



Bethlehem Animal and Environment Association

About Bethlehem Animal and Environment Association

Established in 2013 by Diana Babish, Bethlehem Animal and Environment Association (BAEA) is a registered non-profit (BL-3374-EN) that aims to eliminate the suffering of homeless animals in Palestine by advocating for **animal protection laws, educating the next generation, building a foster network, and operating an animal shelter**. To date, BAEA rescued more than **800 dogs** and **200 cats**, about 80% of whom found loving homes, some having traveled as far as the US and Canada to be with their new families.

Government-Sponsored Animal Abuse in Palestine

Thousands homeless animals roam the streets of the Palestinian Territories. These animals

have no legal protection against abuse. Without comprehensive spay/neuter programs or animal shelter networks, Palestinian citizens attempt to control stray animal populations by embarking on citizen-led and government-sponsored campaigns to shoot and poison the animals. Dogs and cats subject to this treatment die in agony -- those poisoned convulse in seizures, while those shot are often wounded and left to die slowly from their injuries. These tactics are so normalized that Palestinian municipalities post notices



warning citizens not to be alarmed by impending gunfire, and post pictures of bloodied dogs on their Facebook pages, claiming to have made streets safer for people.

BAEA's Focus Areas

a. Advocacy : BAEA is a trailblazer for animal rights causes in Palestine, urging individual municipalities and the Palestinian Authority as a whole to adopt humane population control methods that have become standard practice in more developed regions of the world, but are unheard of in Palestine. Diana's relentless campaigning resulted in three municipalities (Hebron, Jenin, and Beit Jala) to commit verbally to partner with BAEA in order to replace poisoning and shooting with spay and neuter programs.

b. Education : Until BAEA started to garner mainstream attention, Palestinians felt either ambivalent or helpless when confronted with the plight of the animals who surround them. Those who were troubled by the sight of distressed animals were forced to look the other way as they had no avenue for helping them. Today, BAEA's Facebook page has over 10,000 followers. The platform is used to educate the community about animal issues, and to connect concerned citizens who wish to help a specific animal with a network of people who are able to do so. Additionally, BAEA partners with local schools to educate children on the importance of caring for animals, and to shift deep-seated beliefs that animals are a nuisance and not deserving of humane treatment.



c. Shelter and Foster Network : BAEA operates one of only two animal shelters in the West Bank of the Palestinian Territories and utilizes its vast Facebook following to find foster homes for the rescued animals. Being one of the only animal rescue organizations in Palestine, BAEA is unable to help the tens of thousands of homeless animals who reside there, so it is forced to prioritize those who are injured, sick, or live in extremely hostile environments. Currently, approximately 80 dogs and cats live in the shelter, and even more are fostered in homes throughout Palestine and Israel. Between 10-15 dogs are presented at weekly adoption day events.

Future Projects

We hope to expand to build a new state-of-the-art animal shelter on the outskirts of Bethlehem where more dogs and cats could be housed. The shelter would have its own clinic to avoid the lengthy and troublesome journeys to our partner clinics in Israel, and would provide training and employment opportunities for Palestinian vets. We will continue to pressure Palestinian municipalities and the Palestinian Authority to partner with us in order to execute humane spay and neuter programs instead of the prevailing shooting and poisoning campaigns.

