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UK Expands Effort to Evacuate Injured Gazan Children for Medical Treatment

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The British government is set to expand a medical evacuation program that will bring more injured children from Gaza to the United Kingdom for urgent treatment, following increasing international pressure and a private initiative already underway. Plans are expected to be formally announced within weeks, with up to 300 children potentially eligible for specialist care in British hospitals.

Under the proposal, each child would be accompanied by a parent or guardian, and possibly siblings if necessary. Security and biometric screening will be conducted by the Home Office before the families travel. The effort is intended to operate alongside the work of Project Pure Hope, a private group that has already facilitated the evacuation of a small number of children to the UK for critical treatment.

The new government plan comes amid widespread concern over the scale of injuries in Gaza. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), more than 50,000 children have been killed or wounded since the start of the conflict in October 2023. While the number of children receiving aid in the UK is expected to rise, government officials acknowledge this is a limited measure given the wider crisis.

A government spokesperson confirmed: “We are taking forward plans to evacuate more children from Gaza who require urgent medical care, including bringing them to the UK for specialist treatment where that is the best option for their care.”

So far, only three children have been brought to the UK through Project Pure Hope’s efforts. Roughly 5,000 children have been evacuated from Gaza overall, with most transferred to Egypt and Gulf countries for medical care. Project Pure Hope, which is funding treatment through private donations, has long campaigned to establish a formal route to bring 30 to 50 children to the UK for care.

Some medical professionals have voiced concern that the initiative, while welcome, does not address the broader humanitarian need. Waseem Saeed, a British surgeon who recently visited Gaza, described the effort as “a mere drop in the ocean,” and called for an end to hostilities as the only meaningful solution to the growing health crisis.

Nevertheless, the UK’s move to accept more children for treatment has received cross-party political backing. Over 100 Members of Parliament have signed a letter urging the government to fast-track the program. In addition, the government has pledged £1 million to support World Health Organization (WHO) efforts to treat evacuated patients in Egypt.

While some in the public may express concern about resources being stretched in the UK’s healthcare system, officials insist that only those in the most critical condition will be admitted, and only when treatment in the UK is deemed the best medical option. The initiative is part of what the Prime Minister has described as a “moral duty” to provide urgent care to children caught in the crossfire of conflict.