



MONTHLY REPORT

January 2022

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **8,209**

referrals issued to access health facilities outside the Palestinian MoH

2,187 Gaza

5,894 West Bank

 **62%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

39%

of Gaza companion permit applications approved



West Bank

Data on patient and companion permit approvals awaited

 **1**

Gaza patient called for security interrogation

IN FOCUS

Saleem, a -16 year-old child with leukaemia, dies after barriers to hospital admission

Part 1 Referrals

January referrals by the Ministry of Health

In January, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 8,209 referrals for health care services delivered by non-MoH providers, close to the monthly average (8,308) for 2021. Referrals from the West Bank comprised 72% (5,894) of the total, including 876 referrals for patients from East Jerusalem. Referrals for the Gaza Strip accounted for 27% (2,187), while the Gaza population comprises approximately 40% of the total for the oPt. One referral was issued for a Palestinian patient in Jordan, while the origin of 127 referrals (2%) was not reported.

Palestinian MoH referrals to hospitals in the West Bank, outside East Jerusalem, comprised 48% of total referrals for January; to East Jerusalem hospitals 35%; within the Gaza Strip 7%; to Egypt 4%; to Israeli hospitals 6%; to Jordan 0.3% (26 referrals) and 0.02% (2) to Turkey.

The top needed specialties for referrals were oncology (25%); cardiac catheterization (9%); urology & nephrology (7%); cardiology (6%); medical imaging (4%); ophthalmology (4%); haematology (4%); radiation therapy (3%); paediatrics (3%); and endoscopy (3%). The remaining 32% were for 26 other medical specialties.

Referrals for patients under 18 years of age comprised 22% (1,773) of the total, while 29% (2,407) were for those aged 60 years or older. Referrals for female patients comprised 45% of the total.

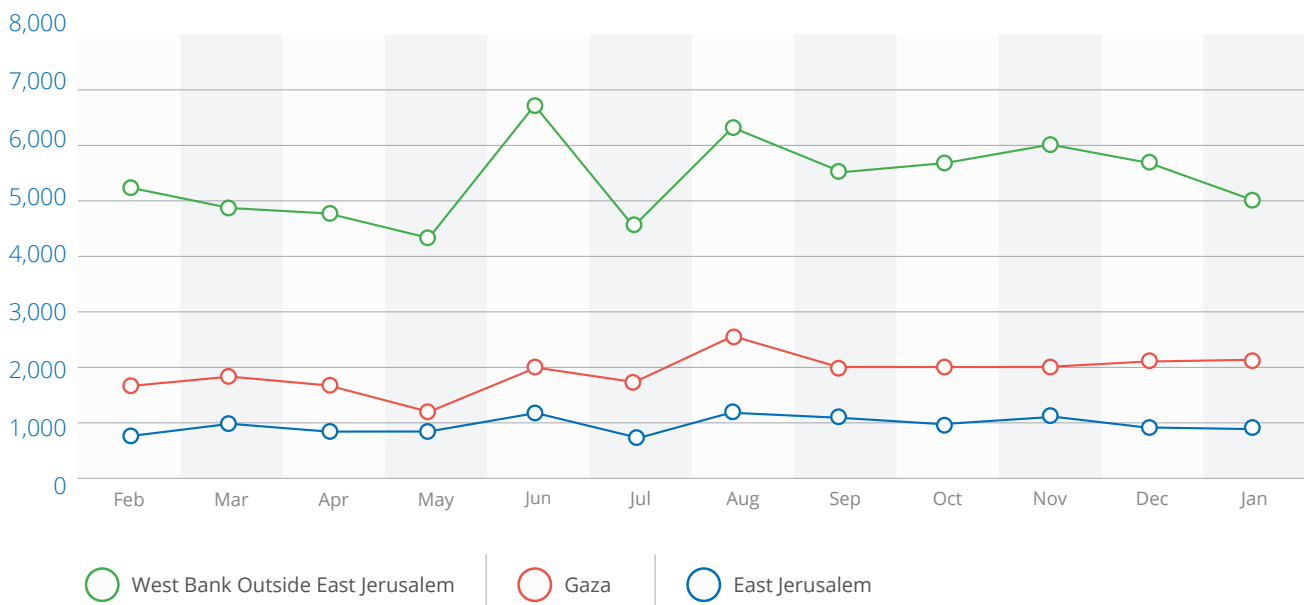
 **2,187**
Gaza Strip

 **5,894**
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, February 2021 to January 2022



Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip


There were 1,550 (M: 832; F: 718) patient permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in January 2022.

Close to a third (30%) of applications were for children under 18 and close to a fifth (18%) were for patients over 60 years old. 46% were for female patients, while 80% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Half (50%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 30% for hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem; 20% for Israeli hospitals; and 3 applications were for hospitals in Jordan. More than two fifths (45%) of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (23%) or Makassed Hospital (22%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 70% of permit applications: oncology (33%); cardiology (13%); haematology (11%); paediatrics (7%); and ophthalmology (6%). The remaining 30% of applications were for 23 other specialties.

A further 99 permit applications for patients and companions were submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs during January 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 99 applications, 35 (35%) were approved, 6 (6%) were denied and 58 (59%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 967 (M: 492; F: 475) or 62% of the 1,550 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez in January 2022 were approved, similar to the approval rate for 2021.

Of approved applications, 49% were for female patients, a third (33%) for children under 18 and a fifth (22%) for patients over 60. The approval rate for patient permits varies by age and sex. In January, men aged 18 to 40 years had the lowest approval rate (45%), while boys aged 0-3 years had the highest (77%), see Table 1. Similarly, approval rates vary by referred specialty. In January, specialties with an approval rate higher than the average of 62% included obstetrics/Gynaecology and Intensive care at 80%, cancer care (oncology) at 74%, heart surgery at 72%, blood disorders (haematology) at 69%, paediatrics at 66%, and nephrology at 65%. The approval rate for patients with heart disease was similar to the average, at 62%. Meanwhile, orthopaedics (54%), internal medicine (53%), neurosurgery (49%), general surgery (48%), ophthalmology (37%), urology (31%), all had approval rates below the average.

 **1,550**
patient applications

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

 **62%**
approved

 **2%**
denied

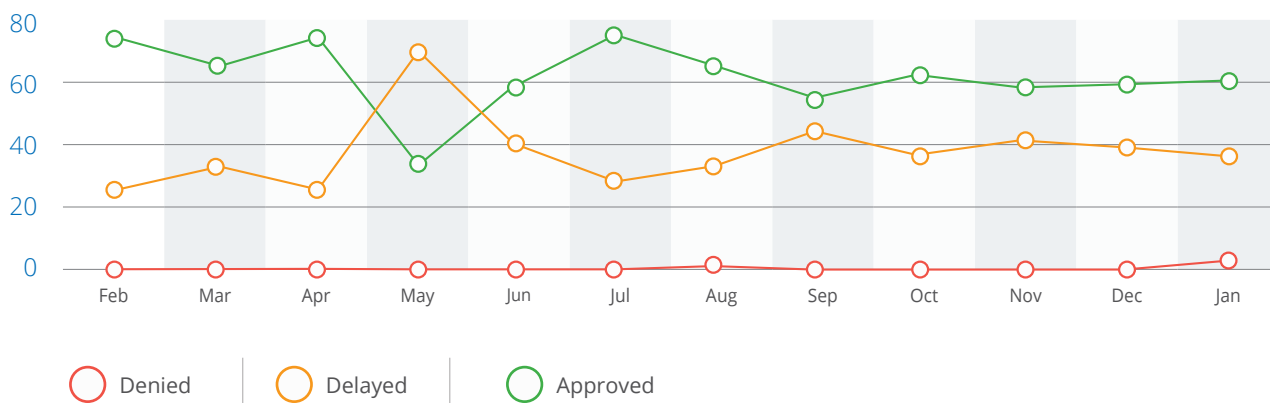
 **35%**
delayed

Table 1 Approval rate for patient permit applications in January 2022, by age and sex

Jan 2022	Number of applications		Approved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
AGE				
0-3	82	45	77%	73%
4-17	199	146	61%	68%
18-40	191	202	45%	60%
41-60	208	192	52%	63%
over 60	152	133	75%	74%
Sub-total	832	718	59%	66%
Total	832	718	59%	66%
General approval rate			62%	

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, February 2021 to January 2022 (%)



Denied care: 35 (M: 22; F: 13) patients were denied in January: four children under 18; ten adults aged 18 to 40; seventeen adults aged 41 to 60 years; and four patients over 60 years old. Ten patients were referred for oncology; three each for cardiology, ophthalmology, internal medicine and urology; two each for neurosurgery, nuclear medicine, general surgery and infertility; and one each for chest disease, orthopaedics, paediatrics, neurology and ENT. 17 patients were referred to hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, 14 were referred to East Jerusalem and four to Israeli hospitals.

Delayed care: 548 (M: 318; F: 230) patient permit applications, or 35% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. 28% (150 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 12% (68) were for patients over 60 years of age. Close to a quarter (23%) of those delayed had appointments for cancer care (oncology); 14% for cardiology; 10% for haematology; 10% for ophthalmology; 7% for orthopaedics; 7% for paediatrics; 5% for neurosurgery; 5% for internal medicine, 4% for urology and 4% for general surgery. The remaining 11% were for 16 other specialties. Of delayed applications, 44% were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, 34% for the West Bank, and 21% for Israeli hospitals. Most delayed applications (494 or 90%) were 'under study' at the time of appointment.

Security interrogation and arrests

A 36-year-old patient with Hodgkin's lymphoma called for security interrogation in January. He had an appointment for haematology at Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem and was subsequently approved permit to travel for medical care.

Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 1,898 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in January. 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 January, 745 companion permit applications (39% of the total) were approved, 109 applications (6%) were denied and the remaining 1,044 (55%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's appointment.



A

Gaza patient

called for security interrogation



1,898

companion applications

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



39% approved



6% denied



55% delayed

Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,067 Gaza patients and 854 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in January to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of the 1,067 patients, 77 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 77 companions. These numbers show that **a fifth 213 (20%) of patients** crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. The bodies of 23 deceased patients were returned to Gaza in January. During the month, Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint was open for 26 days for daytime working hours and closed on 5 days (5 Saturdays).

 **1,067**
patients
exited through Beit
Hanoun/Erez

 **854**
companions
exited through Beit
Hanoun/Erez

Rafah crossing - Egypt



In January, there were **9,760** entries and **9,893** exits through Rafah crossing. Another **510** 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 **11 days** (9 days weekends and 2 days official holidays). 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 109 patients from the Palestinian side to the Egyptian side of the terminal and returned 12 bodies of deceased persons during the month.

The West Bank

Data is currently pending for West Bank patient and companion permit applications

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.

In Focus

Saleem, a 16-year-old child with leukaemia, dies after barriers to hospital admission

Saleem An-Nawati was 16 years old from Gaza and had acute leukaemia diagnosed in late 2021. He was initially referred for an appointment at An-Najah University Hospital in Nablus in the West Bank on 28 November 2021, but he received no definitive response to his permit application in time for his appointment. Saleem was delayed a permit to reach treatment on two further occasions, for appointments at An-Najah Hospital on 6 and 19 December – see Table 2.

Appointment Date	Destination	Israeli Response
28/11/2021	An-Najah University Hospital	Under Study
6/12/2021	An-Najah University Hospital	Under Study
19/12/2021	An-Najah University Hospital	Under Study
26/12/2021	An-Najah University Hospital	Approved
9/1/2022	Ichilov Hospital	Under Study



Finally, on 26 December 2021, Saleem travelled to Nablus accompanied by his uncle, after receiving a permit. However, on 21 December 2021 An-Najah University Hospital had announced that it would be unable to receive patients referred by the Palestinian Ministry of Health because of outstanding debts affecting the procurement of essential medicines and supplies. After reaching the hospital, Saleem was not admitted and instead went with his uncle to the department for referrals in Ramallah. The Services Purchasing Unit of the Ministry of Health tried to secure a referral to several Palestinian hospitals but none were able to accept Saleem, who had been referred for specialist investigations for acute leukaemia. On 3 January, the referrals department contacted Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv, where an appointment was secure for 9 January.

After his travel to the West Bank, Saleem's family appealed through different routes for his admission to hospital. condition deteriorated. After an appointment had been secured at Ichilov Hospital for 9 January, the family was advised that Saleem should return to Gaza in order to apply for a permit to reach the hospital as direct referral from the West Bank would not be possible.

During his time in the West Bank, Saleem's health deteriorated substantially. On 9 January, he again attended the Services Purchasing Unit with his uncle trying to resolve the issue of his direct referral to Ichilov Hospital. Saleem was visibly unwell and was rushed to the Palestinian Medical Complex by ambulance as an emergency case, where he died shortly afterwards.