

MONTHLY REPORT

April 2022

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **7,426**

referrals issued to access
health facilities outside the
Palestinian MoH

1,965 Gaza

5,342 West Bank

 **57%**

of Gaza patient permit
applications approved

34%

of Gaza companion permit
applications approved

 **81%**

of West Bank patient permit
applications approved

76%

of West Bank companion
permit applications approved

 **3**

Gaza patients called for
security interrogation

IN FOCUS

*Communities in the Jordan Valley depend on
precarious mobile clinic access*

Part 1 Referrals

April referrals by the Ministry of Health

In April, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 7,426 referrals to health care services delivered by non-MoH providers, 11% lower than the monthly average (8,308) for 2021. Referrals from the West Bank comprised 72% (5,342) of the total, including 750 referrals for patients from East Jerusalem, while referrals for the Gaza Strip accounted for 26% (1,965) of the total. Three referrals were issued for Palestinian patients present in Jordan, while the origin of 116 referrals (2%) was not reported.

Palestinian MoH referrals to hospitals in the West Bank, outside East Jerusalem, comprised 46% of referrals in April; to East Jerusalem hospitals 38%; within the Gaza Strip 7%; to Israeli hospitals 6%; to Egypt 3%; and to Jordan 0.2% (12 referrals).

The top needed specialties for referrals were oncology (30%); cardiac catheterization (7%); urology & nephrology (6%); cardiology (5%); ophthalmology, medical imaging, haematology, and radiation therapy (4% each); endoscopy (3%); and paediatrics, laboratory examinations, nuclear medicine, orthopaedics, vascular surgery, general surgery, and obstetrics/gynaecology (2% each). The remaining 19% were for 21 other medical specialties.

Referrals for patients under 18 years of age comprised 22% (1,633) of the total, while 29% (2,172) were for those aged 60 years or older. Referrals for female patients comprised 47% of the total.

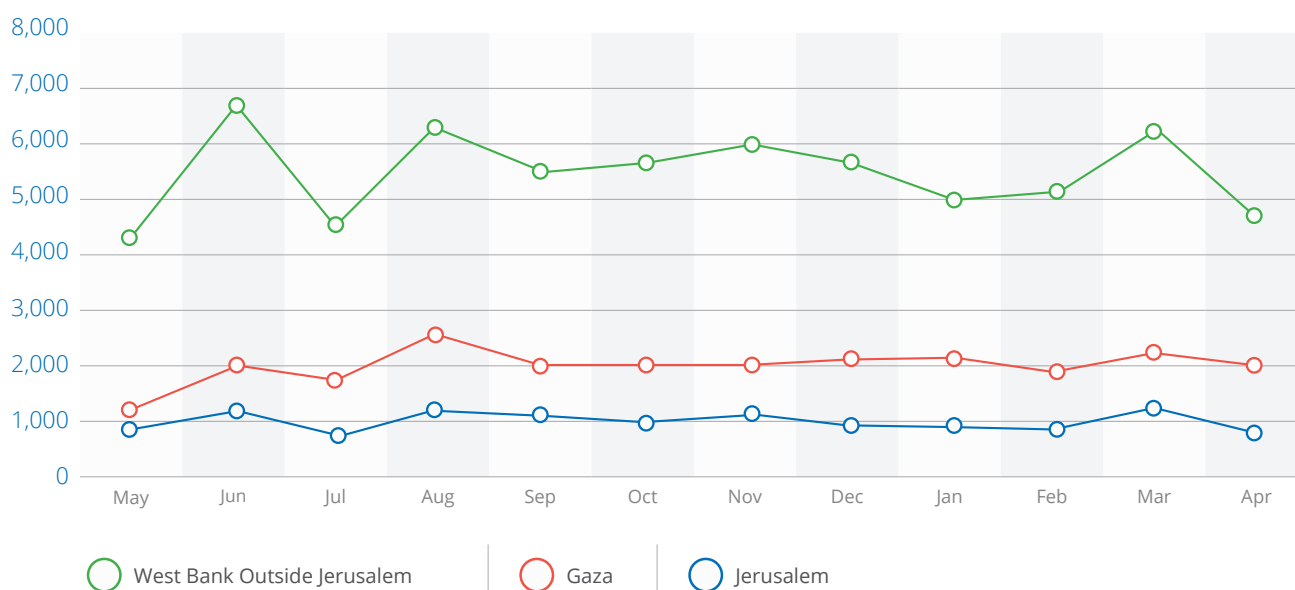
 **1,965**
Gaza Strip

 **5,342**
West Bank

referrals approved financial coverage for health care outside the Palestinian Ministry of Health

Chart 1

Number of referrals issued by the Palestinian MoH by place of origin, May 2021 to April 2022



Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip

There were 1,438 (M: 763; F: 675) patient permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in April.

Around a third (29%) of applications were for children under 18 and close to a fifth (18%) were for patients over 60 years old. 47% were for female patients, while 83% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Approximately half (49%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 34% for West Bank hospitals outside East Jerusalem; and 17% for Israeli hospitals. More than two fifths (43%) of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (22%) or Makassed Hospital (21%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 71% of permit applications: oncology (36%); cardiology (11%); haematology (11%); paediatrics (7%); and ophthalmology (6%). The remaining 29% of applications were for 20 other specialties.

A further 122 permit applications for patients and companions were submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs during April for travel by shuttle to Jordan, which requires approval of Israeli and Jordanian authorities for direct transfer from Beit Hanoun/Erez to the King Hussein Bridge crossing to Jordan, without formal entry to Israel or the West Bank. Jordanian hospitals issue an open appointment (rather than specifying a date) for these permit applications. Of the 122 applications, 40 (33%) were approved, 35 (29%) were denied and 47 (39%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 823 (M: 412; F: 411) or 57% of the 1,438 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez in April 2022 were approved, 9% lower than the average approval (66%) for the first quarter of the year. The approval rate of patient permit applications varies by sex and age of patients. In April, the average approval for male patient permit applications was 54%, while for female patient applications it was 61%. Men aged 18 to 40 had the lowest approval rate, at 37%. Women aged 18 to 40 had the lowest approval rate among females at 54%, while women over 60 years of age had the highest approval rate overall of 75% - see Table 1.



1,438

patient applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez to access health care



57%

approved



0.3%

denied



42%

delayed

Table 1

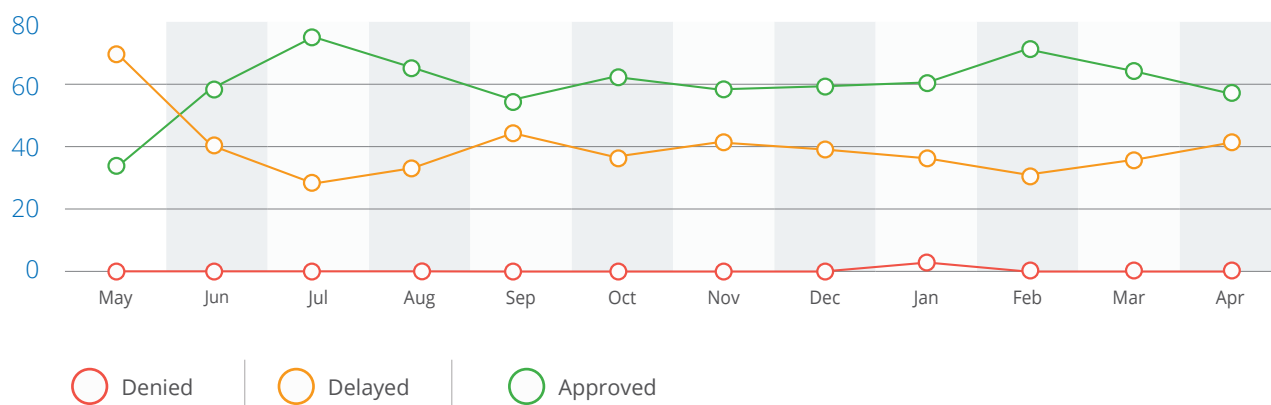
Approval rate for patient permit applications in April 2022, by age and sex

| March 2022 | Number of applications | | Approved | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| AGE | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 0-3 | 52 | 38 | 60% | 63% |
| 4-17 | 190 | 133 | 56% | 59% |
| 18-40 | 185 | 200 | 37% | 54% |
| 41-60 | 189 | 189 | 52% | 60% |
| over 60 | 147 | 115 | 73% | 75% |
| sub-total | 763 | 675 | 54% | 61% |
| Total | 1438 | | | |
| General approval rate | | | 57% | |

Similarly, approval rates vary by referred specialty. In April, specialties with an approval rate higher than the average of 57% included cancer care (oncology) at 67%, haematology at 67%, paediatrics at 63%, vascular surgery at 62%, nephrology at 60%, and intensive care at 57%. Specialties with an approval rate lower than average included cardiology (55%), ENT (50%), neurosurgery (50%), general surgery (49%), heart surgery (47%), ophthalmology (46%), orthopaedics (43%), internal medicine (38%), nuclear medicine (29%), and neurology (24%).

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, May 2021 to April 2022



Denied care: 4 (M: 3; F: 1) patient permit applications, comprising 0.3% of the total for Gaza, were denied in April. These included two children under 18 and two adults aged 41 to 60 years. One patient was referred for oncology, one for ophthalmology, one for internal medicine, and one for haematology. Two patients were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem and two were referred to the West Bank outside East Jerusalem.

Delayed care: 611 (M: 348; F: 263) patient permit applications, or 42% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. 28% (170 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 11% (68) were for patients over 60 years. Of delayed applications, 45% were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, 37% for the West Bank, and 18% for Israeli hospitals. Most delayed applications (551 or 90%) were 'under study' at the time of appointment. 3 applications were delayed based on allegation of relatives staying illegally in Israel or the West Bank.

Security interrogation and arrests

3 (M: 2; F: 1) patients were called for security interrogation in April. Two were 18-40 years, and one was 41-60 years. Two had appointment for cancer care (oncology) and one for cardiology. Two of these patients had applied to reach Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem and one to Al-Najah Hospital in the West Bank. The applications for the three patients remained under study.

Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 1,763 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in April. These applications include parents or other companions applying to travel with children. Patients are eligible to apply to Israeli authorities for one companion to accompany them for health care outside the Gaza Strip. In April, 602 companion permit applications (34% of the total) were approved, 5 applications (0.3%) were denied and the remaining 1156 (66%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's hospital appointment.



3

Gaza patients

called for security interrogation



0

Gaza patients or companions

arrested



1,763

companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez to accompany patients



34% approved



0.3% denied




66% delayed

Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,023 Gaza patients and 765 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in April to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of the 1,023 patients, 73 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 73 companions. These numbers show that **258 (25%) of patients** crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. The bodies of 17 deceased patients were returned to Gaza across Beit Hanoun/Erez in April. During the month, the checkpoint was open for 25 days for daytime working hours and closed on 5 days (5 Saturdays).

 **1,023**
patients
exited through Beit
Hanoun/Erez

 **765**
companions
exited through Beit
Hanoun/Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



In April, there were **9,092** entries and **7,749** exits through Rafah crossing. Another **321** Palestinians seeking to exit from the Palestinian side were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The crossing was open on **20 days** and closed on **10 days** (weekends). The crossing was declared open in both directions from 9 February 2021. Specific data on patient crossings during the month has not been made available by the Rafah terminal authorities. The ambulance service of the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that their ambulance transferred 100 patients from the Palestinian side to the Egyptian side of the terminal and returned 7 bodies of deceased persons during the month.

The West Bank

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, as well as children under 13 years traveling with an approved adult, are exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday, before 8am or after 7pm.

Patients: In March 2022, there were 5,289 permit applications by patients from the West Bank outside Jerusalem to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and in Israel. 2,540 (48%) were for male patients and 2,749 (52%) were for female patients. 943 (18%) were for children under the age of 18 years and 566 (11%) were for patients aged 60 years or older. 65% of patient applications were for appointments in East Jerusalem Hospitals and 35% in Israeli hospitals or clinics. Of the 5,289 West Bank patient applications in March, 4,281 (81%) were approved, 814 (15%) were unsuccessful (denied) and 194 (4%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

Companions: In March 2022, there were 6,348 patient companion permit applications to Israeli authorities from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. 3167 (50%) were for male companions and 3181 (50%) were for female companions. 91% of companion permit applications were for companions aged from 18-59 years. Of the 6,348 West Bank companion applications, 4,807 (76%) were approved, 1,333 (21%) were unsuccessful and 208 (3%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.



5,289
patient permit
applications

for Israeli permits to access
healthcare in East Jerusalem
and Israel



81% approved



15% unsuccessful



4% pending
at the time of monthly
reporting



6,348
patient companion
applications

to access healthcare in East
Jerusalem and Israel



76% approved



21% unsuccessful



3% pending
at the time of monthly
reporting

In Focus

Communities in the Jordan Valley depend on precarious mobile clinic access

Moaayd Daraghme is the driver of a mobile clinic for the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) operating in the Jordan Valley of the West Bank. He has been part of the clinic team for ten 10 years, working with communities in remote areas reliant on mobile clinics for access to essential primary health care. The communities face obstacles to planning and development, demolition orders that make their lives and livelihoods precarious and uncertain, and under-provision of basic services.

“These communities face a lot of violations. The Red Crescent tried four times to assist with building six houses to provide emergency shelter, but each time the houses were demolished... We should be providing health services at least three times a week, but we cover communities in three districts of the Jordan Valley and there is only so much we can do. To reach all communities, the



mobile clinic needs to serve two or three communities at a time. Here in Khirbet Al Meiteh, some people need to walk half an hour from nearby communities to reach us,” Moaayd commented.

Khirbet Al Meiteh is a community served by Moaayd's team, located in Wadi Al Maleh in the northern Jordan Valley, in the governorate of Tubas. The community of 300 people is situated in Area C, where Israel maintains civil and military control. It lies in an area designated as a firing zone, meaning severe restrictions on planning and development, including for roads, schools, and health facilities. Residents rely on agriculture and pasture for their livelihoods, which are threatened by land confiscations and expanding settlements in the surroundings. There is lack of adequate protection for the communities, who experience settler- and occupation-related violence and who face loss of livelihoods due to destruction of crops and attacks against livestock.

The nearest permanent primary care facility is in Tubas, which would be around 30 minutes away by car without unpredictable checkpoint delays. Many in Khirbet Al Meiteh do not have a vehicle, so the mobile clinic serves as a vital lifeline for the community. However, the community remains under-served, with expansion of services provision and establishment of permanent facilities needed. “The mobile clinic covers part of the needs for our community in Wadi Al Maleh,” said Mahdi, a member of the community council. “However, we desperately need a permanent facility. We tried to build two rooms last year to use them as clinics, but Israeli forces demolished the rooms. We’ve been unable to build them again due to lack of funding.”

The PRCS clinic Moaayd works for covers Tubas, Nablus, and Jericho. Each community or cluster of communities served by the mobile clinic receives one or two visits a month. The clinic itself operates five days a week, providing primary health care on three days and services for women's health on two days. The team consists of a driver, nurse and doctor, with a social worker joining the team on occasion. Recently, the PRCS community service programme was able to offer additional support to the communities in Wadi Al Maleh, training youth in the provision of first aid to offer immediate support to injured persons and responding to the high numbers of casualties during demonstrations against settlement expansion.

“As a resident of Tubas, Wadi Al Maleh is very close to my heart,” Moaayd stated. “I feel connected to the people here, and I understand their suffering because I live their experience too. When the community faced demolitions, I was there to help. Despite all our efforts, we need to do a lot more. I'm happy we can provide at least basic health services, but our communities deserve comprehensive health care like all people.”

