



Referrals from Gaza: Summary for May 2012

- The majority of patients referred by the MoH who need Israeli-issued permits to access medical treatment (63%) were destined for Palestinian hospitals in the oPt.
- 849 of 883 referral patients who applied for permits to cross Erez checkpoint were approved, an approval rate of 96%, the highest monthly rate ever recorded.
- 5 patients were denied a permit for medical access, and 29 patients, including 6 children, had their medical care delayed since their permit request was not responded to in time for their hospital appointment. 9 female and 10 male patients were called for interrogation by the security services. Following their interrogation, 7 patients were still waiting for a GSS response, 8 were approved, 3 were asked to submit a new request, and one was denied.
- The main reasons for patient referrals during May were for treatment in the following subspecialties: oncology/hematology (20%), cardiovascular (14%), nuclear medicine (8%), and pediatrics, ophthalmology and orthopedics (7% each).

During May 2012, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) referred 1,498 patients (852 males and 646 females; 57% and 43%, respectively) to health facilities for specialized treatment not available in MoH facilities in Gaza. 18% (265 patients) were referred to NGO or private facilities within the Gaza Strip and 82% (1,233 patients) were referred outside of Gaza to hospitals in East Jerusalem (34%), Egypt (29%), Israel (25%), the West Bank (11%) and Jordan (1.7%). 875 of these patients required Israeli-issued permits to access through Erez crossing, while 358 required an Israeli-issued ID and Egyptian approval to enter Egypt through Rafah border crossing (see Table 1, below).

Referral Destination	MoH Referrals					Total 2012
	January	February	March	April	May	
Gaza (Non MoH facilities)	289	258	284	301	265	1,397
West Bank (MoH & NGOs)	110	101	94	115	134	554
East Jerusalem	374	301	359	344	416	1,794
Egypt	319	240	270	296	358	1,483
Jordan	47	53	41	30	21	192
Israel	254	237	247	252	304	1,294
Total	1,393	1,190	1,295	1,338	1,498	6,714

*Referrals are recorded according to month of scheduled hospital appointment. Source: MoH RAD Gaza.

Patients were referred during May, mainly for treatment in the following subspecialties: oncology/hematology (20%), cardiovascular (14%), nuclear medicine (8%), and pediatrics, ophthalmology and orthopedics (7% each) each. These cases represented 64% of total referrals and 72% of estimated total referral cost in May, of NIS 16 million (\$ 4.1 million). The number of referrals in May 2012, was the highest since the beginning of this year.

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

In May 2012, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 883 patient applications for permits to cross Erez to access hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Israel and Jordan (see Table 2) compared with 764 in April and 768 in March 2012.

During this month 91.4% of applications (807) were for patient referrals submitted and financially covered by the MoH, 3.9% (34) were self-funded, 1.8% (16) by Peres Center for Peace and 1.5% (13) by Physicians for Human Rights - Israel, 1.1% (10) by Nourala al-Alam Foundation, and the remaining 3 cases by other funds.

Age group	Total		Approved*		Denied		Delayed**		Called for GSS interrogation***	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	62	78	60	77	0	0	2	1	0	0
4 - 17	74	111	73	109	0	0	1	2	0	0
18- 40	105	92	93	84	0	0	10	7	9	5
41 - 60	101	131	101	127	2	1	0	2	0	5
Over 60	65	64	62	63	0	2	3	1	0	0
<i>Sub-total</i>	407	476	389	460	2	3	16	13	9	10
Total	883		849 (96.2%)		5 (0.6%)		29 (3.3%)		19 (2.2%)	

* Approvals are typically communicated to the patient only 24 hours in advance of their scheduled appointments.

** Permit applications for patient access through Erez can only be submitted within 10 days of hospital appointments. When there is no timely response from the Israeli Liaison Office, the applications are registered here as “delayed”, meaning that the Palestinian Liaison Office received no response to the permit application prior to the patient’s hospital appointment date. Some patients in this category may eventually receive permit approval, but after their hospital appointment has passed. They must then reschedule their appointment. Other patients in this category may eventually receive denials or may fail to receive a response.

*** These are requests for interrogation as communicated by Israeli authorities through the Palestinian Liaison Office. This may be underreported since Israeli authorities sometimes contact patients directly for interrogation.

In May, **96.2%** (849 patients) of all patient applications for permits were approved, higher than the 2011 average approval rate of 89.7%. Five patients (0.6%) were denied permission to cross Erez checkpoint (3 for orthopedic treatment, 1 for neurology, and 1 for ophthalmic treatment); 3 of the 5 denied patients were aged 18 to 40 years (2 females and 1 male), and 2 male patients were aged 41 to 60 years.

3.3% (29 patients, including 6 children) had their applications delayed beyond their hospital appointment. **19 patients (9 female and 10 male) were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition of their permit application.** Following their interrogation, 7 patients were still waiting for a GSS response, 8 were approved, 3 were asked to submit a new request, and one was denied.

Delays in processing applications **can be critical for patients** who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. In 2011, three patients died before receiving permits to travel through Erez crossing to access the hospitals they have been referred to. Since 2008, 70 referral patients were reported to have died before reaching medical care outside Gaza (50 referrals through Erez crossing and 20 through Rafah border crossing).

Point of exiting Gaza	Patients crossing	Ambulance transfers (back-to-back)	Days open in month	Special conditions
Erez crossing (North)	789	53	Open: 26 days Closed: 5 days (May 27 for an Israeli holiday in addition to 4 Saturdays)	Only exit point to access medical care in oPt, Israel and Jordan
Rafah crossing (South)	441	81	Open: 21 days Closed: 10 days (May 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 only open for pilgrims, May 23 Egyptian holiday and 4 Fridays)	Only exit point to access medical care in Egypt

Table 4: Israeli District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez, by response, sex of applicant (number and %)

Period	May 2011		May 2012		January – May 2011		January – May 2012	
Total	1,076 (F:494; M:582)		883 (F:407; M:476)		4,806 (F:2068; M:2738)		4,083 (F:2000; M:2083)	
Approved	986 (F:461; M:525)	91.64 %	849 (F:389; M:460)	96.1%	4,228 (F:1887; M:2341)	87.97%	3,846 (F:1818; M:2028)	94.2%
Denied	22 (F:4; M:18)	2.04%	5 (F:2; M:3)	0.6%	110 (F:22; M:88)	2.29%	38 (F:14; M:24)	0.9%
Delayed	68 (F:29; M:39)	6.32%	29 (F:16; M:13)	3.3%	468 (F:159; M:309)	9.74%	199 (F:89; M:110)	4.9%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	12 (F:1; M:11)	1.11%	19 (F:9; M:10)	2.2%	68 (F:12; M:56)	1.41%	91 (F:38; M:53)	2.2%

Table 5: Referrals out of Gaza by geographic location (number and %)

Period	May 2011		May 2012		January – May 2011		January – May 2012	
Total outside Gaza	1,195		1,233		5,255		5,317	
West Bank	126	10.5%	134	10.9%	470	8.9%	554	10.4%
East Jerusalem	318	26.6%	416	33.7%	1,505	28.6%	1,794	33.7%
Egypt	448	37.5%	358	29.0%	1,834	34.9%	1,483	27.9%
Jordan	20	1.7%	21	1.7%	102	1.9%	192	3.6%
Israel	283	23.7%	304	24.7%	1,344	25.6%	1,294	24.3%

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