

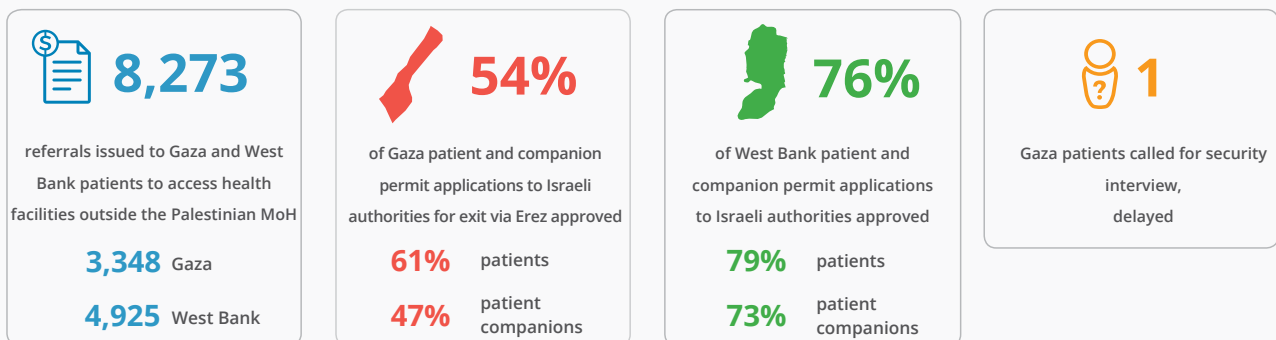


MONTHLY REPORT

May 2019

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory



IN FOCUS

One year on: Sabreen An-Najjar talks about work as a first responder and remembers her daughter, Razan

Part 1 Referrals

March Referrals by the Ministry of Health

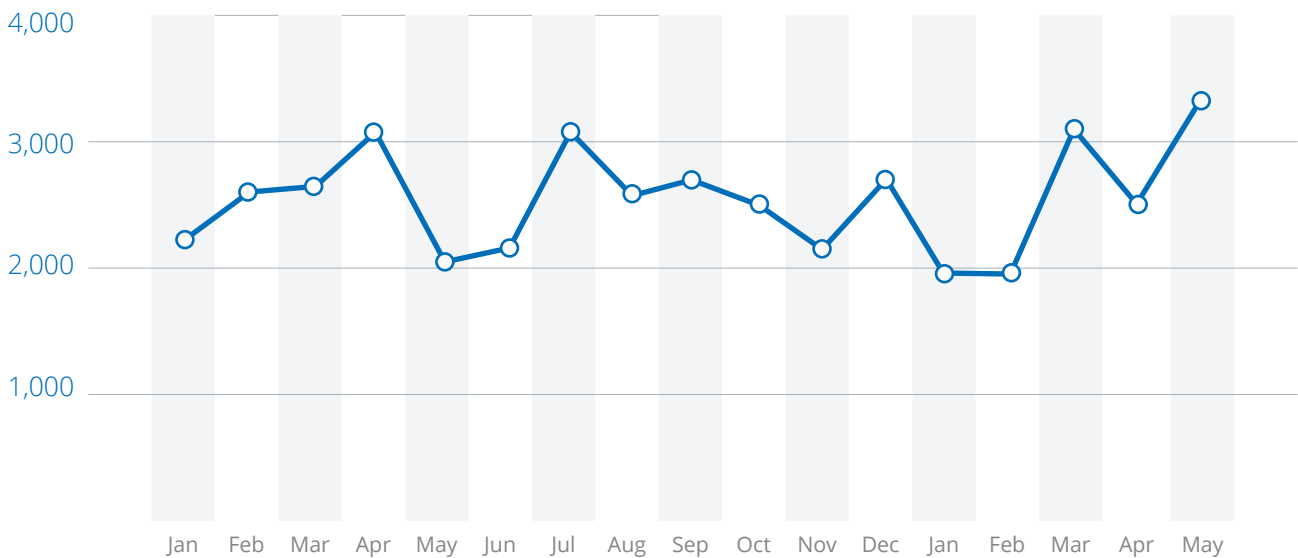
In May, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) made 3,348 referrals for Gaza patients, the highest number ever in one month, and 4,925 referrals for West Bank patients to non-MoH facilities. There was a relatively low number of referrals to Israeli hospitals, with 139 referrals from Gaza and 385 from the West Bank. This follows the Palestinian MoH's announcement in March to stop referrals to Israeli hospitals, apart from exceptional cases. In 2017, the Palestinian MoH made an average 346 referrals from Gaza and 1,010 from the West Bank to Israeli hospitals each month. In May, 71% of Gaza referrals required Israeli-issued permits to reach hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, while 9% required access through Rafah terminal to access healthcare in Egypt. In the West Bank, 41% of referrals were to facilities in East Jerusalem or Israel, the majority of which require Israeli-issued permits to access care.

 **3,348**
Gaza

 **4,925**
West Bank

referrals approved for financial coverage for healthcare outside the Palestinian Ministry of Health

Chart 1: Total number of referrals approved for Gaza patients, January 2018 - May 2019



Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip

There were 2,206 patient permit applications to cross Erez for healthcare in May. 29% were for children under age of 18 and 15% were for patients aged 60 years or older. 45% of applications were for female patients and 94% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Two-thirds (68%) of applications to cross Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals and a fifth (19%) for West Bank hospitals, while 13% were for hospitals in Israel. Makassed Hospital (33%) and Augusta Victoria Hospital (25%), both in East Jerusalem, received nearly three-fifths of permit applications (58%). The top five specialties accounted for 60% of permit applications: oncology (28%); paediatrics (9%); orthopaedics (9%); cardiology (7%); haematology (7%). The remaining 40% were for 25 other specialties.

Approved permit applications: 1,341 patient permit applications (697 male; 644 female), or 61% of the total, were approved in May 2019. Chart 2 shows a 12-month trend for Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications. A third (33%) of permits approved were for children under age of 18 and a fifth (17%) were for people aged 60 years or older. The approval rate has declined by more than 10% since February 2019.

2,206
patients applications
to Israeli authorities to cross
Erez to access healthcare

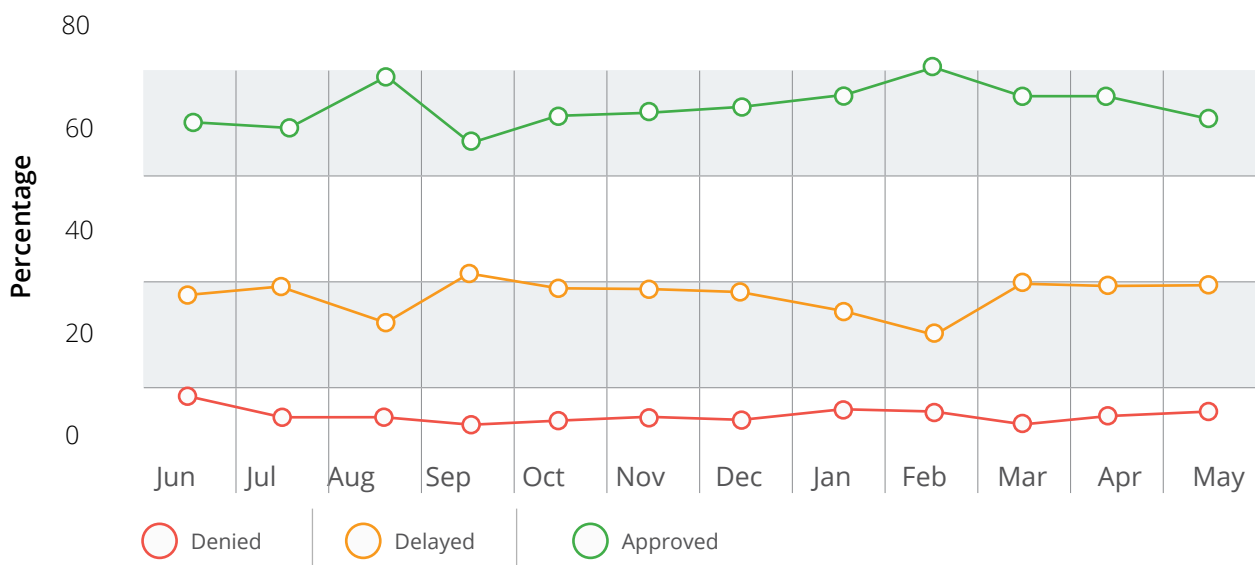
61%
approved

8%
denied

31%
delayed

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, June 2018 - May 2019



Denied care: 178 patient applications (122 male; 56 female), or 8% of the total, were denied permits to cross Erez for healthcare in May. Those denied included 25 children under the age of 18 years and 13 patients aged 60 years or older. 22% of denied applications were for appointments in orthopaedics, 20% for neurosurgery, 8% for ophthalmology, 7% for oncology and 6% for ENT. More than 90% of denied permit applications were for appointments at hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Delayed care: 687 patient applications (388 male; 299 female), or 31% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. Of these, 179 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 87 applications were for patients aged 60 years or older. More than a fifth (22%) of those delayed had appointments for oncology, 12% for orthopaedics, 9% for ophthalmology, 7% for paediatrics, 6% for cardiology, and 6% for neurosurgery. The remaining 38% were for 21 other specialties. 620 (90%) of delayed applications were 'under study' at the time of appointment; 32 (5%) were requested to send a new medical report; 9 were pending approval of companion; 4 were delayed due to relatives allegedly staying in the West Bank; and 2 were requested for treatment within Gaza.

Access for those injured during demonstrations:

As of 31 May 2019, according to Gaza's Coordination and Liaison Office, there were 554 applications to Israeli authorities by those injured in demonstrations to exit Gaza via Erez crossing to access health care. The approval rate of this group is significantly lower than the overall approval rate for patient applications to exit Gaza, with only 18% approved. 27% were denied and 55% were delayed.

Security interrogation

In May, a 43-year-old female patient suffering from ischaemic heart disease was called for security interrogation as a prerequisite to traveling for healthcare. She was delayed, receiving no definitive response by the date of her hospital appointment.

Patient companions:

In May, there were 2,426 permit applications to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients. These applications include parents or other companions applying to accompany children. Only one companion is permitted to accompany each Gaza patient and permits are conditional on security clearance. In May, 1,151 (47%) patient companion applications were approved, 307 applications (13%) were denied and the remaining 968 (40%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's appointment. Chart 3 shows the trend over the last 12 months for Israeli responses to patient companion applications.



1

patient called for security interrogation

Delayed



2,426

patient companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients

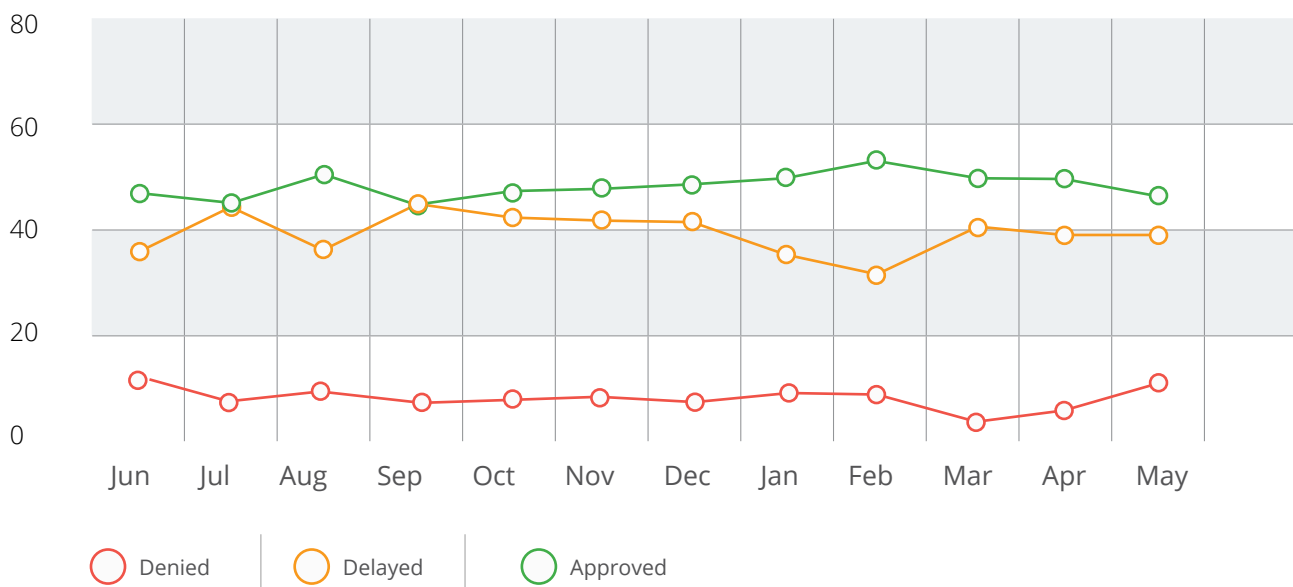
47% approved

13% denied

40% pending

Chart 3

Israeli responses to Gaza patient companion applications, June 2018 - May 2019



Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,751 Gaza patients and 1,368 companions crossed Erez in May to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of these, 99 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 57 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 23 days for daytime working hours and closed on 8 days (4 Saturdays, 2 national Israeli holidays and 2 days following the military escalation at the first week of the month).



1,751

patients crossed Erez for health care



1,368

patient companions crossed Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



During May, Rafah crossing was open for humanitarian cases in both directions in 14 days and was open for 3 days for exit only for pilgrims and 4 days for return only for pilgrims. The crossing was closed for 10 days (5 Fridays, 4 Saturdays, 1 Egyptian national holidays).

According to the terminal authority, 5,259 travelers crossed towards Egypt, among them 573 patients crossing for healthcare with 241 companions. 53 patients were transferred by ambulance with 61 companions. 7 bodies of deceased persons were returned to Gaza. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah terminal during the month.

The West Bank

In May, 13,198 (6,289 patient; 6,909 companion) applications were submitted to the Israeli authorities for West Bank patients and companions 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 exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday or before 8am.

Of the 6,289 patient applications, 4,979 (79%) were approved, 895 (14%) were denied and 415 (7%) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.

Of the 6,909 patient companion applications, 5,074 (73%) were approved, 1,277 (18%) were denied and 608 (9%) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.



13,198

patient and companion applications

for Israeli permits to authorities to access healthcare in East Jerusalem and Israel



76% approved



16% denied



8% pending

at the time of monthly reporting

In Focus

One year on: Sabreen talks about work as a first responder and remembers her daughter, Razan



"I cannot think of anyone who stood for humanitarian work as much as Razan. She lost her life for that."

Sabreen An-Najjar is 44-years-old and has been volunteering as a first responder with the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) since June 2018. She is a refugee from Salama village in the district of Jaffa and today lives in Khuzaa in Khan Yunis governorate in the Gaza Strip.

Sabreen began volunteering with PMRS the week after her daughter Razan was shot and killed while providing care to those injured during demonstrations east of Khan Yunis. Razan's death was just over a year ago, on 1 June 2018. She had also been a volunteer with PMRS.

Sabreen, a mother of six children (including Razan), decided after her daughter's death that she would begin volunteering every Friday to provide immediate care to those injured. She had little experience at that time, but PMRS and the Ministry of Health in Gaza gave her training and the paramedics she worked alongside provided invaluable support in the field. Now, one year on, she has gained much experience. She also now has first-hand experience of attacks against her.

"I have the skills and courage now to continue doing this humanitarian work," Sabreen said. "Violations against health workers hinder our provision of health services to people injured. Razan and the other health workers killed are evidence of these [violations], in addition to the injuries among us [health workers] in every demonstration."

After Razan's death, Sabreen travelled to tell her story and the story of Gaza. "When I travelled, I wished I was more fluent in English to better tell Razan's story to the whole world, so now I am working to improve my English... It's very important to me to continue this way. This was her dream. I am proud to work in the field. I feel so happy every time I am able to help anyone injured. It's rewarding to contribute positively and to do your best for those injured."

Sabreen is currently six months pregnant. If she gives birth to a baby girl, she has already decided what she will call her. Razan.

Meet Sabreen in her interview with WHO: [LINK](#) to the video

