



MONTHLY REPORT

November 2018

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **2,124**

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

 **55%**

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

62% Gaza patients

49% Gaza patient companions

 **80%**

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

 **3**

Gaza patient called for security interview, all delayed

IN FOCUS

13 year-old boy lost his leg when shot playing football, unable to access care outside Gaza

Part 1 Referrals

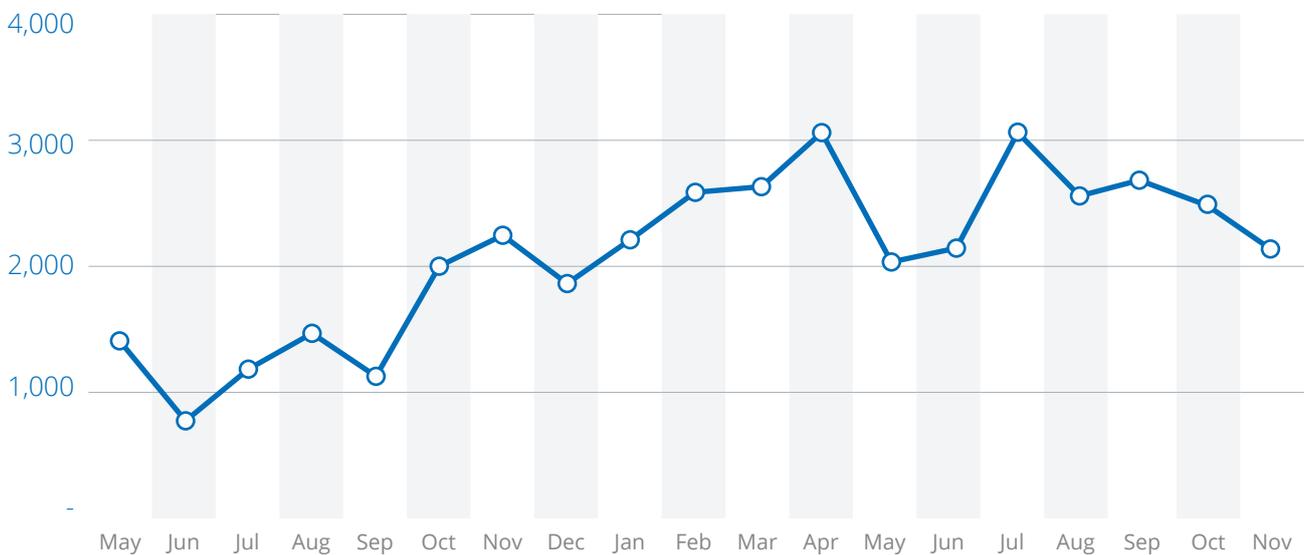
November Referrals by the Ministry of Health

In November, the Palestinian Ministry of Health approved 2,124 referrals for Gaza patients to non-Ministry of Health facilities with an estimated cost of 11,654,697 NIS. The average monthly number of referrals for Gaza patients in 2018 has been significantly higher than the monthly average for 2017, with 2,567 referrals per month in the first 11 months of 2018 compared to 1,709 per month in 2017. 1,685 (79%) required access through Erez crossing to reach hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, while 130 (6%) required access through Rafah terminal to access health care in Egypt. Chart 1 shows the number of referral documents issued to patients in Gaza from May 2017 to November 2018.

 **2,124**
referrals

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

Chart 1: Total number of referrals approved for Gaza patients, May 2017 - November 2018



Part 2 ACCESS

The Gaza Strip

Of 2,519 applications to cross Erez for health care in November, 29% were for children under age of 18 and 16% were for patients aged 60 years or older. 43% of applications were for female patients and 92% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Three-fifths (60%) of applications to cross Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, a fifth (20%) were for West Bank hospitals and a fifth (19%) were for hospitals in Israel. Makassed Hospital (32%) and Augusta Victoria Hospital (22%), both in East Jerusalem, received more than half of referrals. Permit applications for the top five specialties accounted for 61% of referrals: oncology (26%); orthopaedics (12%); paediatrics (9%); haematology (7%) and cardiology (7%). The remaining 39% referrals were for 27 other specialties.

Approved permit applications: 1,561 (819 male; 742 female), or 62% of the 2,519 applications to cross Erez in November 2018 were approved. Chart 2 shows a 12-month trend for Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications. Over a third (35%) of permits approved were for children under age of 18 and a fifth (20%) were for people aged 60 years or older.

2,519
patients applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to access health care

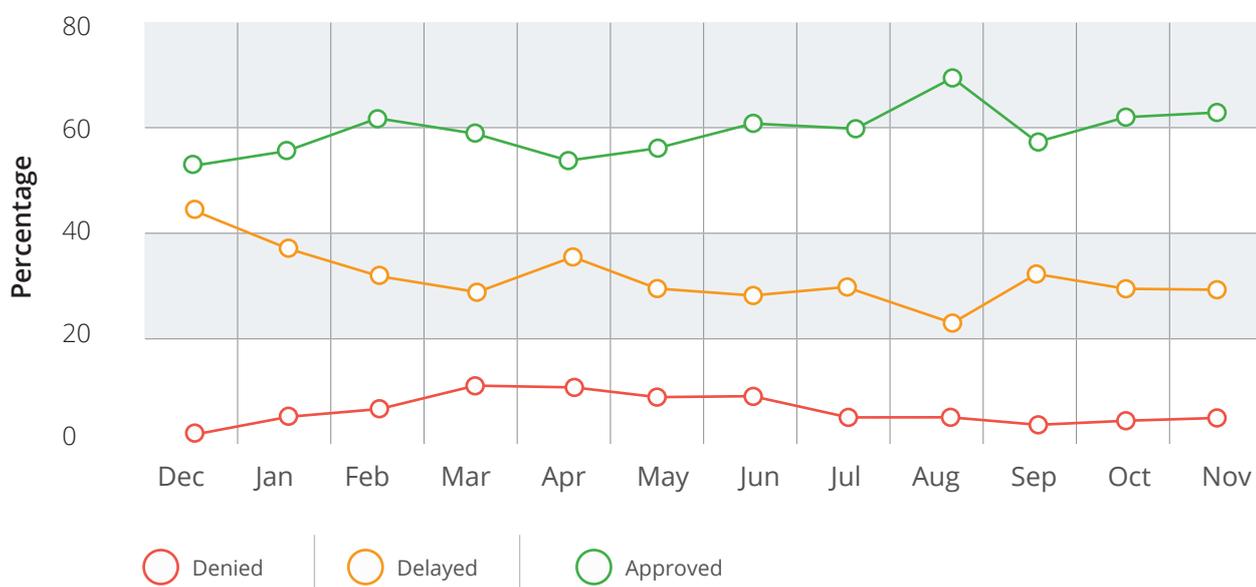
62%
approved

7%
denied

31%
delayed

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, December 2017- November 2018



Denied care: 180 patient applications (133 male; 47 female), or 7% of the total, were denied permission to cross Erez for health care in November. Those denied included 7 children under the age of 18 years and 10 patients aged 60 years or older. 27% of denied applications were for appointments in orthopaedics, 23% for neurosurgery, 9% for ophthalmology, 8% for cancer treatment and investigation and 7% for general surgery. More than 96% of denied permit applications were for appointments at hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Delayed care: 778 patient applications (478 male; 300 female), or 31% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. Of these, 188 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 74 applications were for patients aged 60 years or older. 18% of those delayed had appointments in orthopaedics, 16% for oncology, 7% for ophthalmology, 7% for general surgery, and 7% for cardiology. The remaining 45% were for 21 other specialties.

Access for those injured during demonstrations: 51 permit applications (2% of the total) in November were for those injured during demonstrations. The approval rate for this group was significantly lower than the overall approval rate in November: 4 of 51 (8% of) applications were approved; 6 (12%) denied; and 41 (80%) delayed. As of 30 November, according to Gaza's Coordination and Liaison Office, there had been 386 applications to Israeli authorities by those injured in demonstrations to exit Gaza via Erez crossing to access health care. Of those applications, 78 (20%) were approved, 122 (32%) were denied and 186 (48%) were delayed.¹

Security interrogation

In November, three patients were called for security interrogation as a prerequisite to travel for health care: a 30-year-old man with Hodgkin's lymphoma, a 51-year-old man with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and a 49-year-old woman with cancer breast. None of these patients' applications was approved.

Patient companions:

In November, there were 2,836 permit applications to Israeli authorities 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 November, 1,386 (49%) patient companion applications were approved, 256 applications (9%) were denied and the remaining 1,194 (42%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's application. Chart 3 shows the trend over the last 12 months for Israeli responses to patient companion applications.

 **3**

patient called for security interrogation

 **All delayed**

 **2,836**
patient companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients

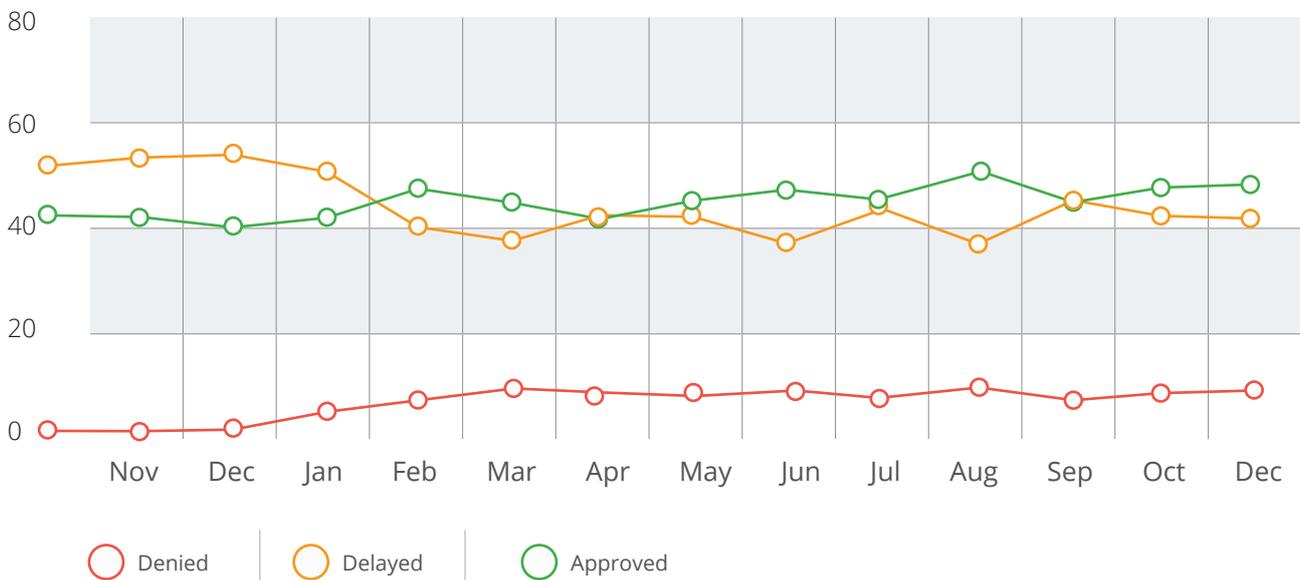
 **49% approved**

 **9% denied**

 **42% delayed**

Chart 3

Israeli responses to Gaza patient companion applications, December 2017- November 2018



Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,558 Gaza patients and 1,348 companions crossed Erez in November to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of these, 75 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 69 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 26 days for daytime working hours and closed on four days (four Saturdays).

 **1,558**
patients
crossed Erez for health care

 **1,348**
patient companions
crossed Erez

¹ Data provided by the Palestinian Coordination and Liaison Office, Gaza

Rafah crossing – Egypt



Rafah border terminal was open in both directions for 20 days in November and was closed for 10 days (9 Fridays and Saturdays and one holiday). According to the terminal authority, 4,440 travellers crossed towards Egypt, among them 103 patients crossing for health care with 111 companions. 87 patients with 85 companions crossed the terminal by ambulance. Of the 103 patients, 21 were injured in the Great March of Return, which raises the total number of those injured in demonstrations seeking health care in Egypt to 235 since mid-April this year. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah terminal during the month.

The West Bank

In November, there were 16,936 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 exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday or before 8am.

Of the 16,936 applications, 13,571 (80%) were approved, 2,527 (15%) were unsuccessful and 838 (5%) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.

 **16,936**
patient and companion
applications

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

 **80% approved**

 **15% denied**

 **5% pending**
at the time of monthly
reporting

In Focus

13-year-old Abdurahman lost his leg from a bullet wound and needed treatment outside Gaza



On Tuesday, April 17, after school, 13-year-old Abdurahman went to play football near the Gaza fence with Israel. The ball flew close to the fence and when Abdurahman went to pick it up, he was shot in the leg.

He was brought to hospital, where doctors initially felt that it would be possible to save his leg. Abdurahman was referred for treatment outside Gaza, but his first application for an Israeli permit to exit was unsuccessful.

His second application to Israeli authorities for a permit to exit Gaza for healthcare was approved, but by this time Abdurahman's leg had become infected. He left Gaza for a hospital in Ramallah. When he reached Ramallah, Abdurahman was very sick. To stop the infection spreading the surgeons advised that he should have his leg amputated. Abdurahman comments:

"I barely remember what was happening back then. I felt so weak and I was sleeping most of the time."

It was not easy for Abdurahman to come to terms with the idea of living without a leg. He received psychosocial support from community mental health centres, supported by WHO. "Thanks to the sessions, we've seen a huge difference in his attitude. It was a great help," his father says.

Soon after the surgery, Abdurahman had the opportunity to travel to the USA to get an artificial leg. None of his relatives were able to obtain an Israeli permit to go with him. During

the trip, the 13-year-old boy was accompanied by a person from the organization that arranged the visit.

"I was just happy. I was happy to have this chance", Abdurahman says.

Even with his artificial leg, Abdurahman faces many challenges. His school is ill-equipped for children with disabilities. The classroom is on the 4th floor, and the elevators do not work. One day, when it was particularly crowded, Abdurahman fell down the stairs. Since then he has stopped attending classes.

But Abdurahman has tremendous support from his family, and hope. He dreams of returning to school and becoming a journalist one day.