



MONTHLY REPORT

June 2023

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **8,644**

referrals issued to access health facilities outside the Palestinian MoH

2,251 Gaza

6,274 West Bank

 **82%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

50%

of Gaza companion permit applications approved

 **77%**

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

77%

of West Bank companion permit applications approved

 **37**

Gaza patient called for security interrogation

Part 1 Referrals

May referrals by the Ministry of Health

In June, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 8,644 referrals to health services delivered by non-MoH providers. Referrals from the West Bank comprised 73% (6,274) of the total, including 840 referrals for patients from east Jerusalem, while referrals for the Gaza Strip accounted for 26% (2,251) of the total. 13 referrals were issued for Palestinian patients present in Egypt, five in Jordan and two in Syria, while the origin of 99 referrals (1%) was not reported.

Half (51%) of Palestinian MoH referrals were to hospitals in the West Bank, outside east Jerusalem; 33% were to east Jerusalem hospitals; 7% within the Gaza Strip; 7% to Israeli hospitals; 2% were to Egypt; and 0.2% (20 referrals) and 0.1% (9 referrals) were to Jordan and Turkey, respectively.

The top needed specialties were oncology (25%); haematology and medical imaging (6% each); urology & nephrology, cardiac catheterization, cardiology, and ophthalmology (5% each); radiation therapy (4%); endoscopy, neonatal ICU, and paediatrics (3% each); and vascular surgery, obstetrics & gynaecology, rehabilitation, diagnostic procedures, and laboratory examinations (2% each). The remaining 20% were for 21 other medical specialties.

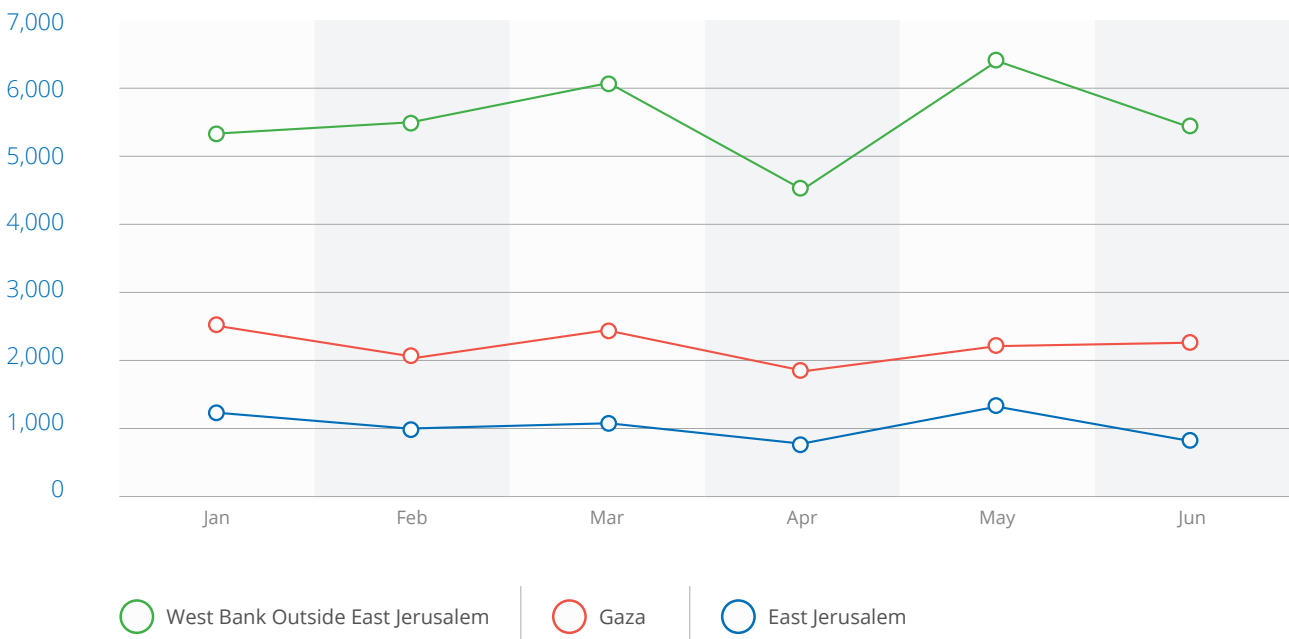
Full age disaggregation was pending at the time of reporting. Referrals for female patients comprised 46% of the total.

 **2,251**
Gaza Strip

 **6,274**
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, January to June 2023




Access

The Gaza Strip

There were 1,556 (M: 801; F: 755) permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in June, 8% lower than the monthly average for 2022 (1,691). More than a quarter (28%) of applications were for children under 18 and more than a fifth (22%) were for patients over 60 years old. Approximately half (49%) were for female patients, while 84% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Just under half (47%) of applications were for appointments in east Jerusalem hospitals; 34% were for hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem; and 19% were for Israeli hospitals. 41% of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (28%) or Makassed Hospital (13%), both in east Jerusalem. The top six specialties accounted for 81% of permit applications: oncology (38%); haematology (12%); cardiology (12%); orthopaedics (7%); paediatrics (6%); and ophthalmology (6%). The remaining 19% of applications were for 20 other specialties.

A further 100 permit applications for patients and companions were submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs during June 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 100 applications, 29 (29%) were approved within the month, none (0%) were denied and 71 (71%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 1,280 (M: 629; F: 651), or 82%, of the 1,556 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were approved in June 2023. The approval rate for patient permit applications varies by age and sex of patients, see Table 1. In June, of the different demographic groups, men aged 18 to 60 had the lowest approval rate at 68%, while women aged over 60 had the highest approval rate (94%). The overall approval rate for female patients (86%) was higher than for male patients (79%).

 **1,556**
patient applications

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

 **82%**
approved

 **1%**
denied

 **17%**
delayed

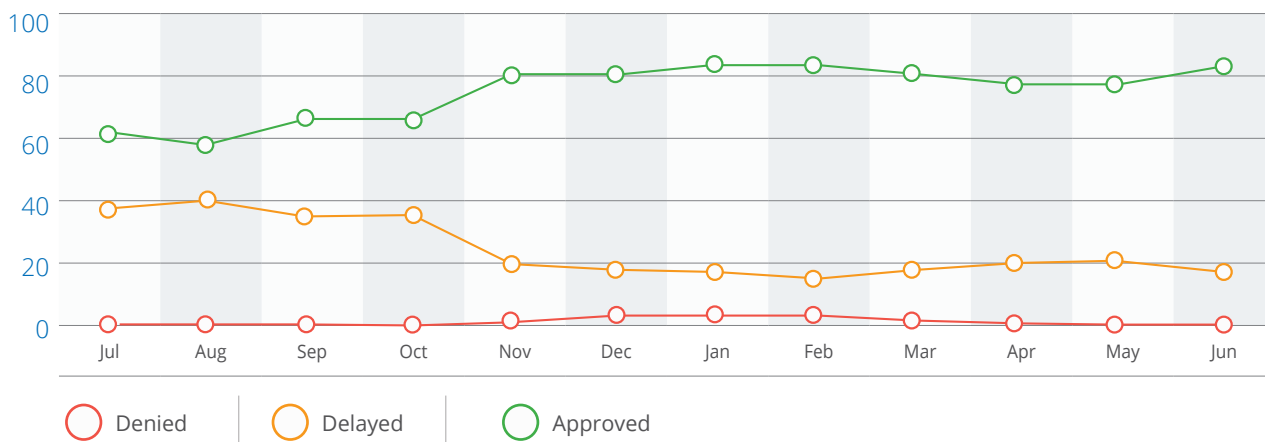
Table 1 Approval rate for patient permit applications in June 2023, by age and sex

June 2023 AGE	Number of applications		Approved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-3	73	50	89%	89%
4-17	170	137	88%	80%
18-40	189	198	68%	84%
41-60	179	212	68%	94%
over 60	190	158	87%	86%
sub-total	801	755	79%	80%
Total	1,556			
Overall approval rate for patient applications			82%	

Approval rates also vary by referral specialty. In June, specialties with an approval rate similar to or higher than the average (82%) with more than 20 applications included oncology (589) at 89%, haematology (181) at 88%, paediatrics (97) at 85%, and general surgery (32) at 84%. Meanwhile, specialties with an approval rate lower than 82% and more than 20 applications included cardiology (180) at 79%, orthopaedics (104) at 75%, neurosurgery (41) at 73%, internal medicine (66) at 70%, ophthalmology (99) at 66%, and urology (31) at 65%.

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, July 2022 to June 2023



Denied care: 18 (M: 12; F: 6) patient permit applications, more than 1% of the total for Gaza patients, were denied in June. Four of these 18 patient applications were for children under the age of 18 years, five for adults aged 18 to 40 years, eight for adults aged 41-60 years and one for a patient over 60 years old. Five patients had appointments for cardiology; three for oncology; two for pulmonary medicine; and one each for urology, heart surgery, ICU, internal medicine, neurosurgery, orthopaedics, paediatrics, and vascular surgery. Eight were destined for hospital appointments in the West Bank outside east Jerusalem, six in east Jerusalem and four to Israeli hospitals.

Delayed care: 258 (M: 160; F: 98) patient permit applications, or 17% 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, 18% (46 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 13% (33) were for patients over 60 years old. Most delayed applications (197 or 76%) were classified as 'under study' at the time of the patient's hospital appointment.

Interrogation

In June, 37 (M: 30; F: 7) patients from the Gaza Strip were requested for interrogation as a prerequisite to their permit applications. 17 patients were aged 18 to 40 years, 16 were aged 41 to 60 years, and 4 were over 60 years old. Of these patients, 11 had appointments for cancer care (oncology); 7 for orthopaedics; 5 for ophthalmology; 4 for neurosurgery; 3 for internal medicine; 2 for cardiology; and 1 each for pulmonary medicine, ENT, heart catheterization, neurology, and urology. 25 of the patients had applied for permits to access hospitals in east Jerusalem and 12 to the West Bank outside east Jerusalem. More than three-fifths of patients (62%, or 23/37) had submitted their permit applications more than 30 days before the hospital appointment. 1 of the 37 patients was approved during the month and the remaining 36 were awaiting a response at the time of monthly reporting.

Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 2,066 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in June. 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 June, 1,028 companion permit applications (50% of the total) were approved, 100 applications (5%) were denied, and the remaining 938 (45%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's hospital appointment.



37

Patients

called for interrogation



0

Gaza patient or companion

arrested



2,066

companion applications

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



50% approved



5% denied



45% delayed

Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,703 patients and 1,278 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in June to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. **A quarter, or 25% (425), of patients** therefore crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. Of the 1,703 patients, 79 were transferred from a Palestinian- to an Israeli-registered ambulance (back-to-back) with 79 companions. The bodies of 19 deceased persons were returned to Gaza across Beit Hanoun/Erez in June. During the month, the checkpoint was open for 26 days for daytime working hours and closed on 4 days (4 Saturdays).



1,703

patient-exits
through Beit
Hanoun/Erez



1,278

companion-exits
through Beit
Hanoun/Erez

Rafah border crossing to Egypt



The ambulance service of the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported the transfer of 143 patients from the Palestinian to the Egyptian side of the crossing and the return of 9 bodies of deceased persons during June. Specific data on patient crossings was not made available by Rafah terminal authorities. There were 17,405 person-entries and 12,998 person-exits across Rafah reported by OCHA. A further 210 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 18 days and closed on 12 days (9 weekends and 3 days for Eid Al-Adha holiday). 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 7,630 permit applications by patients from the West Bank outside east Jerusalem in June. Of patient permit applications, 3,814 (50%) were for female patients, 1,597 (21%) were for children under the age of 18 years, and 633 (8%) were for patients over 60 years. Two-thirds (67%) were for appointments at hospitals in east Jerusalem, while a third (33%) were for Israeli hospitals or clinics.

Of the 7,630 West Bank patient applications in June, 5,911 (77%) were approved, 4% lower than the average approval rate in 2022 (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 1,444 (19%) denied applications and 275 (4%) applications pending at the time of monthly reporting.

The approval rate of patient permits varies by location. In June, governorates with an approval rate of 77% or higher included Abu Dis (90%); Ar-Ram and Jericho (83%) each; Bethlehem and Salfit (82%) each; Tulkarem and Ramallah (80%) each; Jenin (79%); and Tubas and Qalqilya (78%) each. Governorates with an approval rate lower than the average of 77% included Nablus (70%), and Al-Khalil (Hebron) (65%).

Companions: In June, there were 8,781 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities from the West Bank outside east Jerusalem, to access health care in east Jerusalem and Israel. 4,538 (52%) were for female companions, while 89% of applications were for companions aged from 18-59 years.

Of the 8,781 West Bank companion applications, 6,757 (77%) were approved. 1,676 (19%) were unsuccessful and 348 (4%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.



7,630
patient permit
applications

for Israeli permits to access
healthcare in east Jerusalem
and Israel



77% approved



19% unsuccessful



4% pending
at the time of monthly
reporting



8,781
patient companion
applications

to access healthcare in East
Jerusalem and Israel



77% approved



19% unsuccessful



4% pending
at the time of monthly
reporting