

# Globe-trotting philanthropist gives Iraqi boy new lease on life

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By Dina Al Wakeel

AMMAN — A beaming Majed Bahedh was full of thanks for the gift of life granted his son.

Were it not for the philanthropic efforts of a Cuban-American adventurer with a mission and the generosity of like-minded Jordanians, six-year-old Ihab Bahedh of Iraq may have faced an uncertain future.

According to Bahedh, Ihab required heart surgery to correct a malfunctioning heart valve.

"Ihab was supposed to go through this surgery three or four years ago, but due to some financial problems, the operation was postponed," said the father, an unemployed engineer who moved to Jordan from Iraq with his family a year ago.

"When we first came here we were only concerned about Ihab's health; we used to sit and pray and call on God to send somebody to help us. And thankfully God responded," noted Bahedh.

The boy's father met Cuban-American Danny Garcia at the Christian Missionary Church in Amman. The 57-year-old Garcia is a globe-trotter who has walked all over the world for the sake of children.

He says he walks to spread

Rafah on June 11 to collect the money needed for the operation. The journey took place at a precarious time. Besides the sweltering heat one must endure passing through the Jordan Valley westwards, tensions and violence in the Palestinian terri-

cost of the operation around JD5,000, doctors' fees.

"Thanks to God made all the effort to hospital and convince to conduct the surgery, little money we have will not suffer anyone the boy's father. He doctors who operate did so for free.

"It is good to see him like other children, although he is in pain at the moment, he will fully recover and be able to go to school," said Garcia.

"After the operation he perked up and began to eat and to play. It's a joy to see him live his life," added Garcia.

For Ihab's father, the success of the surgery was "like waking up from a nightmare that lasted for six whole years. Even when we went to sleep we close our eyes for fear."

Ihab is expected to be discharged from hospital in a couple of days.

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awareness about children's rights and world peace.

"Although Garcia has nothing to offer but his moral support, he promised to help us," said Bahedh.

Garcia took to the roads again, this time for Ihab, walking all the way to Jerusalem, Gaza and

territories where Israeli occupation forces have been launching brutal attacks on the Palestinians were risks Garcia faced.

When he returned to Jordan, Garcia and the boy's father were only able to collect JD1,500 and an extra JD1,000 donation from the church. The