



9 July 2021 - Three-year-old Ameer is a refugee living in Khan Younis in the south of the Gaza Strip. In August 2019, he was diagnosed with a cancer in his right eye called a retinoblastoma. He had surgery outside the Gaza Strip at the time to remove the cancer, and received an ocular prosthesis – a custom-made ball that fits the socket to keep the shape of the eye. In January 2020, the cancer was found to have spread to Ameer’s left eye, and he had further surgery.

From March 2020, the prosthesis Ameer had for his left eye came out. After failed attempts to put the prosthesis back, doctors in the Gaza Strip provided a temporary solution with silicon – though this caused irritation and inflammation. In 2021, Ameer was referred to a clinic for eye prostheses at St John’s Eye Hospital in East Jerusalem.

Since February, Ameer’s family has made five applications to Israeli authorities for permits to exit the Gaza Strip. Four of those permit applications were not approved in time for the appointments, while on one occasion the hospital had to cancel. Ameer’s last appointment was scheduled for 16 May, during the escalation of violence and aerial bombardment of the Gaza Strip.

“My children were really scared during the attacks,” said Ameer’s mother. “I was scared too, but I couldn’t cry in front of them. In those times I told myself it was good we didn’t get a permit to leave. Imagine if I had been in the hospital in Jerusalem with my kids here under the airstrikes. It was a blessing that we were all together during those difficult days.”

Ameer’s family desperately wants him to receive care within the occupied Palestinian territory. During his initial treatment, Ameer had been referred to Egypt but difficult travel, long hospital stays and costs of copayments for care left his family facing heavy debts. Ameer’s mother explained:

“We stayed two months in Egypt the first time and 40 days the second time. We had to pay the costs of medical imaging, blood analysis and other treatments. We also needed to rent an apartment during the time there. In total we paid US\$3,500. We took out loans to pay but now we are swamped with large debts. My husband works at a small restaurant, the salary is around US\$10-15 per day to feed our whole family. In Egypt I was taking care of Ameer, but I worried about my four other children back in Gaza. My other kids love Ameer, and they take care of him and protect him.”□

Ameer's next appointment for a prosthesis fitting is on 11 July. The family is waiting for a response from Israeli authorities.

Sunday 19th of May 2024 01:19:41 AM