



MONTHLY REPORT

October 2022

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory



11,405

referrals issued to access health facilities outside the Palestinian MoH

2,508 Gaza

8,745 West Bank



69%

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

37%

of Gaza companion permit applications approved



82%

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

78%

of West Bank companion permit applications approved



29

Gaza patients called for interrogation

IN FOCUS

PRCS driver testimony of an attack in Beit Furik, Nablus

Part 1 Referrals

October referrals by the Ministry of Health

In October, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 11,405 referrals to non-MoH health care providers, 30% higher than the monthly average of the first half of 2022 (8,771). This increase related to a backlog of referrals caused by a cyberattack on the Ministry of Health server in August 2022. Referrals from the West Bank comprised 77% (8,745) of the total, including 1,223 referrals for patients from East Jerusalem, while referrals from the Gaza Strip accounted for 22% (2,508) of the total. There were four referrals issued for Palestinian patients present in Jordan, while the origin of 148 referrals (1%) was not reported.

Palestinian MoH referrals to hospitals in the West Bank, outside East Jerusalem, comprised 49% of referrals in October; to East Jerusalem hospitals 38%; within the Gaza Strip 5%; to Israeli hospitals 5%; to Egypt 3%; to Jordan 0.2% (20 referrals); and to Turkey 0.04% (5 referrals).

The top needed specialties were oncology (29%); cardiac catheterization, cardiology, and medical imaging (6% each); urology & nephrology (5%); haematology, ophthalmology, and radiation therapy (4% each); and endoscopy (3%). The remaining 29% were for 25 other medical specialties.

Referrals for children comprised 21% (2,345) of the total, while 29% (3,305) were for those aged 60 years or older. Referrals for female patients comprised 48% of the total.

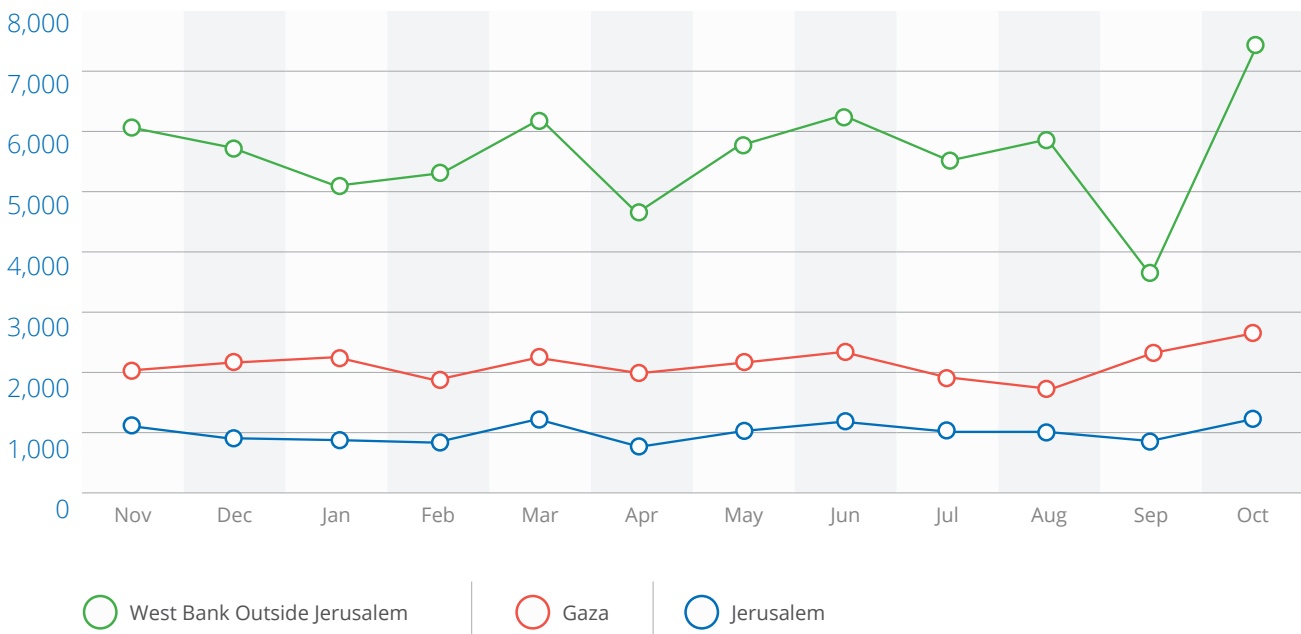
 **2,508**
Gaza Strip

 **8,745**
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, November 2021 to October 2022



Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip

There were 1,739 (M: 911; F: 828) patient permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in October. A quarter (25%) of applications were for children under 18 and a fifth (20%) were for patients over 60 years old. 48% were for female patients, while 88% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. More than half (54%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 32% for hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem; and 14% for Israeli hospitals. 46% of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (27%) or Makassed Hospital (19%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 72% of permit applications: oncology (37%); haematology (11%); ophthalmology (9%); cardiology (9%); and paediatrics (6%). The remaining 28% of applications were for 20 other specialties.

In October, there were an additional 176 permit applications submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs (GACA) for patients and companions to travel by shuttle direct from Erez (Beit Hanoun) checkpoint to King Hussein (Allenby) Bridge to Jordan. In the same month, GACA received 96 responses for patient and companion permit applications submitted in October or before. Of 96 responses received, 89 (93%) were approved, 3 (3%) were denied and 4 (4%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 1,193 (M: 590; F: 603), or 68.6%, of the 1,739 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were approved in October 2022. This represents an improvement of 6% compared to the average approval rate from January to September (63%).

The approval rate for patient permit applications varies by sex and age of patients. In October, men aged 18 to 40 had an approval rate of 53%, while female children aged 0-3 had an approval rate of 84% – see Table 1.



1,739
patient applications

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



69%
approved



0.5%
denied



31%
delayed

Table 1

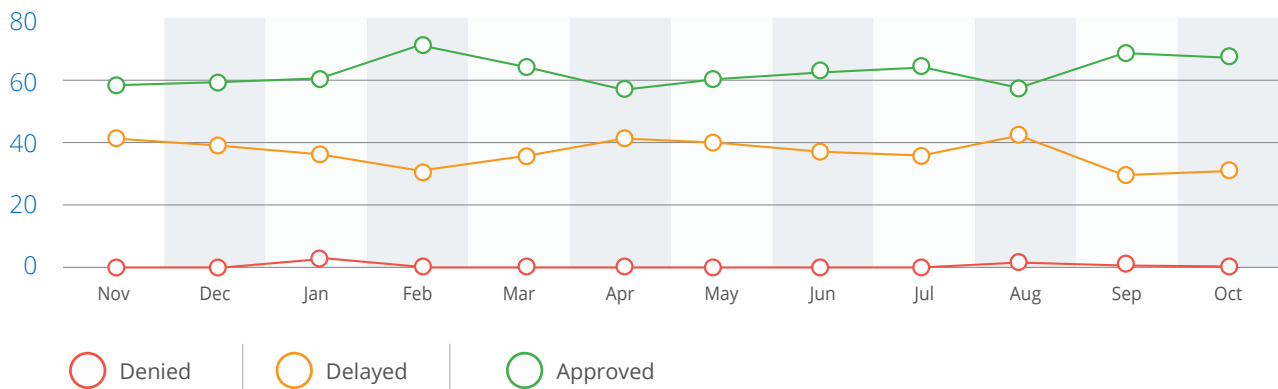
Approval rate for patient permit applications in October 2022, by age and sex

October 2022 AGE	Number of applications		Approved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-3	56	50	73%	84%
4-17	178	152	72%	72%
18-40	230	235	53%	71%
41-60	235	250	61%	70%
over 60	212	141	73%	78%
sub-total	911	828	65%	73%
Total	1,739			
Overall approval rate for patient applications			69%	

Approval rates also vary by referred specialty. In October, specialties with an approval rate higher than 70% with more than ten applications included paediatrics (112) at 79%, haematology (192) at 75%, oncology (646) at 74%, cardiology (151) at 73%, and neurosurgery (30) at 70%. Specialties with an approval rate lower than 60% and more than ten applications included nephrology (37) at 59%, ophthalmology (163) at 56%, neurology (19) at 53%, orthopaedics (100) at 52%, urology (37) at 51%, and heart surgery (11) at 45%.

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, November 2021 to October 2022



Denied care: 9 (M: 8; F: 1) patient permit applications, comprising 0.5% of the total for Gaza, were denied in October. These included five adults aged 18 to 40 years, three adults aged 41 to 60 years and one adult over 60 years of age. They were referred for oncology, ENT, and orthopaedics (2 each); and paediatrics, cardiology, and ophthalmology (1 each). Five patients were referred to hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem and four to East Jerusalem hospitals.

Delayed care: 537 (M: 313; F: 224) patient permit applications, or 31% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. 21% (115 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 16% (87) were for patients over 60 years old. Of delayed applications, 56% were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, 34% for the West Bank, and 10% for Israeli hospitals. Most delayed applications (449 or 84%) were 'under study' at the time of appointment. 78 (15%) applications were delayed for administrative reasons. Two patients were awaiting appointments for security interrogation, while a further two were requested to change companions. Six applications were delayed based on the assertion by Israeli COGAT that suitable care is available within Gaza, though no evidence was provided to support this claim.

Interrogation and arrests

29 (M: 25; F: 4) patients from the Gaza Strip were requested for interrogation as a prerequisite to their permit applications in October. 12 were in the age group 18-40 years, 12 from 41 to 60 years, and five were over 60. Nine had appointments for cancer care (oncology), four for ophthalmology, four for orthopaedics, three for internal medicine, two for cardiology, two for general surgery, two for haematology, and one each for intensive care, urology, and neurology.

18 of the patients had applied to reach hospitals in East Jerusalem, ten to reach hospitals in the West Bank and one to reach an Israeli Hospital. 14 patients had submitted their permit applications more than 30 days before the hospital appointment. One of the 29 patient was approved permit after interrogation and 28 remained pending under study.

Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 2,324 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in October. 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 October, 864 companion permit applications (37% of the total) were approved, 19 applications (1%) were denied and the remaining 1,441 (62%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's hospital appointment.



29

Gaza patients

called for security interrogation



0

Gaza patients or companions

arrested



2,324

companion applications

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



37% approved



1% denied



62% delayed

Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,451 Gaza patients and 1,046 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in October to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of the 1,451 patients, 63 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 63 companions. These numbers show that 405 (28% of) patients crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. The bodies of 12 deceased patients were returned to Gaza across Beit Hanoun/Erez in October. During the month, the checkpoint was open for 22 days for daytime working hours and closed on 9 days (5 Saturdays and 4 days for Jewish Holidays).



1,451

patients
exited through Beit
Hanoun/Erez



1,046

companions
exited through Beit
Hanoun/Erez

Rafah crossing - Egypt



The ambulance service of the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that their **ambulance transferred 167 patients** from the Palestinian side to the Egyptian side of the crossing and returned **7 bodies** of deceased persons during the month. Specific data on patient crossings during the month was not made available by the Rafah terminal authorities. There were **9,281** person-entries and **13,206** person-exits across Rafah recorded by OCHA. Another 456 Palestinians seeking to exit from the Palestinian side were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The crossing was open on 21 days and closed on 10 days (9 weekends and one official holiday). The crossing has been open in both directions since 9 February 2021.

The West Bank

Restrictions on the movement of Palestinians from the West Bank to Israel and East Jerusalem affect parts of the population more than others. Many women older than 50 years of age and men older than 55 years of age 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 October, there were 7,127 permit applications by patients from the West Bank outside Jerusalem to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and in Israel. 3,724 (52%) were for female patients; 1,326 (19%) were for children under the age of 18 years; and 711 (10%) were for patients over 60 years. 70% of patient applications were for appointments in East Jerusalem Hospitals and 30% in Israeli hospitals or clinics.


Of the 7,127 West Bank patient applications in October, 5,834 (82%) were approved, 1,022 (14%) were unsuccessful (denied) and 271 (4%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.


Companions: In October 2022, there were 8,445 patient companion permit applications to Israeli authorities from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. 4,414 (52%) were for female companions, while 92% of companion permit applications were for companions aged from 18-59 years.


Of the 8,445 West Bank companion applications, 6,559 (78%) were approved, 1,455 (17%) were unsuccessful and 431 (5%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

 **7,127**
patient permit
applications

for Israeli permits to access
healthcare in East Jerusalem
and Israel


 **82% approved**


 **14% unsuccessful**


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

 **8,445**
patient companion
applications

to access healthcare in East
Jerusalem and Israel

 **78% approved**

 **17% unsuccessful**

 **5% pending**
at the time of monthly
reporting

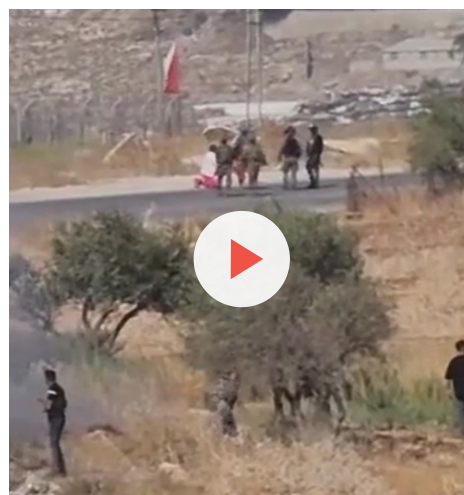
In Focus

PRCS driver testimony of an attack in Beit Furik, Nablus

On 2 October 2022, a Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) ambulance crew travelled to Beit Furik near Nablus, to provide first aid to persons injured during demonstrations against settlement expansion and incursions in the village, which is in the north of the West Bank.

Ali was driving the ambulance, while his colleague Omar¹ sat beside him. They crossed the checkpoint leading to Beit Furik without obstruction. However, as the ambulance approached the entrance to the village the crew was confronted with a temporary (flying) checkpoint comprising Israeli soldiers and border guards.

“The soldiers aimed their guns towards us and were shouting at us, ordering us to stop,” said Ali, the driver. “I was driving very slowly, as we are used to doing in situations like this, and stopped behind one of the military jeeps. A soldier came



1 Pseudonyms are used in this account

to the window and told me to turn the engine off and give him the keys. He was banging at the window with the back of his gun. I tried to explain that we had information that there were people injured and we needed to reach them.”

“After switching off the engine, the soldiers insisted on searching the vehicle. I offered to go to the back of the vehicle with the soldier to open the ambulance for him, but he refused. We are used to going with the soldiers to open the door. They usually want us to be in front of them when they search a vehicle, but this soldier insisted on going alone. Because of this, I was afraid he might try to plant a weapon or a knife on the vehicle and make an accusation against us. I wanted to see what he was doing, but another soldier stood by my door, aiming his weapon at me and preventing me from leaving the vehicle or seeing behind.”

“The ambulance vehicle automatically locked when the soldier tried to open it. He then shouted towards me ordering me to open the backdoor, which I did. I left the ambulance and went towards the backdoor. At this point the soldier shouted at me again, asking why I was there. When I responded that I wanted to see what he was doing, the soldier got out of the vehicle and started pushing me and kicking me, hitting me with the back of his gun and causing me to fall to the ground.”

“Omar came out of the vehicle and tried to help me. Another soldier beside the ambulance came and started pushing Omar, while a further 3 soldiers joined and were surrounding us and pushing us away from the ambulance.”

At the point that Ali and Omar had been pushed away from the vehicle, someone in the nearby demonstration began recording what was happening in a video on their phone. The video shows the soldiers pushing, kicking and beating the paramedics before they are both made to kneel on the ground.

“When we were on the ground, someone was trying to call me. I answered the call on speaker so that the person on the line would know we were in danger. That person contacted the Palestinian Coordination Office, who arrived on site shortly afterwards. Following negotiation, we were released. Another ambulance came to take Omar to hospital for treatment, while I provided information to the officer from the Coordination Office. I then drove myself to hospital.”

As a result of the attack, Ali sustained injuries to his leg including tear of a cartilage in his knee, requiring treatment for the pain and physiotherapy. He returned to work after 40 days.

“Even after my injury, I will go back to the field. Even if it means that something can happen to me, this is our duty. We were raised this way; this is who we are. It’s not the first time I was exposed to violence from soldiers. I worked during the Second Intifada, when we were fired at with live ammunition. We had a female patient in the ambulance at the time. The violations against us have continued all these years. We are still prevented from reaching injured people, pushed around by soldiers, and shot at. Our safety depends on the mood of the soldiers.”

In October, WHO recorded 43 attacks against health care in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Of these, two-thirds (67%, 29) involved obstruction to delivery of health services, including to 28 ambulances. There were 12 health workers arrested or detained during the month. Meanwhile, two-fifths (42%, 18) of attacks involved physical violence against health workers, ambulances, and health facilities. These attacks affected one health facility and led to the damage of 10 ambulances and injury of 13 health staff.