part of our 2016 activities was aimed at other professionals and volunteers. We provided enrichment workshops in Greece. Open for all the volunteers in our vicinity, our mental health experts implemented educational workshops in mental health related issues and identification of vulnerable cases, as well as cultural mediated tips on working with Syrian and other Arabic speaking people.





MORE ABOUT OUR WORK ON THE SHORES AND PORTS

We set up mental health mobile clinics set up by our crew along the shores and ports of Lesvos, in preparation for the refugees who land along the coastline. Before they board the buses on route to the camp we provide psychological first aid, much like urgent medical aid that must be administered in these situations to help prevent further damage and bring a degree of stability to a chaotic situation.



Trainings

and our Volunteers

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In 2016 we launched a training program for our volunteers run by mental health professionals. We have had 10 trainings in 2016 which involved 40-50 participants each and covered 20 hours of material. All the participants come from diverse backgrounds and age groups. The trainings offered background information about the camps, hospitals and shorelines we work at,

the current refugee situation, intensive Psychological First Aid (PFA), resilience tools, appropriate recreational activities, psycho-educational activities, intervention tools, EMDR elements, cultural mediation tools, and the do's and don'ts of volunteering in a sensitive environment. The trainings deemed very successful. While the majority of our participants do not get the chance to volunteer with



us because of limited space and funding, the training is fruitful nevertheless as a general learning experience and is always commended by them. All our trainings are led by professionals in the field of refugee mental health.

We have gone on over 180 missions with over 150 qualified volunteers and mental health professionals. Our volun-



teers build programs for the refugees within their own line of work and propose it to the mental health coordinator once they arrive in Greece in order to better adapt it before implementation. In addition, our volunteers assist us locally where we often hold events and/or workshops for the local community to raise awareness. Humanity Crew would not be what it is now without the constant support of our volunteers both internationally and locally.



FUNDING

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Community Based Support

All of Humanity Crew's funding in 2016 came from community based support; our entire organization ran on private funding and community led support from our volunteers and friends of the organization. Our volunteers were handed donation books in the trainings, and are then responsible to raise money for the organization. We are very thankful

and amazed by the support shown in 2016 for the organization by the community.

Shera El Amal

Through the [Mossawa Center](#), who have worked with us since our establishment as a young initiative and have supported our mission and believed in our ca-

pacities, a group of university students raised money for the Syrian refugees and invested it in Humanity Crew at the start of our mission. The money they raised helped us set up the organization and begin our work in Greece.

Kinder USA

During Eid al-Fitr in 2016, Humanity Crew, in partnership with [Kinder USA](#), threw a party for the residents and distributed 1,000 bags, colouring kits, and drawing books to children at PIKPA and Diavata camps. The main emphasis was on a quality school bag which Kinder USA helped fund. It benefited the children, ages 4-17, on a daily and practical basis in both camps, and was also a quality item for their own personal use.

Project Hope

Young children who are experiencing disruption and loss depend on their parents to maintain a sense of continuity and wellbeing. While parents in refugee circumstances may feel helpless to meet all their children's needs, research shows us that even in tumultuous and traumatic times, children who stay in their parents' care do better than those sent to more comfortable placements

in the care of others. One of the ways that children avoid long term traumatic stress (reactions) disorders, is to have nurturing adults acknowledge their fears and losses, and provide a comfort object that children can cuddle and care for. In partnership with Bank Street College in New York, and Translators Without Borders, we crowd-funded to raise money so we can distribute 500 fliers to parents in Arabic and Farsi explaining the importance of their care and transitional objects. We distributed 320 teddy bears as transitional objects to 320 children aged 0-4.



RAISING AWARENESS

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Humanity Crew staff have been active in raising awareness both locally and abroad in regard to the current mental health status of the refugees and the importance of mental health in that context. In 2016, we held over 30 talks in schools, embassies, conferences, and private NGOs on the importance of our work and the importance of mental health support for refugees. Some of the conferences we took part in in 2016 included a talk by the CEO, Adv.

Jammal, in the Civil Society Forum in the EU parliament in Brussels under the title of "The Dark Side of the Refugee Crisis", and a lecture by Co-founder and mental health director, Dr. Daod, under the title of "Infant Mental Health Policy Under Stable and Peaceful Conditions and During Humanitarian Crises" at the 15th World Congress of the World Association for Infant Mental Health in Prague.

RESEARCH AND THE FOUR STEP APPROACH

Professional challenges surfaced when attempting to address vulnerable cases of acute/complex trauma providing the required, longer than usual, psychosocial support, while respecting the desire of the person to move forward on the route to their country of destination. For that reason, the professional team of Humanity Crew, led by psychiatrist Dr. Essam Daod, drafted the Four Step Approach in 2016. The Four Step Approach is an intervention plan that will allow the detection of vulnerable cases and provide them with the necessary psychological first aid to prevent an escalation in their mental health condition.

IN THE NEWS

Humanity Crew received a lot of attention in the media in 2016. We were featured in over 16 news stories including a [Huffington Post article](#), the cover of Amnesty International print magazine, and a big piece on [Haaretz](#). For more news coverage please click [here](#).

AWARD

In late 2016 Humanity Crew was presented the “Defenders of Refugee Rights” award at the 4th edition of Cities Defending Human Rights in Barcelona. The “Cities Defending Human Rights” project, which takes place in many municipalities around Catalonia was the first official recognition of our work. Upon accepting the award, we toured Catalonia where we held talks for two weeks, speaking to young people, visiting many cities, and meeting human rights activists.





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