

9 August 2018, Gaza — Since the start of the demonstrations in Gaza on 30 March, 162 Palestinians have been killed and 17,259 injured as of 30 July, mainly as a result of live ammunition gunshot wounds and gas inhalation.

While many of those injured were treated and discharged at WHO-supported trauma stabilization posts near the frontlines, more than 9,000 patients required hospitalization, including 1,487 children. Critical injuries have left hundreds of men, women and children with amputated limbs, permanently paralyzed, or in need of limb reconstruction, requiring up to seven surgeries and years of rehabilitation. Many of them will be unable to receive the treatment they need due to limited access to health care outside Gaza.

Here are the stories of five children whose lives have been forever changed as a result of the conflict.

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Abdul-Rahman Nofal is an 11-year-old boy who lives close to the eastern border of Gaza. He loves to play football, but since the mass demonstrations started in March, he was too scared to play in the neighborhood. On 17 April, Abdul-Rahman's friends convinced him that the playground was far enough from the fence, and they started to play. One of the boys shot the ball too far and Abdul-Rahman started running to get it. He was not aware that the ball had landed near the fence until he found himself face-to-face with an Israeli soldier. Abdul-Rahman had no time to run before the soldier aimed his gun at Abdul-Rahman's leg and fired.

Because the bullet was fired at close range, Abdul-Rahman's leg shattered and needed to be amputated below the knee. He is now the youngest amputee as a result of the mass

demonstrations.

Abdul-Rahman cannot imagine his life without football. He wanted to grow up and be a professional football player. He feels anxious and frustrated when he sees his friends playing during the lunch break, since he can no longer join them.

Abdul-Rahman now dreams about becoming a journalist, so he can let the world know about what is happening in Gaza.

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Abdullah Elanqar is a 13-year-old boy who lives near the east border of Gaza City. He has five brothers and two sisters. His mother is a housewife and his father is unemployed, but his father works hard to find jobs every month to provide a basic income for the family.

When the demonstrations started, Abdullah would walk to the border every morning and collect leftover copper from wires and aluminum from drinking cans. By selling them, he was able to make just less than five US dollars a day.

On 3 May, Abdullah was collecting copper close to the fence. An Israeli soldier appeared from behind the fence and shot him in the leg at close range. Shocked at how badly Abdullah's leg was injured, the soldier crossed the fence and carried Abdullah to an Israeli hospital.

Not knowing where he was, Abdullah's family searched for him for hours. The hospital finally contacted them that afternoon, but they were not allowed to leave Gaza without a permit to travel to see Abdullah.

The injury was so severe that Abdullah's leg had to be amputated above the knee. He was alone for two days in the hospital after the operation, without his family. Abdullah's father received a permit on the third day and was finally able to see his son.

Abdullah is now back home, but nothing is the same for him. He cannot go out and look for copper pieces anymore, nor can he play with his neighborhood friends. He wanted to support his father financially, but now he feels that he is a burden on his family.

Abdullah suffers from psychological complications and needs long term physiotherapy and rehabilitation. His doctors say that he may be able to wear a prosthesis by next year, but this treatment is limited in Gaza.

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Hamza Alshokry is 19 years old, the youngest of seven siblings. His mother is a housewife and his father passed away, but they live on his retirement pension. When Hamza failed his secondary school exams and was unable to go to university, he decided to get his driving license and work as a taxi driver to start financially supporting his family.

On 14 May, Hamza and his friends participated in the mass demonstrations. Like many teenagers in Gaza, he dreams of an end to the blockade so that he can work or study outside. He believes that these demonstrations are the only peaceful way to protest against the blockade.

During the demonstration, a man standing next to Hamza was severely injured. Hamza tried to carry him to safety, but was also shot. The bullet entered Hamza's lower back and exited from his neck, cutting his spinal cord. Hamza is now quadriplegic, paralyzed in both arms and legs.

Two months after he was shot, Hamza is still in the intensive care unit at Al Shifa Hospital. His doctors say that he needs an advanced neurosurgical operation, which may help his spinal cord, but the treatment is not available locally in Gaza.

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Noor-Edeen Abu-Baker is a 16-year-old boy, the eldest of six siblings. His family believes that he will be a famous football player one day, and do everything they can to support his passion for football.

On 1 June, Noor-Edeen joined the mass demonstrations. On this day, large numbers of people participated in the demonstration, giving Noor-Edeen hope that together, they might be able to end the blockade and he might be able to discover the world outside Gaza.

When live bullets and tear gas were aimed at the demonstrators, Noor-Edeen hid behind a rock, thinking that he would be out of sight and safe. But a soldier shot him with a live bullet that smashed his left shoulder and exited through his neck.

Noor-Edeen is now quadriplegic, paralyzed in both arms and legs, and depends on a ventilation machine to stay alive. His family is desperate. A month and a half ago, they believed their son would grow up to become famous football player, and are now struggling to accept that he is irreversibly paralyzed.

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13-year-old Mohammed Abu-Hussain's father was killed by an Israeli rocket fire during the 2006 war in Gaza. Mohammed lives with his mother and seven siblings. His mother is unemployed and the family depends on small allowances from his father's retirement salary.

Mohammed's younger brother was injured by a gunshot wound during the mass demonstration on 30 March. The bullet damaged a nerve in his leg, causing complete loss of sensation and a drop foot. Angry and frustrated, Mohammed decided to participate in the mass demonstration.

On 29 June, as Mohammed and his four friends joined the demonstration, he was shot in his right leg. The injury was critical, and the leg had to be amputated above the knee. Mohammed said, "If my dad was alive, he wouldn't let the soldiers shoot me. I have asked my brothers to bury my leg by my dad's grave".

Mohammed's older brother usually finds him in bed watching videos of people with artificial limbs playing football. His doctors say that he needs long term psychological treatment, rehabilitation and physiotherapy.

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