

Lifeline: An Ambulance Driver's Journey to Asylum

News

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Before the war in Gaza, our client drove ambulances for Doctors Without Borders in the region. When conflict broke out in October 2023, he became something else entirely: a lifeline for the people around him. Jenner & Block would later take on his case pro bono, helping him navigate the complex path to asylum in the United States.

As bombing intensified, our client helped his Doctors Without Borders colleagues flee to the Khan Younis Training Center, driving vehicles through active conflict zones to get them to safety. When supplies began running low and tensions rose, he defused threats against his foreign colleagues peacefully. When food and water ran out, he drove through fighting and bombing to find provisions for his family and coworkers. Tragically, many of his extended family members did not survive the airstrikes.

Working with the Special Operations Association of America (SOAA), our client drove through heavy bombing to rescue the mother and uncle of an American soldier—family members trapped in Gaza whose father had already been killed by a gunshot wound. He got them safely out of Gaza and into Egypt. When the Rafah border crossing opened, our client personally shepherded his Doctors Without Borders colleagues through, speaking with officials and ensuring every colleague made it onto a bus before seeing to his own family's escape.

Our client entered the United States on a valid visa in early 2025. Knowing he could not safely return to Gaza and had no long-term status elsewhere, the Jenner team counseled him to affirmatively apply for asylum—a decision that carried profound personal cost. Filing meant potentially years of separation from his wife and three young children while his claim was adjudicated. Our client made the difficult choice to move forward.

The team filed his asylum application in June 2025. Six months later, they filed for work authorization—and despite delays and a challenging adjudication environment, secured his Employment Authorization Document in early 2026. Since then, they have obtained a Social Security Number for our client and helped him successfully apply for a REAL ID. His asylum application remains pending as affirmative asylum cases nationwide have been paused.

Our client's case reflects both the human cost of the conflict in Gaza and the complex, often uncertain path that awaits those who seek protection in the United States. For a man who risked his life repeatedly to protect others—colleagues, strangers, and an American soldier's family—the road to safety has been anything but straightforward.

The Jenner team included Partner Sati Harutyunyan, Associate Carolina Abboud, Assistant Shoeba Hassan, and Coordinator Sabrin Ali.

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