

Moving moments.

Syrian children inspire on the road to recovery at Bader Center

Where healing is fostered through
belonging and care...

By Jessica Brown

Educator & Early Childhood Lecturer



The author, left, with Bader Centre volunteer manager.

The Bader Centre for Therapy Management is an independent Jordanian charity that facilitates the recovery of Syrian women and children injured during the war. The centre was established in late 2013 with the ambition to create a safe space for women and children to access physical therapy rehabilitation. The centre relies on private donations and has support both locally and on the global front.

January 2015. It had been nearly 12 months to the day since I last visited the Bader centre in Jordan. Amman, the city's capital, had yet again greeted me with snow as I disembarked from my flight in January 2015. My immediate thoughts reached to the Syrian refugees and how they must be suffering, living in tents in the Zaatari camp with poor or non-existent heating.

I made the journey to the warm and welcoming Bader centre shortly after my arrival in the country. I was eager to see the familiar faces of the staff and observe the changes which they were keenly talking about the last time we met. New staff had joined the team and the latest, physiotherapist Noura, detailed her passion for the centre in only a few short months of working there. She herself is Syrian and a recent graduate from Damascus University. She has been living in Amman with her family for 2 years, since fleeing the conflict. Noura still has family in Syria and is clearly distressed when recounting phone calls to her Aunts. The situation as she describes it, is not improving, or even staying constant, but is worsening - with unreliable electricity and heating plaguing the people in many cities.

The centre is now catering for outpatients as well as inpatients and the type of injuries that are being presented varies greatly. Noura describes one young boy (a past patient) who had among other injuries, lost one of his eyes. The generosity of global community members is inspiring, a medical facility in Switzerland designed and donated a high quality prosthetic eye, and a surgeon from Lebanon

voluntarily flew to Amman to conduct the operation. The confidence this gave him the therapist describes, is priceless and the smiles in his photo at the clinic support this.

The main rehabilitation room is fully equipped with donated equipment. Three young boys are in this space when I first enter, working with their therapists on the machines which assist them in using their new prosthetic limbs. Above the doorway to this room a hand drawn picture hangs, made by one of the children - you can easily pick the staff he has depicted and himself in a wheelchair, saying "Shukran" meaning thank you in Arabic.

The resilience of children still leaves me in awe. Despite the severe trauma Noor must harbour, she still smiles and laughs.

Gratitude to me is still the most palpable feeling in this space. Much has changed in the way of resources, and organisation of the centre but the same energy and homeliness has not been altered. There are more children here than before, three young boys, and three teenage girls. One of whom is a familiar face, as we had met last time I visited. Lina suffered spinal injuries and the Bader centre is certainly a home for her, as she has been here for more than 12 months receiving therapy. She is happy as she describes her

ability to now sit up on her own and take increasing steps each day. She is certainly thriving from having company her own age as well.

A two-year-old girl, Noor, her mother, Miriam and new born baby brother are also living at the centre. Miriam was three months pregnant when she left Syria, because shrapnel hit an artery in Noor's neck, leaving her temporarily paralysed - the deep scars of this injury are still clearly evident. She also suffered wounds in her stomach which will require further surgery to address problems with her intestines. None of this gruesome trauma is recognisable in little Noor who is happy to give away many smiles and friendly waves, although we have never met. She clearly has a close bond with the staff at the centre, who are freely giving of their love. The resilience of children still leaves me in awe. Despite the severe trauma she must harbour, she still smiles and laughs.

Her therapist describes her amazing progress and ability to stand and walk, due to her active nature and intuition to play. Engagement through play is the basis of therapy with the youngest of children at the centre. These children's developmental pathways have been drastically altered due to the war. But the universal nature of children to play still prevails. Children

throughout the world have the innate right to play, and the devastation of war is taking this from Syrian families.

These children's developmental pathways have been drastically altered due to the war, yet the universal nature to play still prevails.

The Bader centre provides transport for the children to visit their parents who live in the refugee camp and similarly for parents to travel to the centre. One mother has two young children with her in Zaatari; her husband however is in a hospital in Amman and her son is receiving therapy at Bader centre. She is no doubt exhausted and emotionally drained from travelling between her dispersed family members. Each family's situation is unique, yet all tied together with the same thread of trauma and upheaval - a devastating displacement as a result of the conflict in their homeland. The Bader centre offers a beacon of light to many in a situation surrounded by much darkness.

Twitter: @ensania

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ensania.2013>

Email the author: jessica.brown@mq.edu.au

* The real names of patients have not been used in this article for their privacy and safety.

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