

# A journey to restore hope

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OUR WORK IN  
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN  
TERRITORIES

Mohamed in his temporary shelter in Gaza | © HI

Muhammad is a young man full of energy and hope. HI helped him recover from a devastating injury. He tells his story.

Since October 7 and the escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas, at least 38,848 Palestinians have been killed – including at least 10,000 children - and over 89,459 injured in the continuous bombing of Gaza by Israeli forces. This deadly offensive comes in the wake of a massive attack launched on Israel by Hamas, in which 1,200 Israelis were killed and 240 Israelis and foreign nationals were taken hostage.

## The start of the ordeal

Late February, I went to inspect my house damaged by bombing, hoping to collect some firewood for cooking. Little did I know that this visit would mark the beginning of a painful and challenging journey. One minute I was rummaging through the ruins and the next I was in hospital, screaming and passing out with the pain. I later learned that I'd been injured in the bombing of my neighbours' house. I was left with a comminuted shaft fracture in my left leg.

Unfortunately, the first attempt to fix my leg through external fixation surgery was unsuccessful. The procedure left me with serious complications, including multiple infections and stiffness in my entire left knee joint. The constant pain and lack of progress left me feeling defeated and hopeless.

Mid-March, I underwent another surgery; this time an open reduction and internal fixation procedure. The operation involved inserting an intramedullary rod to stabilize the fracture. Despite an improvement in the stability of my leg, I was in hospital for 50 days. This prolonged hospitalisation took a toll on my mental health, physical strength, and general well-being.

## A glimmer of hope: the HI team

In May, the HI team visited me to assess my condition. At this point, I was completely immobile and dependent on a wheelchair. During my first physical therapy assessment session, I repeatedly asked my therapist, Doaa, the same questions:

*"Will I be able to bend my knee again? Will I be able to walk on my own two feet? I am completely hopeless and helpless. I want to pray normally and not from a bed!"*

The assessment revealed an almost complete loss of knee flexion and severe muscle wasting due to multiple operations and recurring infections. To regain mobility, I began with knee flexion exercises from both supine and prone positions until I achieved a full range of motion. Gradually, my muscles strengthened, and I reached a point where I could stand on one leg.

## Progressing through mobility aids

Initially, I was trained to use a wheelchair and learned how to move around in it. As my strength and mobility improved, I progressed to using a walker, then two crutches, then a single crutch, and finally, I took my first steps without an assistive device. Each milestone was a triumph, bringing me closer to normality.

Today, I can go out with my friends, climb stairs and visit the doctor without assistance. I have returned to the mobility I had before the injury, thanks to the relentless efforts of the HI team and my determination to heal.

## Reflecting on my journey

Reflecting on this journey, I realize that regaining hope and mobility did not come easily. It required immense willpower and perseverance – and withstanding pain. However, the result was worth the struggle. The HI team was like a miracle for me, helping me reclaim my life and my dreams. I now appreciate the simple joys of walking, standing, and moving freely, which I once took for granted.

My story is a testament to the power of hope. No matter how dire the situation may seem, with the right support and sufficient determination, it is possible to overcome even the most challenging obstacles.

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## HI's activities in figures

Since October 2023, HI and partners has conducted sessions in risk education and protection against bombing for 84,000 children and 65,000 adults, including 1,400 persons with disabilities. Together with its partners, HI has also provided 11,000 wound dressings and nursing care sessions, 11,000 rehabilitation sessions, and more than 4,000 psychological first aid sessions. Our teams organised recreational activities for 83,000 children and 10,000 adults, including 900 adults with disabilities, and distributed 2,500 assistive devices in 10 months.