# UK admits first children from Gaza for urgent medical treatment amid criticism over limited support



Rana Qudieh and Haneen Abed, recently arrived in north London from Gaza, have been baking together, creating feteer meshaltet—layers of flaky filo pastry drizzled with honey, a symbol of traditional Palestinian hospitality. Their small household includes their children: Qudieh’s 13-year-old daughter Rama, who suffers from a chronic bowel condition, and Abed’s two daughters, five-year-old Ghena, born with a congenital eye condition, and her 12-year-old sister, Hala. The families’ arrival at the end of April 2025 marked a poignant milestone: they are the first—and so far only—children from Gaza permitted medical treatment in the UK since the war erupted in October 2023.

Ghena underwent surgery at Great Ormond Street Hospital to relieve pressure on her optic nerve, an operation impossible to carry out in Gaza where healthcare infrastructure has been devastated by the conflict. Rama’s serious gastrointestinal condition is still under investigation after a biopsy was conducted under general anaesthetic. These cases highlight the dire shortages in Gaza’s hospitals, many of which have been damaged or destroyed amid the ongoing violence. Medical care in the region is largely restricted to the most critical cases, making treatment for chronic or elective conditions extremely difficult or impossible to obtain.

Their evacuation and ongoing medical care are thanks to Project Pure Hope, a UK-based humanitarian initiative founded by healthcare professionals and humanitarians, which has raised £1.5 million privately to cover the costs of evacuation, accommodation, and private medical treatment for children from Gaza. The initiative stresses that this funding incurs no cost to the NHS or UK taxpayers. According to the project’s leadership, the fundraising effort “has given Rama a new life,” a sentiment echoed by her mother, who said through an interpreter that she did not expect her daughter to receive such care or to have a long life given the conditions in Gaza.

Despite such efforts, the UK government has approved visas for only these two children and one more set to arrive soon, while other countries in Europe, including Spain, Italy, Ireland, Norway, and Romania, have accepted significantly more children from Gaza. Over 7,000 patients have been evacuated from Gaza since the conflict began, 5,000 of whom are children, mostly to countries like Egypt, the UAE, and Qatar. Activists and medical professionals have openly questioned the UK’s limited role. Victoria Rose, a London-based consultant plastic surgeon who has worked extensively in Gaza, expressed bewilderment at the UK’s reluctance to take in more children for treatment. She highlighted the pressing need for timely interventions, such as cleft lip and palate repairs, which require surgeries at specific early developmental stages that can be conducted efficiently in UK hospitals renowned for their expertise.

“Yes, the UK has some of the best cleft lip and palate surgeons in the world,” she said. “We just need to help out, as Europe has done. We haven’t really taken our fair share.” Rose criticised the government’s slow response, noting that Italy has stepped in to assist children for whom UK visas were delayed. She also pointed out the seeming contradiction of the government’s willingness to fund high-cost military equipment, such as parts for F-35 fighter jets, while resisting fully supporting humanitarian medical evacuations. Human rights groups have challenged the UK about continuing to supply military aircraft parts that may be used by Israel amidst the ongoing conflict, framing the medical evacuation policies as part of broader ethical questions.

The Palestine Children’s Relief Fund (PCRF) and the World Health Organization collaborated with Project Pure Hope to coordinate the evacuation. The young patients arrived in London from Egypt with their mothers and, in the case of Abed’s family, accompanied by a sibling. Both children are now being treated privately in specialised units staffed by multidisciplinary teams that include surgeons, paediatricians, and psychological support workers. Temporary housing, translation services, and mental health support are also being provided, ensuring a holistic care environment beyond just medical interventions.

The success of these evacuations was the culmination of 17 months of sustained negotiation and organisation involving UK clinicians, government bodies, humanitarian groups, and international partners. Project Pure Hope continues to push for more children to be allowed access to medical care in the UK, calling on the government to approve larger cohorts rather than requiring individual permissions case by case. Their continued efforts aim to provide urgently needed treatment to severely affected children from Gaza, highlighting both the overwhelming humanitarian need and the complex political challenges that accompany such life-saving interventions.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/meet-the-only-two-children-from-gaza-allowed-into-uk-for-medical-treatment), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgpy75v0nxo), [[6]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2025/05/01/two-girls-evacuated-from-gaza-for-urgent-medical-treatment-in-uk-breakthrough/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/meet-the-only-two-children-from-gaza-allowed-into-uk-for-medical-treatment), [[4]](https://www.pcrf.net/pcrf-in-the-news/two-palestinian-children-arrive-uk.html), [[6]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2025/05/01/two-girls-evacuated-from-gaza-for-urgent-medical-treatment-in-uk-breakthrough/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/meet-the-only-two-children-from-gaza-allowed-into-uk-for-medical-treatment), [[2]](https://www.purehope.co.uk/), [[6]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2025/05/01/two-girls-evacuated-from-gaza-for-urgent-medical-treatment-in-uk-breakthrough/), [[7]](https://www.virgin.com/virgin-unite/latest/every-child-deserves-hope-project-pure-hope-and-a-lifeline-for-gazas)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/meet-the-only-two-children-from-gaza-allowed-into-uk-for-medical-treatment), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgpy75v0nxo), [[5]](https://news.sky.com/story/two-children-from-gaza-enter-uk-for-specialist-medical-care-for-first-time-after-months-of-struggle-13359013)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/meet-the-only-two-children-from-gaza-allowed-into-uk-for-medical-treatment), [[5]](https://news.sky.com/story/two-children-from-gaza-enter-uk-for-specialist-medical-care-for-first-time-after-months-of-struggle-13359013)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/meet-the-only-two-children-from-gaza-allowed-into-uk-for-medical-treatment), [[4]](https://www.pcrf.net/pcrf-in-the-news/two-palestinian-children-arrive-uk.html), [[6]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2025/05/01/two-girls-evacuated-from-gaza-for-urgent-medical-treatment-in-uk-breakthrough/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/meet-the-only-two-children-from-gaza-allowed-into-uk-for-medical-treatment), [[2]](https://www.purehope.co.uk/), [[4]](https://www.pcrf.net/pcrf-in-the-news/two-palestinian-children-arrive-uk.html), [[6]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2025/05/01/two-girls-evacuated-from-gaza-for-urgent-medical-treatment-in-uk-breakthrough/), [[7]](https://www.virgin.com/virgin-unite/latest/every-child-deserves-hope-project-pure-hope-and-a-lifeline-for-gazas)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/meet-the-only-two-children-from-gaza-allowed-into-uk-for-medical-treatment> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.purehope.co.uk/> - Project Pure Hope is a UK-based humanitarian initiative led by healthcare professionals and humanitarians, aiming to provide life-saving medical care to children affected by the Middle East conflict. In April 2025, they successfully evacuated two Palestinian children from Gaza to the UK for urgent medical treatment, marking the first such evacuation since the conflict began in October 2023. The initiative is funded entirely through private donations, ensuring no cost to the NHS or UK taxpayer. Their mission continues to focus on delivering urgent medical attention to severely affected children in the region.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgpy75v0nxo> - In May 2025, two Palestinian girls, Ghena and Rama, were brought to the UK for private medical treatment, becoming the first children from Gaza to be granted temporary UK visas since the outbreak of war in October 2023. Ghena, aged five, required treatment for her optic nerve, while 12-year-old Rama needed surgery for a bowel condition. Both conditions were beyond the capabilities of Gaza's strained healthcare system, which has been under immense pressure due to the ongoing conflict. The evacuation was facilitated by Project Pure Hope, a humanitarian initiative dedicated to providing medical care to children affected by the Middle East conflict.
4. <https://www.pcrf.net/pcrf-in-the-news/two-palestinian-children-arrive-uk.html> - The Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) announced the successful evacuation of two Palestinian children from Gaza to the UK for critical medical treatment. This evacuation was made possible through PCRF’s collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and in partnership with Project Pure Hope. Ghena, aged five, and Rama, aged 12, arrived in London from Egypt, accompanied by their mothers and a sibling. Their conditions required urgent, highly specialized treatment unavailable in Gaza, where the healthcare system has been severely impacted by the ongoing conflict. Both children are receiving care in the private wings of leading London hospitals, supported by multidisciplinary teams including surgical, pediatric, and psychological specialists.
5. <https://news.sky.com/story/two-children-from-gaza-enter-uk-for-specialist-medical-care-for-first-time-after-months-of-struggle-13359013> - In May 2025, two children from Gaza, Ghena and Rama, entered the UK for specialist medical care, marking the first such entry since the conflict between Israel and Hamas began. The process took 17 months, with Project Pure Hope, a charity comprising medical professionals and humanitarians, facilitating the evacuation. The children arrived in London from Cairo, accompanied by their mothers. Ghena, aged five, required treatment for her optic nerve, while 12-year-old Rama needed surgery for a bowel condition. Both conditions were beyond the capabilities of Gaza's healthcare system, which has been under immense pressure due to the ongoing conflict. The UK government had not previously approved such evacuations, making this a significant breakthrough.
6. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2025/05/01/two-girls-evacuated-from-gaza-for-urgent-medical-treatment-in-uk-breakthrough/> - In May 2025, two Palestinian girls, Ghena and Rama, were evacuated from Gaza to the UK for urgent medical treatment, marking a significant breakthrough. The evacuation was facilitated by Project Pure Hope, a humanitarian initiative that had been lobbying the UK government for months to approve such evacuations. The girls were transferred to Egypt before traveling to the UK, accompanied by their mothers and one sibling. Ghena, aged five, needed treatment on an optical nerve to save her sight, while 12-year-old Rama required an operation on her bowel. They are now receiving privately funded specialist care in private wings of leading London hospitals, supported by teams specializing in surgery, pediatrics, and psychological health. Temporary housing, interpreters, and mental health services have also been provided. All costs, including evacuation, were covered by private charitable donations.
7. <https://www.virgin.com/virgin-unite/latest/every-child-deserves-hope-project-pure-hope-and-a-lifeline-for-gazas> - Project Pure Hope, established in 2023 by a coalition of NHS clinicians, healthcare leaders, and humanitarian advocates, has facilitated medical treatment for injured children from Gaza in Italy, the UAE, and Jordan. In May 2025, the initiative successfully evacuated two young girls from Gaza to the UK for urgent medical care, marking the first time children from Gaza have been safely evacuated to the UK for medical treatment. The evacuation was the result of 17 months of sustained coordination between UK clinicians, government agencies, and international humanitarian organizations. The initiative is funded entirely through private donations, ensuring no cost to the NHS or UK taxpayer. The mission continues to focus on delivering urgent medical attention to severely affected children in the region.