



MONTHLY REPORT

November 2021

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **9,307**

referrals issued to access health facilities outside the Palestinian MoH

2,044 Gaza

7,124 West Bank

 **58%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

36%

of Gaza companion permit applications approved

 **87%**

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

80%

of West Bank companion permit applications approved

 **1**

Gaza patients called for security interrogation

Part 1 Referrals

November referrals by the Ministry of Health

In November, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 9,307 referrals to health care services delivered by non-MoH providers, 20% higher than the monthly average (7,768) for the first half of 2021. Referrals from the West Bank comprised 77% (7,124) of the total, including 1,115 referrals for patients from East Jerusalem, while the West Bank population comprises approximately 60% of the total population in the oPt. Referrals for the Gaza Strip accounted for 22% (2,044) of the total. One referral was issued for a Palestinian patient present in Jordan, while the origin of 138 referrals (1%) was not reported.

Palestinian MoH referrals to hospitals in the West Bank, outside East Jerusalem, comprised 49% of referrals in November; to East Jerusalem hospitals 36%; within the Gaza Strip 5%; to Egypt 4%; to Israeli hospitals 6%; to Jordan 0.4% (39 referrals) and 0.04% (4) to Turkey.

The top needed specialties for referrals were oncology (26%); cardiac catheterization (8%); urology & nephrology (7%); cardiology (6%); ophthalmology (5%); haematology (4%); medical imaging (4%); radiation therapy (4%); paediatrics (3%); and endoscopy (3%). The remaining 30% were for 26 other medical specialties.

Referrals for patients under 18 years of age comprised 21% (1,922) of the total, while 29% (2,695) were for those aged 60 years or older. Referrals for female patients comprised 45% of the total.

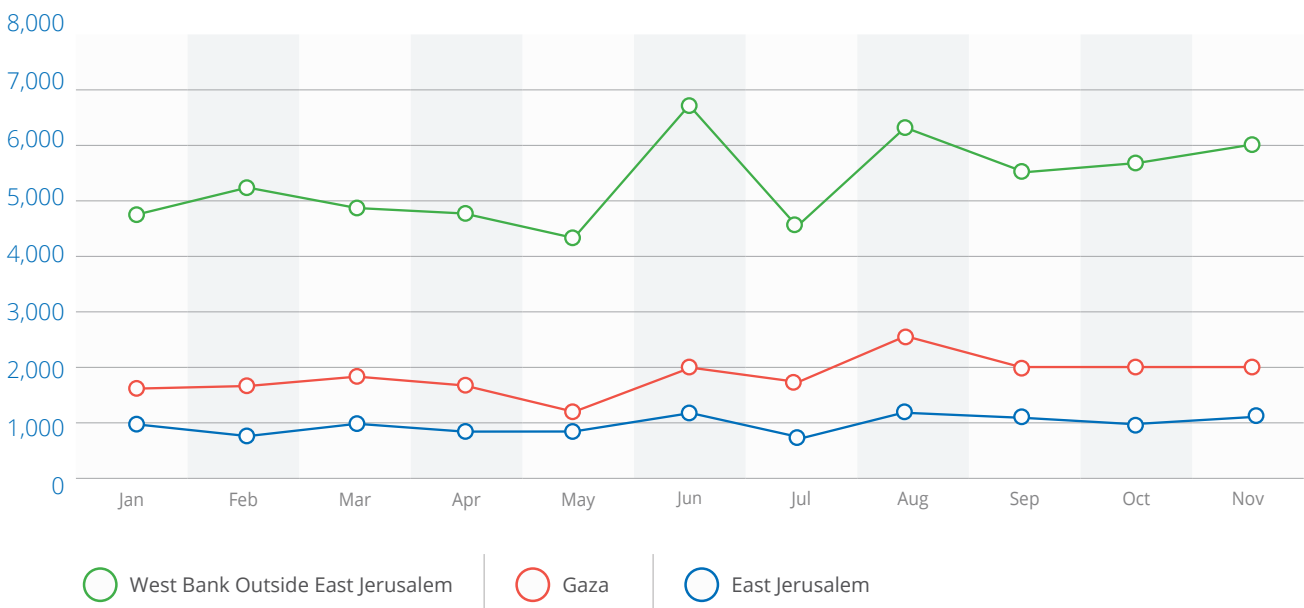
 **2,044**
Gaza Strip

 **7,124**
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 November 2021



Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip

There were 1,630 (M: 883; F: 747) patient permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in November 2021.

Close to a third (29%) of applications were for children under 18 and one in six (16%) was for patients over 60 years old. 46% were for female patients, while 82% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Close to half (46%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 37% for West Bank hospitals outside East Jerusalem; 17% for Israeli hospitals; and 2 applications for a hospital in Jordan. Two in five (40%) of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (20%) or Makassed Hospital (20%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 73% of permit applications: oncology (35%); cardiology (13%); haematology (10%); ophthalmology (9%); and paediatrics (6%). The remaining 27% of applications were for 24 other specialties.

A further 61 permit applications for patients and companions were submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs during November 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 61 applications, 18 (30%) were approved, 8 (13%) were denied and 35 (57%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 946 (M: 493; F: 453) or 58% of the 1,630 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez in November 2021 were approved, 14% lower than the average approval rate (72%) in 2021 before the escalation in May. In May 2021, the approval rate for patient applications dropped to 31% during the military escalation then improved in June and July. In August and September, the approval rate had declined to 64% and 54% respectively, with May and September among the lowest monthly approval rates in the past 3 years.

Of approved applications, 48% were for female patients, a third (29%) for children under 18 and a fifth (20%) for patients over 60. More than two-fifths (44%) of approved applications were for oncology patients, 11% for haematology, 11% for cardiology, 6% for ophthalmology, 6% for paediatrics, and the remaining 22% were for other 21 medical specialties.



1,630
patient applications

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



58%
approved



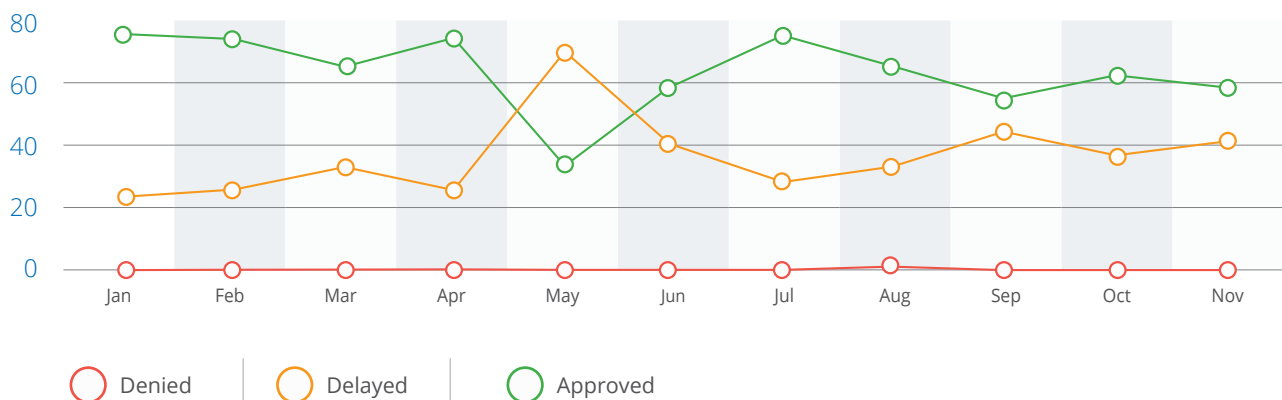
1%
denied



41%
delayed

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, January to November 2021



Denied care: 9 (M: 8; F: 1) patients were denied in November: two children less than 18 years; three adults aged 18 to 40; three adults aged 41 to 60 years; and one patient over 60 years old. Four patients were referred for ophthalmology, including one of the children (referred for retinal detachment); two were referred for oncology; one for orthopaedics; one for cardiology; and one for haematology. Five patients were referred to hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, and four were referred to East Jerusalem.

Delayed care: 675 (M: 382; F: 293) patient permit applications, or 41% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. 30% (204 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 10% (70) were over 60 years. Close to a quarter (23%) of those delayed had appointments for cancer care (oncology); 15% for cardiology; 13% for ophthalmology; 8% for haematology; 7% for paediatrics; 5% for orthopaedics; 4% for neurosurgery; and 4% for urology. The remaining 21% were for 17 other specialties. Of delayed applications, 43% were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, 40% for the West Bank, 17% for Israeli hospitals and 1 application was to Jordan. Most delayed applications (643 or 95%) were 'under study' at the time of appointment.

Security interrogation and arrests

In November, a female cancer patient aged 42 years with a pancreatic tumour was requested by Israel for security interrogation as a prerequisite to her permit application. She had an appointment for general surgery at Al-Ahli Hospital in Hebron (Al-Khalil). At the end of November, her permit application remained under study.

A patient companion arrested

Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights reported that Hassan Abu-Mustafa, a 49-year-old man from Khan Yunis, was arrested at Beit Hanoun (Erez) checkpoint on Wednesday 24 November. Mr Abu-Mustafa was accompanying his wife, Khaldia (a 50-year-old woman) for an ophthalmology appointment at Al-Najah Hospital in Nablus in the West Bank. The permit applications for Khaldia and Hassan were approved, and they travelled to the Israeli checkpoint at Erez early in the morning of 24 November. Hassam was taken for interrogation and after a long wait Khaldia was informed that her husband had been arrested. She was then denied access and returned to Gaza.

Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 2,005 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in November. 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 November, 726 companion permit applications (36% of the total) were approved, 25 applications (1%) were denied and the remaining 1,254 (63%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's appointment.

Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,030 Gaza patients and 810 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in November to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of the 1,030 patients, 67 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 67 companions. These numbers show that **a fifth 220 (21%) of patients** crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. The bodies of 17 deceased patients were returned to Gaza in November. During the month, Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint was open for 26 days for daytime working hours and closed on 4 days (4 Saturdays).



1

Gaza patient

called for security interrogation



1

Gaza patient companion

arrested



2,005

companion applications

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



36% approved



1% denied



63% delayed



1,030

patients

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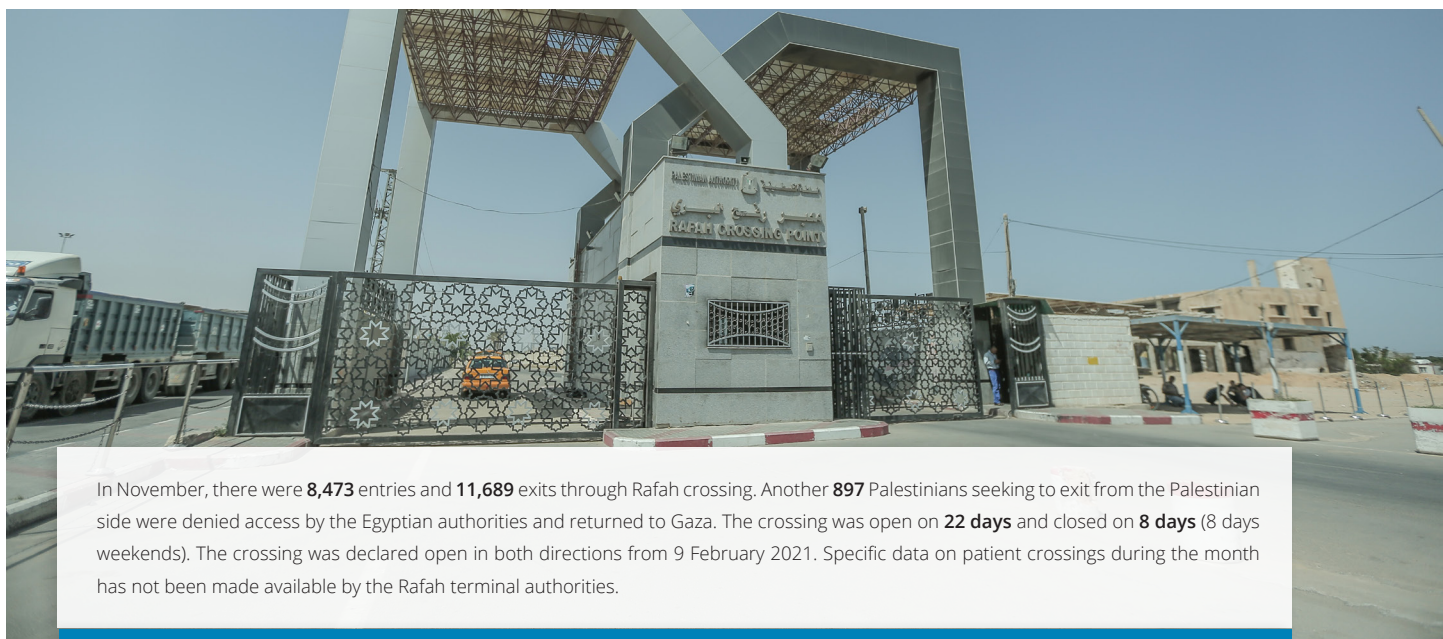


810

companions

exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



In November, there were **8,473** entries and **11,689** exits through Rafah crossing. Another **897** Palestinians seeking to exit from the Palestinian side were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The crossing was open on **22 days** and closed on **8 days** (8 days weekends). 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 West Bank

In November 2021, there were 7,777 permit applications by patients and 8,210 by patient companions from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel.


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.


Of 7,777 West Bank patient applications, 6,789 (87%) were approved, 641 (8%) were unsuccessful (denied) and 347 (5%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.


Of the 8,210 West Bank companion applications, 6,576 (80%) were approved, 1,118 (14%) were unsuccessful and 516 (6%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.


 **7,777**
patient permit
applications

for Israeli permits to access
healthcare in East Jerusalem
and Israel


 **87% approved**


 **8% unsuccessful**


 **5% pending**
at the time of monthly
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 **8,210**
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