RED NOSES
In Laughter there is Hope
مؤسسة الأنوف الحمراء الدولية–فلسطين

## A Small Nose, A Big Impact: How Laughter Changed Me and Those Around Me

*Written by Mays Assi, a healthcare clown*

Beautiful stories often begin with difficult beginnings, and my journey as a healthcare clown with RED NOSES Palestine (RNPS)—what I usually call " The Big Heart"—was the start of an unexpected path, full of wonder and joy.

When I auditioned in 2016, fear and questions overwhelmed me:
*Will I be able to make people laugh?*
*Do I have the courage to be a source of joy amid suffering?*

But that experience was the key to a new world—one that holds real stories of happiness and transformation. Despite my professional background in theatre, I had inner doubts. But they faded the moment I put on the red nose for the first time. It wasn't just a theatrical prop; it became a symbol of internal transformation. It was as if I had discovered a warmer, more genuine version of myself.

**The Red Nose: A Tool for Connection, Not for Performance**

The red nose gave me a new perspective on the world. It became a human bridge, connecting me with others. My eyes became a window for real communication. The moment I wore the nose, the rules of interaction changed: no formal words, no barriers—just looks filled with love.

In the world of healthcare clowning, we learn that looking into someone's eyes is the highest form of empathy. People usually fear eye contact, but the red nose breaks that barrier. It turns a glance into a silent embrace, full of hope.

## Laughter Heals

I began to realise that laughter isn't just entertainment—it's a form of healing. During one of our visits to a children's hospital, the atmosphere was heavy with sadness and anxiety. But as soon as we started playing and laughing, smiles began to bloom, and the children's eyes sparkled with hope.

One little boy once told me:
"*I feel like I can face my illness when I laugh*."

That sentence made me realise that laughter is stronger than any medicine. And its effect wasn't limited to children. During our visits to elderly care homes, we saw how a single laugh could bring life back to eyes dimmed by waiting. One elderly woman told me:
"*I haven't laughed from the heart in so long… today, you brought my youth back*."

## Science Confirms: Laughter Is a Healing Tool

Psychological studies have confirmed that laughter reduces stress and anxiety levels. In my own experience, these were tangible observations. Every laugh led to a breakthrough in human relationships—it rebuilt trust and opened direct ways of communication.

Whenever I put on the red nose, I could see how people's moods shifted. This dynamic highlights the power of laughter in strengthening social bonds. Science shows that laughter reduces cortisol (the stress hormone), boosts immunity, lifts mood, reduces depression, increases social connection, and builds trust between patients and those around them.

## Art as a Life Mission

Over time, the magic of the red nose began to deeply affect my life. I felt like I was taking part in creating solutions, and the smiles I left behind were signs that a better life was possible. I wasn't just a clown—I was a source of joy and change in a world full of challenges.

Every day became a new opportunity to share that positive spirit, to spread my wings like a butterfly, touch hearts, and bring hope into people's lives. Every laugh we revive, every memory we create, reflects the powerful impact of positivity in society and its role in improving mental well-being.

My journey with the "Red Noses" has shown me that laughter is one of the most powerful remedies we have to face life's hardships. It also taught me that when we open our hearts to others—through the magic of the red nose—life can be completely transformed. With every new experience, I realise I'm helping to create brighter, happier worlds.