

07:31 , 06.24.10



# activism מעורבות

Print

## Big Heart



'Not afraid to come.'  
Aram and his mom  
Photo: Sheila  
Shalhevet

[click here to enlarge text](#)

### 'Israel's answer to flotillas – helping Gaza's children'

**Regional Cooperation Ministry, EU to allocate about \$750,000 towards 'Save a Child's Heart' project, which helps fund surgery for Palestinian children, as well as kids from developing nations. Mother of Kurdish child: We didn't keep our trip to Israel a secret**

Meital Yasur-Beit Or

Some 250 children suffering from severe and life-threatening heart defects will be given the opportunity to undergo surgery thanks to the "Save a Child's Heart" project at the Edith Wolfson Medical Center in Holon.

The association, which was founded 15 years ago, has helped fund surgeries for more than 2,400 children – about half of them from the Palestinian Authority and Gaza and the rest from some 40 developing nations, including Iraq, Morocco, Angola and Romania.

The EU is expected to issue a 400,000 euro (\$496,000) grant towards the project, while Minister for Regional Cooperation Silvan Shalom announced his office would allocate NIS 1 million (about \$260,000) to the program, enough to perform an additional 250 surgeries a year.

"At a time when the world is debating [Israel's](#) actions in Gaza, our answer to the next flotilla is this project and saving children from Gaza," Minister Shalom said during a ceremony held at the hospital Sunday. "We are not engaged in a conflict with the Palestinian people, but with the Palestinian Authority and Hamas."



**Girl from El Salvador during ceremony (Photo: Sheila Shalhevet)**

Funds transferred by the EU will be used to train Palestinian physicians, to operate on Palestinian children with heart problems and to support joint Israeli-Palestinian community activity.

European Union Ambassador to Israel Andrew Standley said during the ceremony at Wolfson that the project proves that Israel and the Palestinians can cooperate.

One of those who underwent surgery at the hospital is nine-year-old Kurdish boy Aram, who made his way to Israel along with his mother Shawana from Iraq, via Jordan. "His condition has improved. Before the operation he had trouble breathing. Now he is breathing better," said the mother.

"I am glad he had the operation and I was not afraid to come to Israel. Everyone knew that we were travelling to Israel. We did not keep it a secret," she added.

According to a price list published by the Health Ministry, open heart surgery costs NIS 67,000 (\$18,000), but the cost of an operation for children who are part of the project is only NIS 27,000 (\$7,000).

Wolfson Medical Center Director Dr. Yitzhak Berlovitz said, "We are proud of this project, and hope other hospitals will take an active role in it."

[Back](#)