



# MONTHLY REPORT

## November 2022

## Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory




November data on referrals was not available

 **80%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

**46%**

of Gaza companion permit applications approved

 **82%**

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

**79%**

of West Bank companion permit applications approved

 **54**

Gaza patients called for security interrogation

### IN FOCUS

*21-year-old Musaab repeatedly denied access to cancer care*

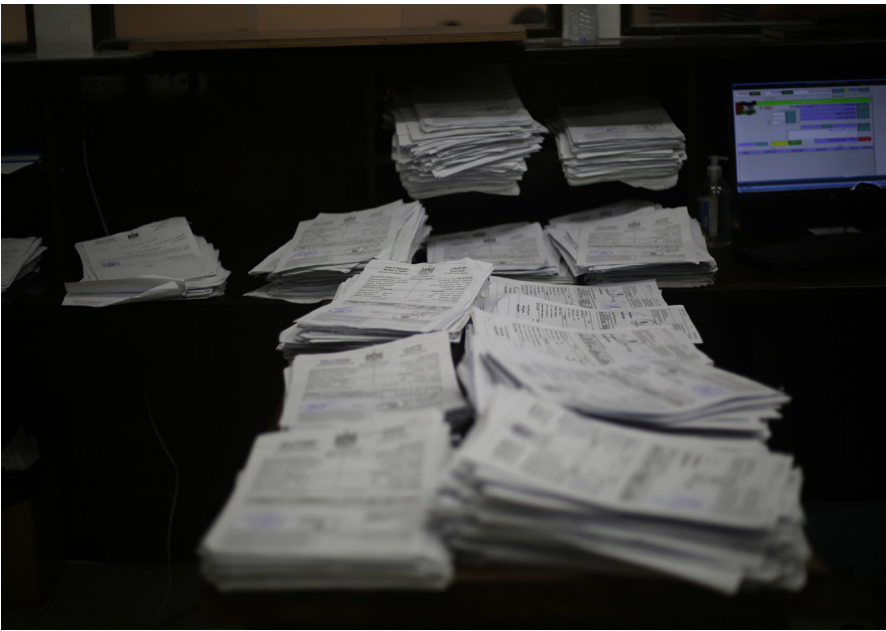
# Part 1 Referrals

## November referrals by the Ministry of Health

Referrals data for November was not made available to WHO by the date of publication.

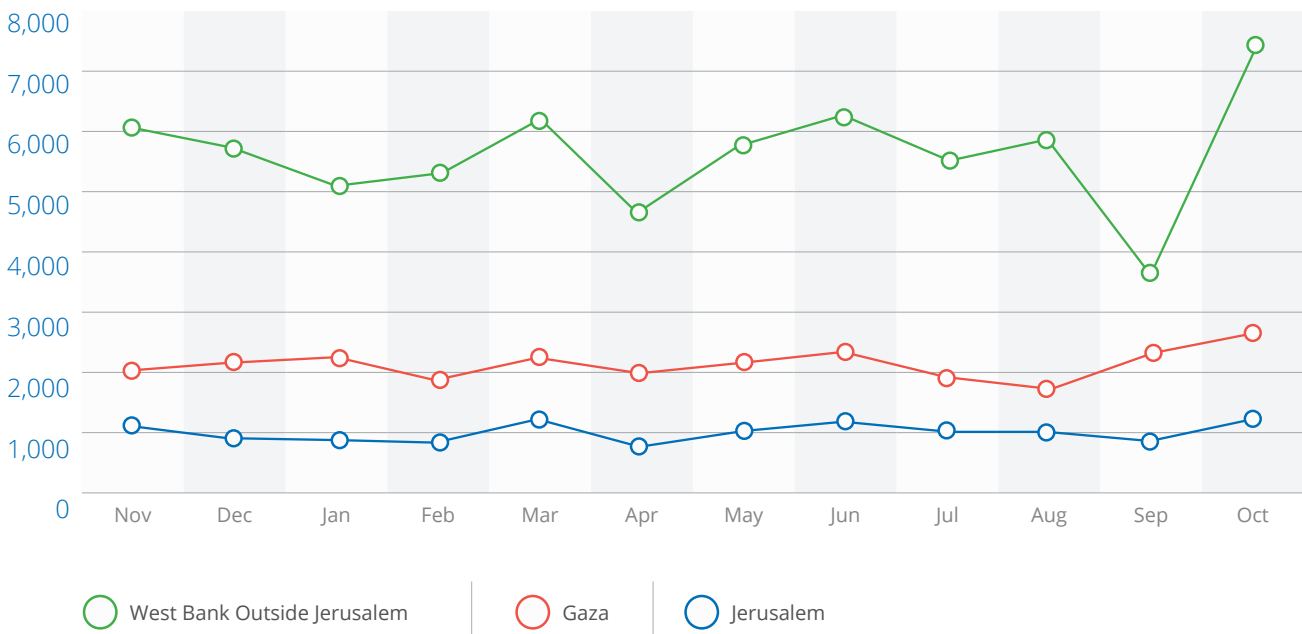


November data on referrals was not available



**Chart 1**

Number of referrals issued by the Palestinian MoH by place of origin, November 2021 to October 2022



# Part 2 Access

## The Gaza Strip

There were 1,984 (M: 1,041; F: 943) permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in November, 19% higher than the monthly average for January to October 2022. Nearly a third (30%) of applications were for children under 18 and a fifth (20%) were for patients over 60 years old. 48% were for female patients, while 87% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. More than half (54%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 28% for hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem; and 18% for Israeli hospitals. 47% of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (26%) or Makassed Hospital (21%), both in East Jerusalem. The top six specialties accounted for 78% of permit applications: oncology (35%); haematology (11%); cardiology and paediatrics (9%) each; and ophthalmology and orthopaedics (7%) each. The remaining 22% of applications were for 22 other specialties.

No data on permit applications for direct access to Jordan from the Gaza Strip in November was made available to WHO by the date of publication.

**Approved permit applications:** 1,593 (M: 807; F: 786), or 80%, of the 1,984 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were approved in November 2022, the highest monthly approval rate in over six years, since July 2016 when the approval rate was 83%.

The approval rate for patient permit applications varies by sex and age of patients, see Table 1. In November, of the different demographic groups, men aged 18 to 40 had the lowest approval rate at 67%, while women over 60 had the highest approval rate of 88%.



**1,984**

patient applications

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



**80%**

approved



**1%**

denied



**19%**

delayed

**Table 1**

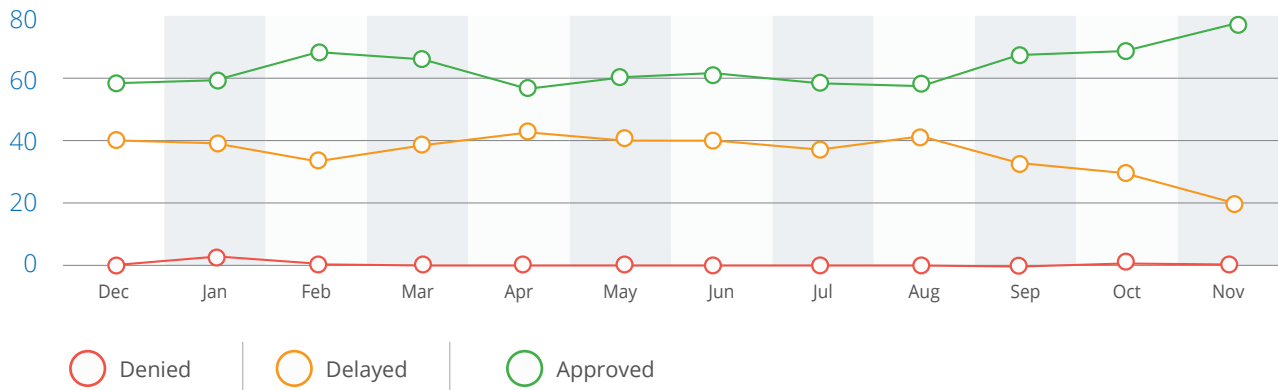
**Approval rate for patient permit applications in November 2022, by age and sex**

November 2022 AGE	Number of applications		Approved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-3	92	61	84%	80%
4-17	234	210	85%	80%
18-40	243	243	67%	83%
41-60	227	275	70%	85%
over 60	245	154	84%	88%
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>1041</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,984</b>			
<b>Overall approval rate for patient applications</b>			<b>80%</b>	

Approval rates also vary by referral specialty. In November, specialties with an approval rate 80% or higher with more than 20 applications included oncology (702) at 85%, paediatrics (179) at 83%, nephrology (27) at 81%, and haematology (224) at 80%. Specialties with an approval rate lower than 80% and more than 20 applications included vascular surgery (23) at 78%, orthopaedics (134) at 74%, general surgery (65) at 74%, ENT (38) at 74%, neurosurgery (40) at 73%, internal medicine (72) at 72%, ophthalmology (134) at 71%, urology (47) at 70%, and neurology (28) at 68%.

## Chart 2

### Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, December 2021 to November 2022



**Denied care:** 22 (M: 15; F: 7) patient permit applications, comprising 1% of the total for Gaza, were denied in November. These included four children under 18 years, eight adults aged 18 to 40 years, eight adults aged 41 to 60 years and two adults over 60 years of age. They were referred for oncology (4); cardiology (3); general surgery, ophthalmology, orthopaedics, internal medicine, and urology (2 each); and paediatrics, ENT, endocrinology, heart surgery, and nuclear medicine (1 each). Ten patients were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem, six to hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, and six to Israeli hospitals.

**Delayed care:** 369 (M: 219; F: 150) patient permit applications, or 19% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. Of delayed applications, 27% (100 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 15% (56) were for patients over 60 years old. A half (49%) were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, while 32% were for the West Bank and 19% for Israeli hospitals. Most delayed applications (285 or 77%) were classified as ‘under study’ at the time of hospital appointment. Eight (2%) were awaiting appointments for security interrogation, while six (2%) were requested to change companions and two were requested to submit new applications. Five applications were delayed based on the assertion by Israeli COGAT that suitable care is available within Gaza, though no evidence was provided to support this claim.

### Interrogation

In November, 53 (M: 43; F: 10) patients from the Gaza Strip were requested for interrogation as a prerequisite to their permit applications. 21 were aged 18 to 40 years, 29 were aged 41 to 60 years, and three were over 60 years old. Of these patients, 14 had appointments for cancer care (oncology); ten for ophthalmology; six for internal medicine; five for orthopaedics; three for cardiology; two each for general surgery, haematology, endocrinology, ENT, vascular surgery, neurosurgery, and neurology; and one for urology. 31 of the patients had applied for permits to access hospitals in East Jerusalem, 20 for hospitals in the West Bank and two for Israeli hospitals. A third (18) of patients had submitted their permit applications more than 30 days before the hospital appointment. Five of the 53 patient were approved permit after interrogation, one was denied, and 47 remained pending under study in December.

### Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 2,688 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in November. 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 November, 1,238 companion permit applications (46% of the total) were approved, 41 applications (1.5%) were denied and the remaining 1,409 (52.5%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient’s hospital appointment.



**53**

**Gaza patients**

called for security interrogation



**0**

**Gaza patients or companions**

arrested



**2,688**

**companion applications**

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



**46% approved**



**2% denied**



**53% delayed**

## Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,886 Gaza patients and 1,046 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in November to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. A quarter, or 24% (460), of patients therefore crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. Of the 1,886 patients, 87 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 87 companions. The number of patients exiting via Beit Hanoun/Erez in the month was the highest for more than three years. The bodies of 13 deceased patients were returned to Gaza across Beit Hanoun/Erez in November. During the month, the checkpoint was open for 25 days for daytime working hours and closed on 5 days (4 Saturdays and 1 day for Israeli elections).



**1,886**

**patients**  
exited through Beit  
Hanoun/Erez



**1,046**

**companions**  
exited through Beit  
Hanoun/Erez

## Rafah crossing - Egypt



The ambulance service of the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that the transfer of 158 patients from the Palestinian to the Egyptian side of the crossing and the return of 7 bodies of deceased persons during November. Specific data on patient crossings during the month was not made available by the Rafah terminal authorities. There were 10,700 person-entries and 13,261 person-exits across Rafah reported by OCHA. A further 455 Palestinians seeking to exit from the Palestinian side were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The crossing was open on 22 days and closed on 8 days (4 weekends). The crossing has been open in both directions since 9 February 2021.

## The West Bank

Restrictions on the movement of Palestinians from the West Bank to Israel and East Jerusalem affect parts of the population more than others. 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, before 8am or after 7pm.

**Patients:** In November, there were 8,532 permit applications by patients from the West Bank outside Jerusalem to Israeli authorities to access hospitals in East Jerusalem and Israeli hospitals. Of patient permit applications, 4,113 (48%) were for female patients, 1,598 (19%) were for children under the age of 18 years, and 697 (8%) were for patients over 60 years. Two-thirds (66%) were for appointments at hospitals in East Jerusalem, while a third (34%) were for Israeli hospitals or clinics.


Of the 8,532 West Bank patient applications in November, 7,012 (82%) were approved, 1,274 (15%) were unsuccessful (denied) and 246 (3%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.


**Companions:** In November 2022, there were 9,552 patient companion permit applications to Israeli authorities from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. 4,960 (52%) were for female companions, while 92% of companion permit applications were for companions aged from 18-59 years.


Of the 8,445 West Bank companion applications, 6,559 (78%) were approved, 1,455 (17%) were unsuccessful and 431 (5%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

 **8,532**  
patient permit  
applications

for Israeli permits to access  
healthcare in East Jerusalem  
and Israel


 **82% approved**


 **15% unsuccessful**


 **3% pending**  
at the time of monthly  
reporting

 **9,552**  
patient companion  
applications

to access healthcare in East  
Jerusalem and Israel

 **79% approved**

 **17% unsuccessful**

 **4% pending**  
at the time of monthly  
reporting

## In Focus

### 21-year-old Musaab repeatedly denied access to cancer care

Musaab is 21 years old and in his third year of study at university in Nablus, in the north of the West Bank.

In the summer of 2022, Musaab was diagnosed with a cancer called a synovial sarcoma in his left ankle. To confirm his diagnosis and to guide the best approach to his treatment, he was referred to Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem for bone biopsy in June 2022, for an appointment on 6 July. Because Musaab has a West Bank identity card, he was required by Israel to obtain a permit to access East Jerusalem. He applied three times for a permit for his initial hospital appointment and was denied each time. The family were told that Musaab and his companions (different family members for each application) had been denied on security grounds. He eventually received the bone biopsy at Istishari Hospital in Ramallah, which meant he didn't require a permit for his appointment.



Musaab was in Israeli prison from July 2020 to January 2021. It was during his detention that he started to feel pain in his left ankle. “He was given paracetamol, which didn’t help,” his father said. “He has been suffering a lot. He told me sometimes he felt as if his bone was being crushed.”

After his diagnosis, doctors considered to refer Musaab to Augusta Victoria Hospital, the major Palestinian cancer centre, in East Jerusalem. However, because he had been denied a permit to East Jerusalem previously, the doctors instead referred him to An-Najah University Hospital in Nablus, which meant he didn’t require an Israeli permit to reach care. Musaab received the chemotherapy he needed before he would undergo an operation. By November 2022, he was ready for surgery and his family applied for permits for him to reach Assuta Hospital in Tel Aviv. They wanted a private surgical consultation, to see the extent to which it would be possible to salvage Musaab’s leg. His three applications for a permit to reach two different appointments at the hospital were again denied.

## History of permit applications

Application date	Appointment Date	Hospital	Response
27/6/2022	6/7/2022	Makassed Hospital	Denied
3/7/2022	6/7/2022	Makassed Hospital	Denied
5/7/2022	6/7/2022	Makassed Hospital	Denied
16/11/2022	16/11/2022	Assuta Hospital	Denied
26/11/2022	30/11/2022	Assuta Hospital	Denied
27/11/2022	30/11/2022	Assuta Hospital	Denied
During November <sup>1</sup>	During November <sup>1</sup>	Makassed Hospital	Denied
During November <sup>1</sup>	During November <sup>1</sup>	Makassed Hospital	Denied

Musaab’s father spoke with a doctor at Makassed Hospital to get advice on how to proceed. “He told me that repeatedly delaying surgery might cause bone erosion requiring leg amputation, God forbid.” The family had lost hope of obtaining a permit to access East Jerusalem, so Musaab’s father went to the Services Purchase Unit (SPU) of the Ministry of Health in Ramallah to request a change of destination to Jordan.

“Musaab and I travelled [to the Jordan border, the King Hussein Bridge] on 12 December. At the Bridge, we were asked to sit and wait. We waited about an hour, then an Israeli officer came out and asked us to go back to the West Bank. He said that we were both denied for security reasons. We refused to leave, and I requested to see the Mukhabarat [intelligence] officer. I insisted, telling them that my son has cancer and that he has the right to access health care. I asked them to let him go. After waiting another four hours, they decided to allow Musaab to cross to Jordan, but they made me return.” Although he crossed, Musaab missed his appointment at King Hussein Cancer Center in Amman, which had been for 12:30pm that day. The next available appointment was a week later.

“My son needs me beside him during these difficult times. We should see the doctor together so we can discuss the different options to help Musaab decide about the surgery.” Musaab’s father appealed through nongovernmental organizations Physicians for Human Rights Israel and Hamoked, as well as through a private lawyer, to get approval to travel to Jordan. He said, “This is so inhumane. How can this happen in any place in the world? Why are they blocking me from accompanying my son? I just want to hold his hand when he goes for surgery.”

Musaab is currently undergoing medical assessment in preparation for surgery. His mother crossed to Jordan on 20 December. His father is still hoping to join him .

<sup>1</sup> Applications through Israeli District Coordination Office, details from the patient’s family