



# MONTHLY REPORT

## April 2023

## Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory



April data on referrals was not available

**78%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

**46%**

of Gaza companion permit applications approved

**74%**

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

**73%**

of West Bank companion permit applications approved

**28**

Gaza patient called for security interrogation

### IN FOCUS

*Testimony from Huwara and increasing attacks on health care in 2023*

# Access


## The Gaza Strip

There were 1,211 (M: 581; F: 630) permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in April, 29% lower than the monthly average for 2022 (1,691). Over a quarter (28%) of applications were for children under 18 and a fifth (20%) were for patients over 60 years old. A half (52%) were for female patients, while 85% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Just under half (47%) of applications were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 35% were for hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem; and 18% were for Israeli hospitals. 40% of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (26%) or Makassed Hospital (14%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 74% of permit applications: oncology (36%); haematology (12%); cardiology (11%); paediatrics (8%); and ophthalmology (7%). The remaining 26% of applications were for 21 other specialties.

A further 99 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 to Jordan, without formal entry to Israel or the West Bank. Jordanian hospitals issue an open appointment, rather than specifying a hospital appointment date, for these permit applications. Of the 99 applications, 50 (51%) were approved within the month, 1 (1%) was denied and 48 (48%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

**Approved permit applications:** 947 (M: 437; F: 510), or 78%, of the 1,211 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were approved in April 2023. The approval rate has declined after a peak of 85% in February.

The approval rate for patient permit applications varies by sex and age of patients, see Table 1. In April, of the different demographic groups, men aged 18 to 40 had the lowest approval rate at 65%, men aged 41-60 had an approval rate of 69% while women over 60 had the highest approval (88%) and the overall approval rate for female patients (81%) was higher than for male patients (75%).

 **1,211**  
patient applications

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

 **78%**  
approved

 **1%**  
denied

 **20%**  
delayed

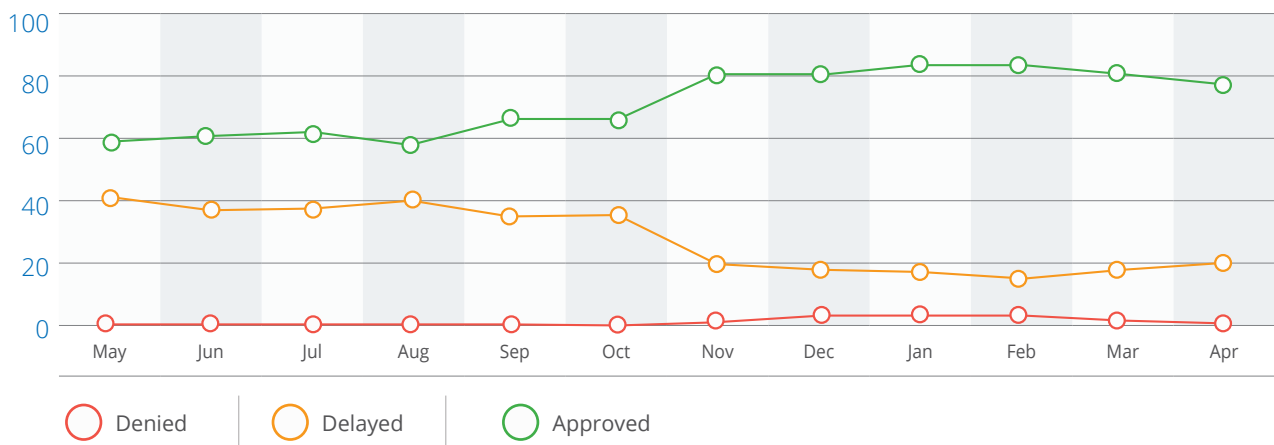
**Table 1** Approval rate for patient permit applications in April 2023, by age and sex

April 2023 AGE	Number of applications		Approved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-3	49	43	80%	77%
4-17	145	98	83%	84%
18-40	133	187	65%	82%
41-60	126	190	69%	76%
over 60	128	112	80%	88%
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>81%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,211</b>			
<b>Overall approval rate for patient applications</b>			<b>78%</b>	

Approval rates also vary by referral specialty. In April, specialties with an approval rate higher than the average (78%) with more than 20 applications included haematology (144) at 88%, oncology (440) at 82%, and cardiology (139) at 82%. Meanwhile, specialties with an approval rate lower than 78% and more than 20 applications included pediatrics (102) at 76%, ophthalmology (89) at 74%, neurosurgery (37) at 73%, general surgery (35) at 71%, and orthopaedics (66) at 56%.

## Chart 1

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, May 2022 to April 2023



**Denied care:** 18 (M: 8; F: 10) patient permit applications, 1% of the total for Gaza, were denied in April. These included 10 applications for adults aged 18 to 40 years and 8 for adults aged 41 to 60 years. 8 patients had appointments for oncology, 4 for internal medicine, and 6 were for 6 other specialties.

**Delayed care:** 246 (M: 136; F: 110) patient permit applications, or 20% 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, 24% (60 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 15% (38) were for patients over 60 years old. Most delayed applications (220 or 89%) were classified as 'under study' at the time of the patient's hospital appointment.

### Interrogation

In April, 28 (M: 12; F: 16) patients from the Gaza Strip were requested for interrogation as a prerequisite to their permit applications. For the first time, more female patients were requested for security interrogation than male patients.

11 patients were aged 18 to 40 years, 14 were aged 41 to 60 years, and 3 were over 60 years old. Of these patients, 14 had appointments for cancer care (oncology); 4 for ophthalmology; 2 each for orthopaedics, neurosurgery, and cardiology; and 1 each for general surgery, haematology, internal medicine, and nuclear medicine. 16 of the patients had applied for permits to access hospitals in East Jerusalem, 11 for hospitals in the West Bank, and 1 to an Israeli hospital. More than three-fifths of patients (64%, or 18 of 28) had submitted their permit applications more than 30 days before the hospital appointment. None of the 28 patients was approved during the month.

### Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 1,602 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, 735 companion permit applications (46% of the total) were approved, 179 applications (11%) were denied, and the remaining 688 (43%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's hospital appointment.



**28**

**Gaza patients**

called for security interrogation



**0**

**Gaza patient or companion**

arrested



**1,602**

**companion applications**

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



**46% approved**



**11% denied**



**43% delayed**

## Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,329 patients and 1,011 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in April to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. A quarter, or 24% (318), of patients therefore crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. Of the 1,329 patients, 56 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 56 companions. The number of patients exiting via Beit Hanoun/Erez in the month was 24% lower than the monthly average for the first quarter of the year (1,743). The bodies of 13 deceased persons were returned to Gaza across Beit Hanoun/Erez in April. During the month, the checkpoint was open for 22 days for daytime working hours and closed on 8 days (5 Saturdays and 3 Israeli official holidays).



**1,329**

**patient-exits**  
through Beit  
Hanoun/Erez



**1,011**

**companion-exits**  
through Beit  
Hanoun/Erez

## Rafah crossing - Egypt



The ambulance service of the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported the transfer of 97 patients from the Palestinian to the Egyptian side of the crossing and the return of nine bodies of deceased persons during April. Specific data on patient crossings was not made available by Rafah terminal authorities. There were 10,859 person-entries and 8,572 person-exits across Rafah reported by OCHA. A further 324 Palestinians seeking to exit from the Palestinian side were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The border crossing was open on 16 days and closed on 14 days (9 weekends, 4 days for Eid Al-Fiter and 1 day for the Easter). The crossing has been open in both directions since 9 February 2021.

## The West Bank

Most Palestinian patients from the West Bank outside of East Jerusalem are required to obtain permits to reach hospitals in East Jerusalem or Israel. Most women older than 50 years of age and men older than 55 years of age are exempted from the requirement, though a proportion of these are also restricted on purported security grounds.

**Patients:** There were 6,237 permit applications by patients from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem in April. Of patient permit applications, 2,966 (48%) were for female patients, 1,232 (20%) were for children under the age of 18 years, and 474 (8%) were for patients over 60 years. More than two-thirds (67%) were for appointments at hospitals in East Jerusalem, while a third (33%) were for Israeli hospitals or clinics.

Of the 6,237 West Bank patient applications in April, 4,617 (74%) were approved, 8% lower than the average approval rate of the last year (82%). The approval rate has been declining gradually since the beginning of the year and currently remains lower than the approval rate for the Gaza Strip. There were 1,445 (23%) denied applications and 175 (3%) applications pending at the time of monthly reporting.


The approval rate of patient permits varies by location. In April, governorates with an approval rate of 74% or higher included Abu-Dis (85%), Bethlehem (83%), Qalqilya (77%), Arram (76%), Salfit (75%). Governorates with an approval rate lower than the average of 74% included Al-Khalil (Hebron) (73%), Tulkarem (72%), Ramallah (71%), Jericho (71%), Jenin (65%), Nablus (60%), and Tubas (52%).


**Companions:** There were 7,103 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem in April, to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. 3,346 (47%) were for female companions, while 89% of applications were for companions aged from 18-59 years.


Of the 7,103 West Bank companion applications, 5,162 (73%) were approved, 3% less than the average approval rate of last year. 1,658 (23%) were unsuccessful and 283 (4%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

 **6,237**  
patient permit  
applications

for Israeli permits to access  
healthcare in East Jerusalem  
and Israel


 **74% approved**


 **23% unsuccessful**


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

 **7,103**  
patient companion  
applications

to access healthcare in East  
Jerusalem and Israel

 **73% approved**

 **23% unsuccessful**

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

## In Focus

### Testimony from Huwara and increasing attacks on health care in 2023

*“ I call on international organizations to give us protection. Doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians and ambulances. We live under occupation, and we are exposed to the violence of occupation every day.”*

~ Dr Shadi



On 26 February, Israeli settlers raided Huwara village near Nablus, in the north of the West Bank. Shadi, a doctor working in emergency medicine at Huwara Emergency Medical Centre, spoke about his experience on that day.

“Our team from Huwara Emergency Medical Centre was prevented from access. I wasn’t on duty when it all happened. I was at home, but I was called with other colleagues to assist the team that was on duty. We were forced to use an ambulance to help us reach the medical centre.”

WHO documented nine attacks on health care during the raid, obstruction to access of 7 ambulances and paramedic teams, as well as 8 doctors, with 2 incidents further involving verbal assault and intimidation of medical teams by both soldiers and settlers.

“The ambulances were not able to transfer the injured people or provide them with needed treatment. One of the conditions put on the first responders was that they would have to get out of the ambulance and go on foot to provide treatment in the field, where they were not allowed to evacuate the injured from the location.

“We contacted Rafidia Government Hospital and asked them to send staff to support our team. They sent a team, but the team reached us late because Israeli forces obstructed them at the checkpoint. The ambulance transferring the team was stuck at Huwara checkpoint for two hours, before they took a different route through Awarta checkpoint and reached the medical centre around 11pm.”

A 19-year-old man had suffered a major head injury and needed transfer from Huwara Emergency Medical Centre to Rafidia Government Hospital in Nablus. His transfer was delayed for more than two hours before the crew managed to get coordination for his transfer.

“So many of our staff live in Nablus. When they come to work or leave to return home they are obstructed at checkpoints. Even ambulances – where it is known internationally that they should move freely – are obstructed. I call on international organizations to give us protection. Doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians and ambulances. We live under occupation, and we are exposed to the violence of occupation every day.”

# Health attacks in the oPt

1 January- 30 April 2023

## 96 Attacks on Health Care

78 in the West Bank (outside East Jerusalem)

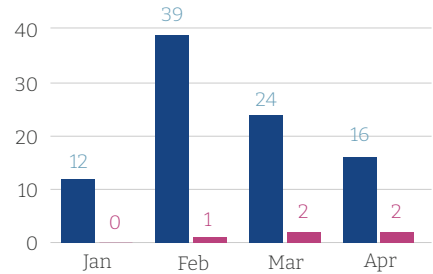
13 in East Jerusalem

5 in Gaza Strip

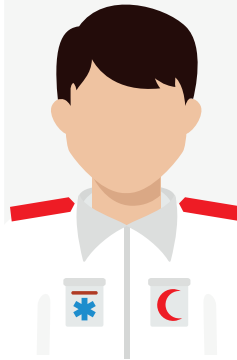


## Health Attacks in Numbers

■ West Bank  
■ Gaza Strip



## 78 Health Workers directly affected



-  34 Injured
-  12 Targeted not injured
-  21 Obstructed
-  3 Searched
-  9 Verbally abused or intimidated
-  4 Arrested or detained

 5 Health facilities affected

 1 Patient arrested


 1 Patient companion arrested

## 88 Ambulances Affected



 4 Searched

 77 Obstructed access

 4 Targeted not damaged

 13 Damaged

 3 Used as shield

 1 Detained

1 MoH vehicle damaged (not ambulance)