

CEO CLIMBS FROM THE LOWEST TO THE HIGHEST FOR CANCER

By Ghazal Kawar

SYRACUSE, N.Y., Sept. 27, 2017 — How far do people go to save lives? In 2013, 22

Jordanians volunteered to climb the highest point on earth, Mount Everest, starting from the lowest point, the Dead Sea. The team wanted to raise donations for the growth and development of the King Hussein Cancer Foundation.

Ihab Hinnawi, the CEO of Umniah Telecommunications Company in Jordan, decided to join From the Lowest Point to the Highest Point for Cancer Expedition, which was run and led by Mostafa Salameh, the first Jordanian to climb and reach the top of Mount Everest.

“I think that Cancer is one of the most disastrous diseases out there, especially because of our poor economy. I wanted to help in expanding the foundation and to make a difference, so I decided to join Mostafa in his journey and support his project,” said Hinnawi.

Hinnawi further explained that one of the foundation’s main issues is space. This project helped in erecting two new buildings for the King Hussein Cancer Foundation, which increased the center’s capacity to treat more patients. According to Hinnawi, the foundation is one of the most underfunded medical organizations in Jordan, so the proceeds of this expedition went directly to the foundation.

Before beginning his journey, Hinnawi changed his lifestyle, quit smoking, and signed up professional training for this particular project. During his journey, Hinnawi suffered extreme physical and emotional challenges, but, according to Hinnawi, the thought

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of doing this for an important cause, as well as his family's full support, kept him determined all the time.

Hinnawi stated that this exhausting 18-day journey was the hardest thing he had ever done. He, along with the other members, faced different temperatures from sweltering to freezing. Depending on the time, place and activity, the weather might drop to -30 degrees Celsius (-22 degrees Fahrenheit) and suddenly rise to 30 degrees Celsius (85 degrees Fahrenheit). They had to carry everything throughout the trip. Hinnawi witnessed and experienced a lot of frightening moments, from frostbites to near-death experiences.

"Facing the cold was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. Considering that I live in Jordan, surviving the cold was a miracle. I have never felt anything like it before," said Hinnawi. "But it was definitely a wonderful experience."

According to Hinnawi, one of the team members would wake up every two hours in order to guard the site from polar bears. He described this job as "probably the worst thing to do."

Jumana Twal, the CEO and founder of Bidaya Corporate Communications and Hinnawi's wife, said, "At first I did not agree to this, I was beyond afraid. But he explained to me that it was for the King Hussein Cancer Foundation, and then I remembered that he lost both his parents to cancer. I took it as a life-changing experience for him. My kids loved the idea and supported him all the way through. I can't find the words to describe how proud we are of him. ... If only you saw my tears the second I saw him walk out of the airport."

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Once the team arrived Queen Alia International Airport in Jordan on Thursday, April 13, 2013, they were greeted by Her Royal Highness Princess Dina Mired, the General Director of the the King Hussein Cancer Foundation, friends and families.

Salameh said, "It was great having Ihab with us, I could not imagine what it would have been like without him. The journey was very challenging, but he made it the best challenging experience of my life. Once we reached the Base Camp, Ihab was the first one to raise one of the sponsors' flags. He was the one that helped us overcome our physical tiredness with his optimistic attitude."

Climbing Mount Everest from the lowest point on earth to the highest was a challenging experience for Hinnawi and the other team members. According to Hinnawi, he witnessed and experienced "the best of the worst, the best of the best and the worst of the worst."

"Regardless of the hardships, challenges and obstacles we went through as a team, I can't find the words to describe the beauty of this journey. The whole trip was as if it was the most beautiful place I have ever seen," said Hinnawi.

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