

MONTHLY REPORT

July 2022



Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **8,488**

referrals issued to access health facilities outside the Palestinian MoH

1,898 Gaza

6,457 West Bank

 **64%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

34%

of Gaza companion permit applications approved

 **76%**

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

69%

of West Bank companion permit applications approved

 **11**

Gaza patient called for security interrogation

IN FOCUS

Ahmed, a patient with cancer, delayed critical follow up for four months

Part 1 Referrals

July referrals by the Ministry of Health

In July, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 8,488 referrals to health care services delivered by non-MoH providers, 2% higher than the monthly average (8,308) for 2021. Referrals from the West Bank comprised 76% (6,457) of the total, including 1,034 referrals for patients from East Jerusalem, while referrals for the Gaza Strip accounted for 22% (1,898) of the total. Four referrals were issued for Palestinian patients present in Jordan, while the origin of 129 referrals (2%) was not reported.

Palestinian MoH referrals to hospitals in the West Bank, outside East Jerusalem, comprised 49% of referrals in July; to East Jerusalem hospitals 37%; within the Gaza Strip 6%; to Israeli hospitals 6%; to Egypt 2%; to Jordan 0.3% (22 referrals); and to Turkey 0.05% (4 referrals).

The top needed specialties were oncology (27%); cardiac catheterization (7%); cardiology (6%); medical imaging (5%); haematology (5%); and 4% each for urology & nephrology, ophthalmology, radiation therapy, and endoscopy. The remaining 34% were for 23 other medical specialties. Referrals for patients under 18 years of age comprised 21% (1,804) of the total, while 27% (2,310) were for those aged 60 years or older. Referrals for female patients comprised 47% of the total.

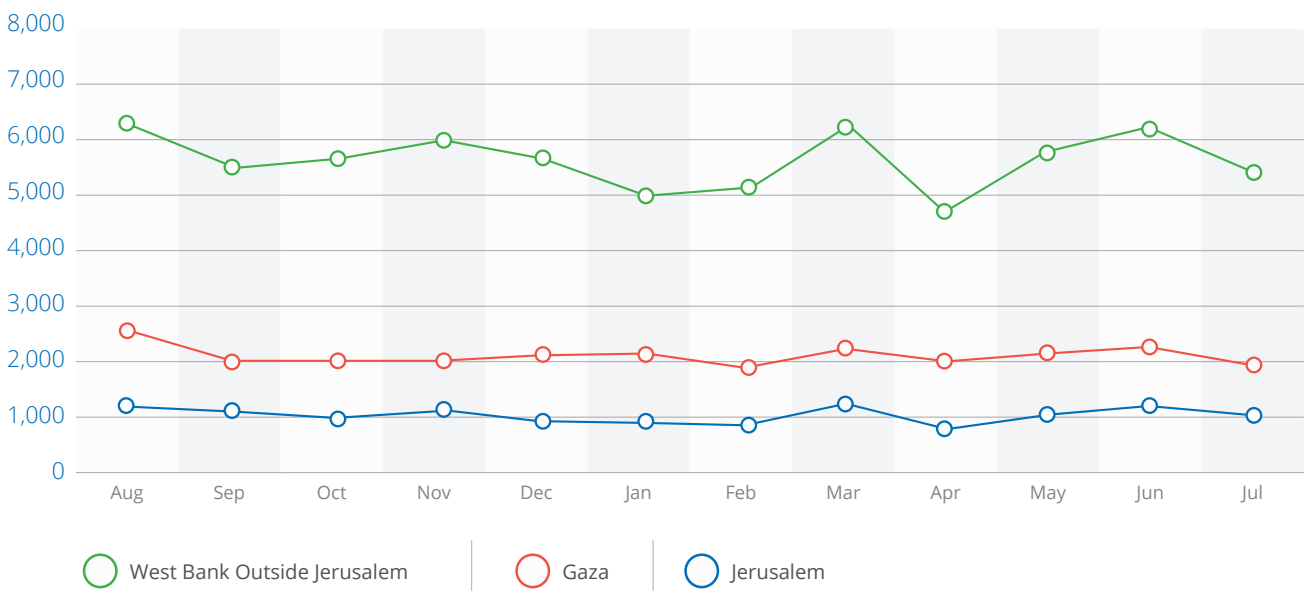
 **1,898**
Gaza Strip

 **6,457**
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, August 2021 to July 2022




Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip

There were 1,619 (M: 838; F: 781) patient permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in July. Just under a third (30%) of applications were for children under 18 and close to a fifth (19%) were for patients over 60 years old. 48% were for female patients, while 83% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Half (49%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 30% for West Bank hospitals outside East Jerusalem; and 20% for Israeli hospitals. 43% of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (25%) or Makassed Hospital (18%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 72% of permit applications: oncology (35%); cardiology (13%); haematology (10%); ophthalmology (7%) and paediatrics (7%). The remaining 28% of applications were for 20 other specialties.

A further 92 permit applications for patients and companions were submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs during July 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 92 applications, 85 (92%) were approved, 3 (3%) were denied and 4 (4%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 1,035 (M: 533; F: 502) or 64% of the 1,619 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez in July 2022 were approved, similar to the average approval rate (63%) for the first half of the year. The approval rate for patient permit applications varies by sex and age of patients. In July, men aged 18 to 40 had an approval rate of 52%, while women over 60 had an approval rate of 77% - see Table 1.

 **1,619**
patient applications

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

 **64%**
approved

 **0.4%**
denied

 **36%**
delayed

Table 1

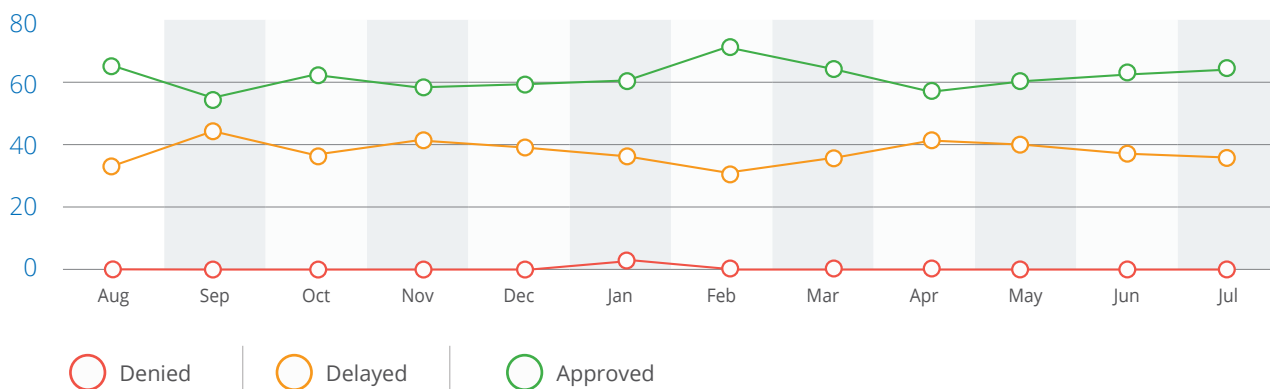
Approval rate for patient permit applications in July 2022, by age and sex

July 2022	Number of applications		Approved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-3	83	53	76%	58%
4-17	186	169	61%	63%
18-40	205	207	52%	57%
41-60	191	216	63%	66%
over 60	173	136	75%	77%
sub-total	838	781	64%	64%
Total	1,619			
Overall approval rate for patient applications			64%	

Approval rates also vary by referred specialty. In July, specialties with an approval rate higher than 70% with more than one application included maxillo-facial surgery and dermatology at 100% (just 2 application each), heart surgery at 82% (11 applications), haematology at 76% (161 applications), intensive care at 75% (12 applications), neurosurgery at 74% (38 applications), and cancer care (oncology) at 71% (566 applications). Specialties with an approval rate lower than 50% included orthopaedics (49%), general surgery (46%), nuclear medicine (42%), urology (33%), respiratory medicine (33%), obstetrics/genecology (21%), and plastic surgery (0%) of 3 applications.

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, August 2021 to July 2022



Denied care: 6 (M: 5; F: 1) patient permit applications, comprising 0.4% of the total for Gaza, were denied in July. These included three adult aged 18 to 40 years and three adults aged 41 to 60. They were referred for neurosurgery (2), oncology (1), ophthalmology (1), cardiology (1) and haematology (1). Five patients were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem and one was referred to a hospital in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem.

Delayed care: 578 (M: 300; F: 278) patient permit applications, or 36% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. 31% (178 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 13% (75) were for patients over 60 years. Of delayed applications, 48% were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, 32% for the West Bank, and 19% for Israeli hospitals. Of the delayed applications, 28% had appointments for cancer treatment (oncology), 12% for cardiology, 9% for ophthalmology, 8% for paediatrics, 7% for orthopaedics, 7% for haematology, 5% for general surgery, 4% for internal medicine, 3% for urology. The remaining 17% were for 12 other specialties.

Most delayed applications (530 or 92%) were 'under study' at the time of appointment. Seven applications were delayed based on the assertion by Israeli COGAT that suitable care is available within Gaza. No evidence was provided as a basis for this claim, with patient medical need unrelated to the security justifications for enforcement of permit requirements for patients. Eight were delayed based on changing different patient companions.

Security interrogation and arrests

11 (M: 6; F: 5) patients from the Gaza Strip were requested for security interrogation in July. One was in the age group 18-40 years, eight were 41-60 years, and two were over 60 years of age. Four had appointments for cancer care (oncology), two for ophthalmology, two for general surgery, one for internal medicine, one for nephrology, and one for neurology. Seven of these patients had applied to reach hospitals in East Jerusalem and four to hospitals in the West Bank. One patient of the 11 (9%) were approved permit after interrogation and 10 (91%) remained pending under study.



11

Gaza patients

called for security interrogation



0

Gaza patients or companions


arrested

Patient companions


The Health Liaison Office submitted 2,158 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in July. 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 July, 735 companion permit applications (34% of the total) were approved, 8 applications (0.4%) were denied and the remaining 1,415 (66%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's hospital appointment.


Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez


The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,235 Gaza patients and 864 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in July to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of the 1,235 patients, 72 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 72 companions. These numbers show that 371 (30%) of patients crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion, the highest monthly percentage of patients travelled without companions since April 2020 when it peaked at 32%. The bodies of 18 deceased patients were returned to Gaza across Beit Hanoun/Erez in July. During the month, the checkpoint was open for 26 days for daytime working hours and closed on 5 days (5 Saturdays).

 **2,158**
companion applications


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

 **34% approved**

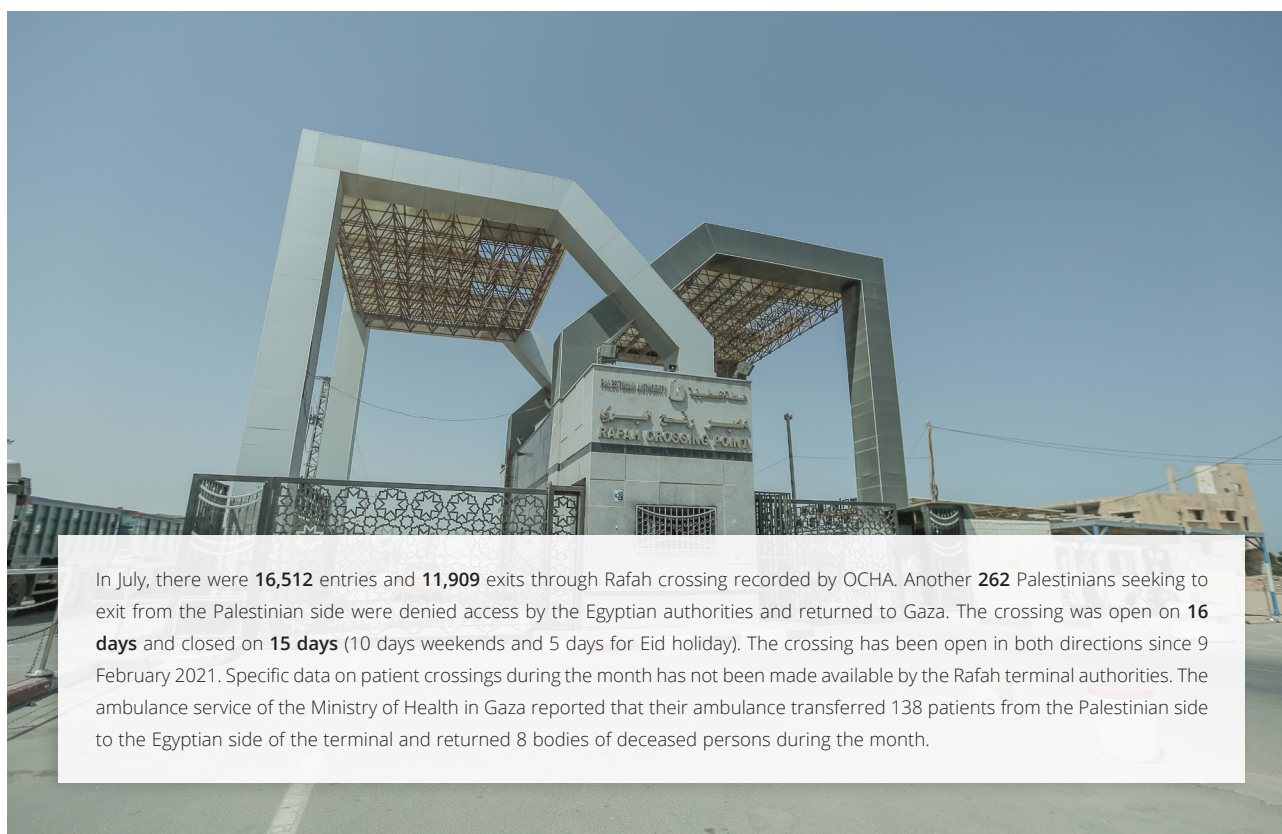
 **0.4% denied**

 **66% delayed**

 **1,235**
patients
exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez

 **864**
companions
exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez

Rafah crossing - Egypt



In July, there were **16,512** entries and **11,909** exits through Rafah crossing recorded by OCHA. Another **262** Palestinians seeking to exit from the Palestinian side were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The crossing was open on **16 days** and closed on **15 days** (10 days weekends and 5 days for Eid holiday). The crossing has been open in both directions since 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 138 patients from the Palestinian side to the Egyptian side of the terminal and returned 8 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 July 2022, there were 6,626 permit applications by patients from the West Bank outside Jerusalem to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and in Israel. 3,512 (53%) were for female patients; 1,404 (21%) were for children under the age of 18 years; and 504 (8%) were for patients over 60 years. 69% of patient applications were for appointments in East Jerusalem Hospitals and 31% in Israeli hospitals or clinics. Of the 6,626 West Bank patient applications in July, 5,064 (76%) were approved, 1,338 (20%) were unsuccessful (denied) and 224 (3%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.


Companions: In July 2022, there were 8,076 patient companion permit applications to Israeli authorities from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. 4,506 (56%) were for female companions, while 88% of companion permit applications were for companions aged from 18-59 years. Of the 8,076 West Bank companion applications, 5,554 (69%) were approved, 2,190 (27%) were unsuccessful and 332 (4%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

 **6,626**
patient permit
applications

for Israeli permits to access
healthcare in East Jerusalem
and Israel


 **76% approved**


 **20% unsuccessful**


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

 **8,076**
patient companion
applications

to access healthcare in East
Jerusalem and Israel

 **69% approved**

 **27% unsuccessful**

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

In Focus

Ahmed, a patient with cancer, delayed critical follow up for four months

Ahmed is 39 years old from the Gaza Strip.

He was diagnosed with cancer in his right parotid gland in 2013, receiving surgery and treatment in Egypt. In 2016, doctors found recurrence of his cancer and he had further surgery in 2017 at Assuta Hospital in Tel Aviv. Ahmed received medicines and radiotherapy and chemotherapy to increase the chances of his successful treatment and since this time he has needed regular follow up, including medical imaging (PET scan) not available in the Gaza Strip.

In July 2021, doctors at Assuta Hospital found spread of Ahmed's cancer to his lungs. He was treated with further radiotherapy and scheduled for follow up (PET scan) at 6 months and at one year.

"I lost two hospital appointments in May and July. Doctors told me that follow up is critical in my case, I need a PET scan to look for nodules on the lung. Then I would need to see the oncologist and ear, nose and throat specialist."



Ahmed had an appointment scheduled for 23 August, but he was notified that his application was under study.

“For me, as a young person and a father of three young children, my health means everything. It means my ability to work, my ability to make an income, my ability to support my family and to support my children as they grow up and become independent.”

In July alone, nearly 2,000 patients from across the occupied Palestinian territory were prevented from accessing essential health care because of the delay and denial of permits by Israel.

Health is a fundamental right. Arbitrary delay and denial of access for Palestinian patients must end. We should all have unhindered access to the health care we need.

