



The AWB Israel – West Bank Trauma Healing Project

We often read about violence, despair and political stalemate in this beautiful land. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and hopeless. And yet there are Israelis and Palestinians working together to transform conflict into cooperation.



Women in Jenba, West Bank at an AWB mobile clinic

Acupuncturists Without Borders (AWB) has been providing trauma healing acupuncture services in Israel and the West Bank for the past three years. We believe that unresolved trauma is often the obstacle to individual, community and national wellbeing. Most people we work with in Israel say theirs is a “PTSD” country. Palestinians say the same.

The one thing that all people in this land share is trauma, from war, displacement, dispossession of land, violent attacks and transgenerational trauma. Trauma keeps fear alive and prevents human contact, diminishing the chances for co-existence and peace.

You might ask how acupuncture treatment can change this dynamic?

Acupuncture helps “reset” the nervous system and allows the rational part of the brain to work better. We don't think well when we're afraid. We are wired to fight, flee or freeze to survive. While this is helpful when we have to deal with acute threats, it can undermine our ability to solve long-term problems, keeping us in an irrational response mode.

As one Palestinian peace activist from Jenin said,

“Most of us just want peace. But often the leaders want to keep the conflict (going). They want us to be afraid so we don't see each other as people. It is not rational.”

AWB believes the key to bringing the *Medicine of Peace* to communities throughout the United States and the world is to treat *everyone* to reduce the toxic effects of trauma. In Israel and the West Bank, we treat refugees, Palestinians, settlers, soldiers, survivors of terror, and at-risk youth. Our work is apolitical and inclusive, fulfilling a challenging mission given that everything in this region is politically and emotionally charged.



Israeli acupuncturists trained by AWB, May 2016

Here's what AWB did in 2017 in Israel and the West Bank:

- AWB trained over 50 acupuncturists to provide treatments in their communities, **totaling 120 Jewish and Arab Israelis trained** since 2014.
- **AWB Israel** was formed as a non-profit organization in Israel, dedicated to providing treatment, training and education to Israelis and Palestinians about the benefits of trauma healing.
- **Over 2000 treatments were provided** in Palestinian villages, in the Otniel settlement, for Holocaust survivors in the Galilee, for Israeli soldiers with severe PTSD, for at-risk youth in central Israel, and in other communities.
- AWB Israel recently started a weekly treatment **clinic affiliated with Tel Hashomer**, the Israeli version of the VA, where veterans receive treatment for trauma.
- AWB took 15 acupuncturists from the US and Europe on a two-week **World Healing Exchange** to Israel and the West Bank. The group provided clinic services, learned about indigenous healing practices and met with coexistence and peace activists throughout the region.
- AWB cultivated organizational relationships with Israeli and Palestinian **social justice activists** to bring trauma healing acupuncture services to more **under-resourced communities**.



AWB volunteer providing treatments to acupuncture students in East Jerusalem, March 2017

In 2018 AWB plans to:

- Set up **dedicated trainings** for medical practitioners in the West Bank and Israeli Arab acupuncturists who have asked AWB for special trainings.
- Mentor and **support healing circles** and trauma healing projects created by practitioners in Israel and the West Bank.
- Collaborate with local social justice and peace activists to **further this work** throughout the region.

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