



# Ham & Highgate

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BRITAIN'S NUMBER ONE IN WIMBLEDON DREAM TIE

## NEWS 11

### Former refugee has eyes on Iraq

PEOPLE with eye problems in Iraq are the latest to benefit from good work at the Royal Free.

Ophthalmic surgeon Haidar Al Hakim at the Hampstead hospital is hoping to raise £20,000 to buy a specialist corrective laser eye machine that can treat glaucoma, detached retinas and diabetic retinopathy.

It will be set up in a community clinic in Najaf, southern Iraq, where many people do not have access to the treatment.

"I see this as a journey, the machine travelling all the way to Najaf, and the parallel journey of local people – the children, women, and the elderly who will make their way to the clinic to have their treatment and who'll have their lives quite literally transformed," said Dr Hakim.

The doctor and his family arrived in the UK in the 1970s as refugees from Saddam Hussein's regime.

After a trip to his homeland in 2004 he resolved to help rectify the shortfall in medical facilities, particularly in the south of the country.

During the visit he found years of dictatorship, war and civil unrest had all but wiped out the healthcare infrastructure.

He and his colleagues studied blindness and visual impairment in the over-50s and discovered that if the current situation continued, it would take 159 years to clear the current backlog of adults visually impaired by cataracts.

Following his return to the UK, he founded the Al Hasan Foundation with the aim of providing ophthalmic care, training, research and the establishment of a community eye clinic in Najaf.

To make a donation to the Bringing Sight to Sore Eyes appeal visit [www.justgiving.com/bringingsighttosoreeyes](http://www.justgiving.com/bringingsighttosoreeyes).

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