

Mustafa Abed

Mustafa has had his life saved three times. The first time was in Iraq immediately after he was critically injured in the war, and then two times after that in Oregon. Mustafa is a symbol of the human cost of war and also of a family and a young man who teach so much about resilience.



Mustafa Abed is from Fallujah, Iraq. In the fall of 2004, the U.S. [heavily bombed](#) that city. Mustafa, like many thousands of other Iraqis, was caught in the crossfire of the U.S. war in their country. In 2004 Mustafa, then 2 years old, and his mother Nidhal were seriously wounded when they were hit by a bomb as they ran for cover. Mustafa lost his left leg and suffered critical internal injuries, including permanent loss of bowel and bladder function.

Mustafa's anguished parents were told that their son likely would not survive his injuries. Amazingly however, Mustafa did survive, but he remained critically ill and in severe pain for several years, as the medical care he required was not available in Iraq. His parents searched desperately all over Iraq to find care for their son. In 2008, they encountered a small American non-profit group, [No More Victims](#), who was working to help Iraqi children injured as a result of the U.S. war in Iraq. The goal of the organization was to help individual children through getting them needed medical care, as well as to educate about the human costs of war.



A group of volunteers—many from the pediatric health community—heard about No More Victims and formed a Portland, Oregon chapter in 2008. They organized to get the medical care Mustafa would need donated by local doctors and hospitals.

In the fall 2008, 5-year-old Mustafa came to Portland with his father, Ahmed. It turned out that Mustafa's injuries and the complications from them were far worse than was imagined. That fall, Mustafa received life-saving surgery and medical care. Everyone in Portland who met Mustafa and his father fell in love with them! In addition to receiving intensive medical care during their 3-month stay, Mustafa was honored by the Portland basketball team, the Trailblazers, Portland's Mayor issued a City Proclamation in his honor, high school students made him a friendship quilt, elementary students sent him poems and drawings, and all who met him fell in love with feisty and adorable Mustafa and the resilience he represented. One of the local Portland news stories from that time can be seen [here](#).

Mustafa and his father returned to their village in Iraq ravaged by years of war, occupation, poverty and devastation. The family had to flee their village on the outskirts of Fallujah and the Portland group lost all contact with them for about eight years. Then, quite a miracle occurred—a report on NPR NewsHour about Fallujah showed thousands of families living in tents in a refugee camp in the desert. The reporter zoomed in on one boy and his family—it was Mustafa—then 13 years old! The story was so amazing that NPR produced a special video about it called [Finding Mustafa](#).

Through the NPR journalist, Jane Arraf, the Portland group reconnected with the family in 2016. They learned that Mustafa was quite ill, the family was living in extreme poverty—often going days without food, and that medical supplies and health care were not available. Mustafa's mother, Nidhal was also suffering as a result of the injuries she had sustained in the bombing for which she had never been treated.



By 2016, No More Victims was no longer bringing children from Iraq, but the group in Portland re-convened on their own and started fundraising—as a project of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility--initially sending money to the family for the medical supplies Mustafa needed. Then in April 2018, they were able [to bring Mustafa and his mother, Nidhal](#), to Portland so they both could get the medical care they required.

Mustafa again was very ill and he spent six weeks in the hospital being treated for infections and undergoing two abdominal surgeries. He received wonderful medical care, and is now stable and doing well. His mother, Nidhal was also able to have orthopedic surgery to decrease pain and improve the function of her hand and arm that were badly wounded in the bomb blast. All the medical care has been donated by very generous medical providers in Portland and Eugene, OR.

In the fall of 2018, the informal group that brought Mustafa and Nidhal heard about and were very fortunate to join up with [Without Borders](#), who is serving as the fiscal sponsor of the Mustafa Abed project.

After nearly a year in Portland, Mustafa and Nidhal will return to Iraq and their family on March 7 2019. Once again, they have found a place in the hearts of all who know them, as they have taught us about courage, perseverance and love.

They affirmed our commitment to end war, as it is always sweet, innocent people like Mustafa and Nidhal who are its casualties. They also re-affirmed our understanding that, regardless of religion, nationality, race, language, or any other perceived difference, we are really all the same – sisters and brothers living together on this very small, incredibly broken, but still beautiful planet.

Now it is time to think seriously about their return to a war-ravaged village on the outskirts of Fallujah and what we can do. Mustafa and Nidhal's family are incredibly poor. They have virtually nothing. They live with others in their extended family in a home that was partially destroyed by the war; they have no kitchen, no bathing facilities and only one faucet of cold water. Ahmed (Mustafa's father) is a day laborer who is mostly unemployed. There are days the family has nothing to eat. And as if this weren't enough, they recently were informed that their 2-room home will soon be demolished to make room for a road!

Their needs are obviously enormous, but together we can once again make a big difference in the lives of this very special family.

We are asking for your help for Mustafa and his family to recover from the devastation of war and poverty and to rebuild their lives in Iraq in two very tangible and meaningful ways:

- To fund the construction of a modest home for Mustafa and his family. For \$50,000 they can build a house to accommodate the 10 people of the extended family who live there and, unlike their current partially destroyed home, it would have a bathroom and kitchen.
- To provide Mustafa with an ongoing supply of medically needed colostomy bags and urinary catheters. His medical supplies cost \$5000 per year.

The fundraising goal to support the family in these two important ways is \$55,000. This will go a long way toward helping Mustafa and his family regain some of what was stolen by war. They and we are so very grateful for all donations large and small so we might help heal the terrible wounds of war.

Thank you very much for your donation for Mustafa Abed through: <http://withoutborders.us>

