

First Gazan Child Receives UK Treatment Amid Ongoing War Injuries Crisis

August 1, 2025

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A 15-year-old boy from Gaza is believed to be the first war-injured child from the region to receive medical treatment in the United Kingdom, marking a significant moment in the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Majd al-Shaghnoobi arrived in London this week for reconstructive surgery after reportedly suffering severe facial and leg injuries from a tank shell blast in 2024. His treatment is part of a privately funded initiative to bring critically injured children from Gaza to the UK for life-saving care.

Majd was injured in February 2024 while seeking humanitarian aid in northern Gaza when a shell exploded nearby. The blast shattered his jaw and severely wounded his leg. He was initially treated in Gaza before being transferred to Egypt with Israeli coordination for further care. Now, he has been admitted to Great Ormond Street Hospital in London for facial reconstructive surgery, led by a volunteer team of surgeons specialising in craniofacial, plastic, and orthodontic procedures.

His arrival follows efforts by Project Pure Hope, a volunteer-led initiative established in November 2023. The project aims to transport injured and chronically ill children from Gaza to the UK for specialised treatment. Funded entirely by private donations, the group has coordinated Majd's case and that of other children, working in partnership with UK-based hospitals and professionals offering their services pro bono.

According to Project Pure Hope, while countries including the United States, Belgium, Italy, and Switzerland have reportedly responded to the medical needs of Gaza's children, the UK had not admitted any for war-related care until now. The organisation welcomed the British government's reported pledge, under Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, to evacuate more children for treatment, although few details have been released.

Professor Noor ul Owase Jeelani, a pediatric neurosurgeon at Great Ormond Street and Majd's lead surgeon, expressed hope that surgery would help the teenager eat, speak, and express himself again, though not fully restoring normal function. "It won't be completely normal, but hopefully he'll be able to feed himself and speak, and his facial expressions will be better," Jeelani said. "Hopefully that's going to make a big impact on how he lives and on his future."

The professor also voiced concern over the delay in extending help to Gaza's children, citing the UK's strong pediatric healthcare system and its support for victims of conflict in Ukraine and Israel. "As a doctor and as a human, I don't quite understand why it's taken us over 20 months to get to this stage," he said.

The humanitarian need remains critical. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), over 50,000 children have reportedly been killed or injured since the conflict began in 2023. Project Pure Hope has identified 30 critically wounded children who require urgent medical care outside Gaza and is calling for expedited evacuation efforts. "Every day of delay risks the lives and futures of children who deserve a chance to live, to recover, and to rebuild a life," said co-founder Omar Din.

In April, two more girls, Rama, 13, and Ghena, 5, were evacuated from Gaza to the UK. Both had longstanding medical conditions and were unable to receive adequate treatment in Gaza due to the collapse of the region's healthcare infrastructure. Since arriving in London, they have undergone surgeries funded by private donors and overseen by volunteer doctors. Their health has shown signs of improvement, though they remain emotionally distressed over family members still in Gaza.

UN experts have recently raised concern over increasing hunger, malnutrition, and disease among Gaza's 2.1 million residents. Children like Rama and Majd continue to express fear and anxiety for loved ones left behind, many of whom face daily struggles to access food and shelter.

While the UK's medical system has supported a limited number of cases, advocates say broader action is needed. The situation underscores the importance of international cooperation and humanitarian commitment amid one of the world's most protracted conflicts.