

After a serious injury, Thaer can now walk again thanks to HI

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OUR WORK IN
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN
TERRITORIES

Thaer during a rehabilitation session | © HI

Thaer was shot in the knee. After a painful medical journey, he can now walk normally, thanks to the support of HI's rehabilitation specialists.

Since October 7 and the escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas, at least 38,345 Palestinians have been killed – including at least 10,000 children - and over 88,000 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.

Thaer thought his life was over

Thaer Abu Shehadeh, 30, is from Gaza. Even before the escalation of violence last October, he had already been displaced and he was living in the Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City.

Thaer is married with two children. Before the war, he used to work in the most prestigious restaurants in Gaza as an assistant chef.



transformed into a designated emergency shelter. During these displacements, his priority was always to find enough food and essential supplies for his family.

A serious injury

Last January, Thaer was shot in the left knee by a sniper whilst out buying food for his family, causing a complex fracture to the left patella.

He was taken to hospital where he underwent surgery, and was then given a splint to stabilize his foot. But the injury was a disaster for Thaer, the only breadwinner in his family.

Fortunately, in March, HI's rehabilitation team reached out to Thaer in a UN shelter and he was assessed by specialists in physical therapy, occupational therapy and, psychological support.

The power of rehabilitation

Thaer was suffering from limited mobility in his left knee and the muscles in his left leg were wasting away.

Thaer was given seven rehabilitation sessions as part of HI's emergency programme in Gaza, during which a physical therapist worked on strengthening the muscles in his left leg and increasing the range of motion of his left knee joints.

An occupational therapist then showed him how to use the elbow crutches provided to him by HI, and psychological support sessions helped relieve his anxieties. Gradually, Thaer regained confidence.

"HI provided me with crutches and taught me how to use them, until I was finally able to walk without them. I used the crutches for around two and a half months."

Thaer now walks comfortably without his crutches. His leg has become strong enough to carry his weight and allow him to go about his daily activities. The range of motion of his left knee has increased from 30 degrees to 110 degrees.

"Without HI's intervention, things would have been worse, and walking might not have been possible. I was scared that I wouldn't receive the support I needed to recover, which affected my mental health, especially given the harsh circumstances we live in now. However, now I feel much better and I'd like to continue receiving support from HI."

Indeed, if the rehabilitation team had not intervened, Thaer would not have been able to bend his knee, walk with an elbow crutch and eventually walk independently without assistance.

Our actions in figures

Since October 2023, HI and partners have run sessions on risk education and protection against bombing for 84,000 children and 65,000 adults, including 1,400 people with disabilities. With its partners, HI has also provided 11,000 wound dressing and nursing care sessions, 11,000 rehabilitation sessions, and more than 4,000 psychological first aid sessions. HI's teams have further 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.