

MONTHLY REPORT

July 2018

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory



3,098

referrals issued to Gaza patients to health facilities outside the Palestinian Ministry of Health



53%

of Gaza patient and companion permit applications to Israeli authorities for exit via Erez approved

60% Gaza patients
47% Gaza patient companions



82%

of West Bank patient and companion permit applications to Israeli authorities approved



12

Gaza patients called for security interview, 1 approved and 1 denied

IN FOCUS

Patients injured in the Great March of Return continue to face increased barriers to access

Part 1 Referrals

June Referrals by the Ministry of Health

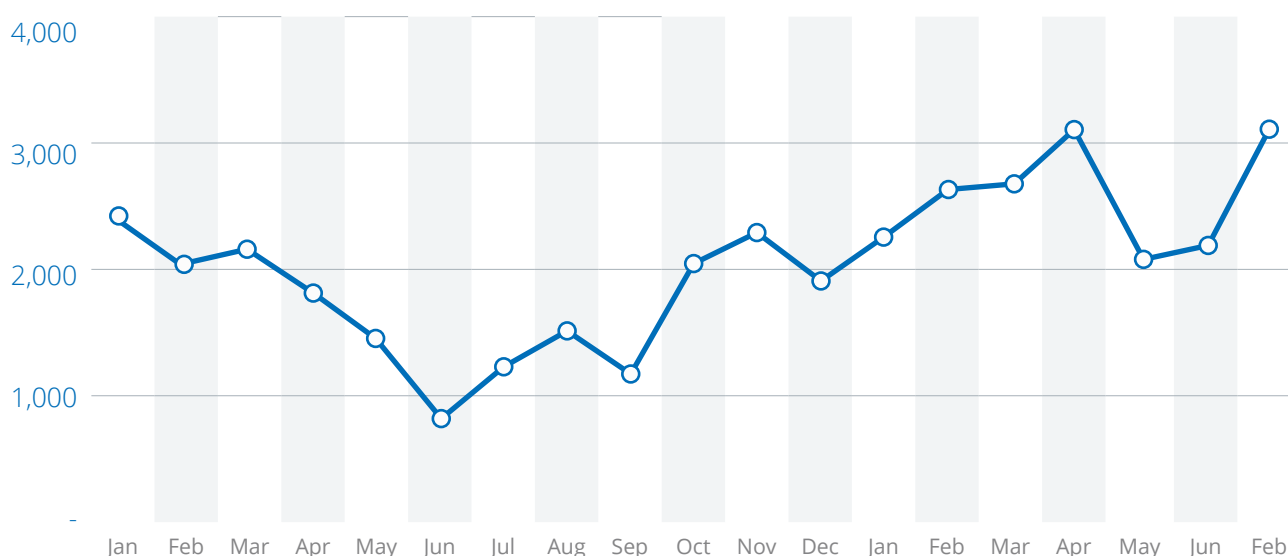
In July, the Palestinian Ministry of Health approved 3,098 referral requests for Palestinian patients from Gaza to non-Ministry of Health facilities with an estimated cost of 11,510,711 NIS, the highest number of referrals issued for Gaza patients in one month ever. There was a significant increase in referrals to Egypt, from 4% of referrals in the first quarter of 2018 to 15% in July, with an easing of access through Rafah terminal to Egypt. A further 1,979 (64%) required access through Erez crossing to reach hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, while 665 (21%) were referred to non-Ministry of Health facilities in Gaza. 41% of referrals were for female patients; 26% were for children under the age of 18 years and 23% were for patients aged 60 years or older. A fifth (19%) of referrals were for cancer treatment and follow up, 14% were for orthopaedics, and 9% for heart catheterization.



3,098
referrals

approved for financial coverage
for Gaza patients outside the
Palestinian Ministry of Health

Chart 1: Total number of referrals approved for Gaza patients, Jan 2017 - July 2018



Part 2 ACCESS

The Gaza Strip

Of 2,336 applications to cross Erez for health care in July, almost a third (30%) were for children under age of 18 and more than one in six (18%) were for patients over the age of 60. Under half (46%) of applications were for female patients and 92% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. 45 applications (2% of the total) in July were for permits for those injured during demonstrations needing referral outside Gaza via Erez.

Three in every five (62%) applications to cross Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, just over a fifth (22%) were for Israeli hospitals and one in six (16%) were for hospitals in the West Bank. Makassed Hospital (29%) and Augusta Victoria Hospital (26%), both in East Jerusalem, were the receiving hospitals for more than half of referrals. Permit applications for the top five needed specialties accounted for two-thirds of referrals (66%): oncology (31%); orthopaedics (10%); paediatrics (9%); haematology (8%); and cardiology (8%). The remaining 34% were for 24 other specialties.

Approved permit applications: 1,404 (718 male; 686 female), or 60% of the 2,336 applications to cross Erez in July 2018 were approved. Chart 2 shows a 12-month trend of Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications. Two out of five (39%) of permits approved were for children under age of 18 and almost a quarter (23%) were for elderly people over 60 years of age. Some specialties are more likely to be approved for Israeli permits. In July, 75% of applications were approved for paediatrics, and 71% for oncology and haematology, compared to 47% for ophthalmology, 45% for neurosurgery and 32% for orthopaedics.

 **1,404**
patients applications

to Israeli authorities to cross
Erez to access health care

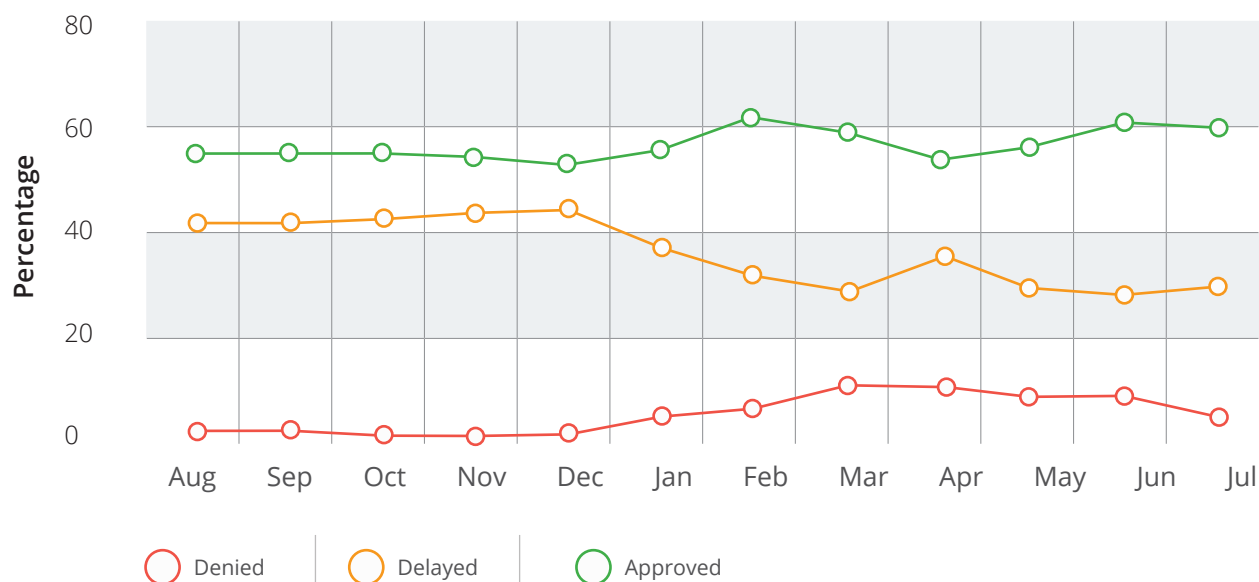
 **60%**
approved

 **6%**
denied

 **34%**
delayed

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, Aug 2017- Jul 2018



Denied care: 148 patient applications (97 male; 51 female), or 6% of the total, were denied permission to cross Erez for health care in July. Those denied included 11 children under the age of 18 years and 11 patients aged 60 years or older. A fifth (20%) of those denied had appointments for orthopaedics, 18% for cancer treatment and investigation, and 14% for neurosurgery.


Delayed care: 784 patient applications (447 male; 337 female), or 34% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. Of these, 152 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 80 applications were for patients aged 60 years or older. Of the 784 delayed patients, 23% had appointments for oncology, 16% for orthopaedics and 8% for ophthalmology. Almost two thirds (64%) of delayed patients submitted their applications more than 15 days prior to their hospital appointment.

Security interrogation

12 adult patients (4 male; 8 female) were called for security interview by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS). Five patients had been referred for cancer treatment or investigation, two for general surgery and one each for heart surgery, nuclear medicine, neurosurgery, plastic surgery and blood disorders (haematology). One of the 12 applications was approved, one was denied and 10 remained pending during the month.

 **12**


patients called for security
interrogation

 **11 not approved**

 **2,727**
patient companion
applications

to Israeli authorities to cross
Erez to accompany patients

 **47% approved**

 **8% denied**

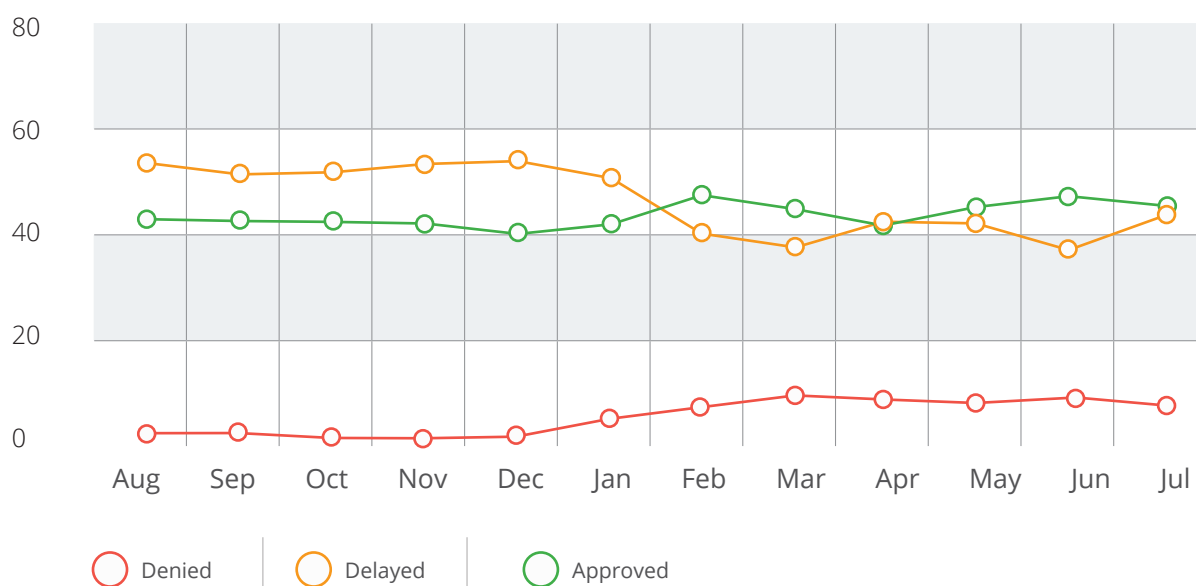
 **45% delayed**

Patient companions:

In July, there were 2,727 applications to Israeli authorities by companions for permits to cross Erez to accompany patients. These applications include parents or other companions applying to accompany children. Only one companion is permitted to accompany each Gaza patient and permits are conditional on security clearance. In July, 1,269 (47%) patient companion applications were approved, 220 applications (8%) were denied and 1,238 (45%) remained pending on the date of the patient's medical appointment. Chart 3 shows the trend over the last 12 months for Israeli responses to patient companion applications.


Chart 3


Israeli responses to Gaza patient companion applications, August 2017- July 2018



Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,476 Gaza patients and 1,326 companions crossed Erez in July to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. 81 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulances, with 78 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 27 days for daytime working hours and closed on four days (four Saturdays).

 **1,476**
patients
crossed Erez for health care

 **1,326**
patient companions
crossed Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



The Rafah border terminal was open in both directions for 23 days in July. According to the terminal authority, 5,099 travelers crossed towards Egypt, 66% of the number of travelers in the previous month. Of these, 151 were patients seeking health care with 106 companions. 139 of those patients were transferred by ambulance to the Egyptian side of the terminal. Since mid-April this year, 94 patients injured during the Great March of Return attempted to cross Rafah terminal towards Egypt but at least 15 of them were returned by Egyptian authorities. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah terminal during the month.

The West Bank

In July, there were 19,007 applications by West Bank patients and patient companions to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. Restrictions on the movement of Palestinians from the West Bank to Israel and East Jerusalem are less severe for certain sections of the population. Many women older than 50 years of age and men older than 55 years of age are exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday or before 8am.

Of the 19,007 applications, 15,534 (81.7%) were approved, 3,365 (17.7%) were unsuccessful and 108 (0.6%) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.



19,007

patient and companion
applications

to Israeli authorities to access
health care in East Jerusalem
and Israel



81.7% approved



17.7% denied



0.6% pending

at the time of monthly
reporting

In Focus

Patients injured in the Great March of Return face increased barriers to access

Erez crossing: From the beginning of the Great March of Return on 30th March until 7th August 2018, there have been 216 permit applications for 183 patients injured during the demonstrations to exit Gaza via Erez checkpoint through the Palestinian Patient Liaison Office. Of the 216 patient applications, 33 (15%) were approved for 32 patients, which is significantly lower than the overall approval rate for the first half of 2018 (59%). 87 (40%) patient applications were denied, which is significantly higher than the overall denial rate of 9% for the first half of 2018. 96 applications (44%) remained pending.

24 applications were for 21 children under the age of 18 years. 177 of those applying were male patients and 6 were female patients.

The largest single reason for the referral of injured patients was orthopedic surgery (120), followed by vascular surgery (50), see Table 1 below.

Table 1

Reason for referral out of Gaza of those injured during demonstrations for the great March of return

Of the 216 applications, 166 (77%) had initial appointments in East Jerusalem and 50 (23%) had initial appointments at hospitals in the West Bank. Two-thirds of appointments (143) were at Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem; 15% (32) were at Al Istishari Hospital in Ramallah; with remaining appointments at six other Palestinian hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Those who referred for ICU were the most likely to be approved (14 out of 20), while those referred for orthopedics were the least likely to be approved (3 out of 120). Only 6 out of the 50 needed referrals for vascular surgery were approved.

Evacuation to Jordan: In May, the Palestinian Ministry of Health provided a list of 34 names of injured patients for special coordination and evacuation to Jordan for health care. The Palestinian MoH reports 29 were successfully evacuated. These 34 patients were not registered at the Palestinian Liaison Office, which usually coordinates patient applications for Israeli permits.

Rafah crossing: From 30th March to 31st July, 94 injured patients attempted to cross Rafah terminal to access health care in Egypt. 15 were denied exit from Gaza by Egyptian authorities.

A total of 140 injured patients succeeded to exit Gaza for health care: 61 exited via Erez crossing and 79 through Rafah terminal.

Reason for referral	Number of patients applications	Percentage
Orthopaedics	120	56%
Vascular surgery	50	23%
ICU	20	9%
General surgery	12	6%
Neurosurgery	5	2%
Neurology	3	1%
Internal medicine	2	1%
Maxillofacial surgery	2	1%
Urology	2	1%
Total	216	100%

