



Security corridor leading to Erez checkpoint at Beit Hanoun, north Gaza, 2012.

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Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

Ref: RAD 1 (Feb.25, 2013)

Summary

- **Death at Erez:** A patient critically ill with H1N1 virus died at Erez checkpoint shortly after his transfer to an Israeli ambulance. Resuscitation had been attempted by both Israeli and Palestinian ambulance teams.
- **Patients interrogated:** 12 patients (3 F; 9 M) who had applied for permits in January to cross Erez checkpoint were requested to appear for Israeli security interviews.
- **Patients delayed:** 56 patients (21 F; 35 M) did not receive a response to their permit application and missed their hospital appointments.
- **Referrals within oPt:** January represented the highest number of referrals to East Jerusalem hospitals in the past three years, and highest to West Bank hospitals since 2011.
- **Referrals to Jordan:** Only one patient received financial coverage from the Ministry of Health for treatment in Jordanian hospitals. 6 self-funded patients applied for permits.
- **Referrals to non-MoH facilities inside Gaza:** 133 cases were referred to private and NGO facilities inside Gaza mainly for lithotripsy, MRI, and cardiac catheterization.
- **Medical reasons for referrals:** Most January 2013 referrals were for treatment in oncology (16.5%), nuclear medicine (10%), urology (8%), paediatrics (7%), orthopaedics (6%), ophthalmology (6%), haematology (5.5%), heart surgery (5%), heart catheterization (5%) and neurosurgery (5%). The estimated cost was NIS 12.8 million.

Referrals increased to Jerusalem

The total number of Gaza patients referred by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in January was 1,216, an increase over the monthly average in the previous year of 1,139. According to the Gaza Referral Abroad Department (RAD) data, of these referrals, 425 (35%) were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem, 296 (24%) to Egypt, 214 (17.5%) to Israel, 147 (12%) to West Bank hospitals, 1 (0.08%) to Jordan and 133 (11%) to NGO and private hospitals inside the Gaza Strip (Table 1). It was the highest monthly total for East Jerusalem in at least the last three years. Referrals fell slightly to Egypt because of medical coordination issues.

Gaza referral data for January showed a wide gender gap: 59% of referrals were males and 41% were females. 28% of all referrals were children aged 0-17 years and 17% were elderly over 60 years. The total estimated cost for all referrals was NIS 12,779,906, more than 10% higher than the previous month. Heart surgery, neurosurgery, and pediatrics were the highest cost per case for this month. Oncology referrals were the most common and the total cost was the highest: 200 referrals totaling NIS 2.1 million. Radiotherapy and complex chemotherapy treatment are not available in Gaza.

Table 1: Palestinian MoH Referrals, by destination and planned exit route, January 2013

Referral Destination	January	Exit point
Gaza (non-MoH facilities)	133	NA
WB (MoH and non-MoH)	147	via Erez/Israel: 787
East Jerusalem	425	
Jordan	1	
Israel	214	
Egypt	296	via Rafah: 296
Total	1,216	

Health access: patient applications for Israeli-issued permits to cross Erez

In January 2013, applications were submitted for 796 patients to the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) for permits to cross Erez and access hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, in Israel or Jordan. Of the total, 738 (92.7%) received permits to cross Erez and 2 (0.25%) were denied (Table 2). The 2 denied patients were a 33-year-old man with cancer who was approved later after submitting a detailed medical report and a 27-year-old woman with a kidney stone who is still denied. Both were referred to Al-Mizan hospital in Hebron.

56 patients (21 females and 35 males, 7% of the total applicants) did not receive a response and therefore lost their appointments in the hospitals; 9 of them were children under 18 years, 7 were over 60 years, and 11 were oncology- hematology patients. The waiting time for response should be in a maximum of 10 days but 9 applicants did not receive a response after 2 weeks and 12 did not receive a response after 30 days. Of the 56 delayed patients, 15 had had appointments in Israeli hospitals, 1 had an appointment in a Jordanian hospital and the rest in West Bank including in East Jerusalem.

Table 2: Israeli District Liaison Office decisions on patient permit requests to cross Erez, by age and sex, January 2013.

Age group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed		Called for GSS interrogation	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	51	60	51	59	0	0	0	1	0	0
4 - 17	84	118	80	114	0	0	4	4	0	0
18 - 40	102	86	91	65	1	1	10	20	3	6
41 - 60	85	98	83	90	0	0	2	8	0	3
Over 60	54	58	49	56	0	0	5	2	0	0
Sub-total	376	420	354	384	1	1	21	35	3	9
Total	796		738 (92.71%)		2 (0.25%)		56 (7%)		12 (1.5%)	

Source: Palestinian DC, Gaza.

12 patients (1.5%) were called for interrogation by Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition to process their application, fewer than the previous month when 37 patients (4.1%) who applied for permits were called for GSS interviews. 2 out of the 12 patients interrogated were granted permits while the rest did not receive responses.

In January 87% of patients applying for Israeli permits were referrals financially covered by MoH. The remaining patients were covered by different sources (Table 3).



Al-Helal Al-Emarati Maternity Hospital, Rafah.

Table 3: Patient applications by source of fund, January 2013

Financial coverage source	Total / %
Ministry of Health	693 (87%)
Self-funded	38 (5%)
Peres Center for Peace	25 (3%)
Physicians for Human Rights-Israel	23 (3%)
NourAla Al-Alam	12 (1%)
Others	5 (1%)
Total	796

Source: Palestinian DCO in Gaza

Table 4: Crossing data for treatment outside Gaza, December 2012

Point of exit	Patients crossing	Ambulance transfers (back-to-Back)	Days open in month
Erez crossing (north)	649	56	Open: 26 days ; Closed: 5 days (4 Saturdays and 1 election day)
Rafah crossing (south)	844 (patients/ companions)	61	Open: 31 days ; Closed: 0 days

Source: General Authority of Civil Affairs and Emergency Medical Services in the MoH in Gaza.

The Palestinian General Authority for Civil Affairs registered 649 patients and 622 companions travelling through Erez checkpoint to Israel and oPt during January. 56 patients were transferred by ambulance through Erez; 12 were urgent cases and transferred during off-duty hours (**Table 4**).

According to the Emergency Medical Services of MoH in Gaza, their office coordinated the travel of 844 people to Egypt. 61 patients were transferred by ambulance with 79 companions. The remaining 704 were patients and their companions who travelled through Rafah terminal as regular passengers.

Man dies at Erez after ambulance transfer

A diabetic patient, 41 years old, infected with H1N1 virus and in critical condition, died in the security area inside Erez terminal minutes after he was placed in an Israeli ambulance. He had been enroute to Karmel Hospital in Haifa. Resuscitation efforts by both Palestinian and Israeli ambulance crews were unsuccessful.

Palestinian ambulances are not permitted to leave Gaza with patients; patients must be transferred from the Palestinian ambulance, and carried on a gurney to an Israeli-plated ambulance at Erez crossing some distance away.

Table 5: Israeli District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez, by response, sex of applicant (number, %)

	January 2012		Monthly Average for 2012		January 2013	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)
Total	902 (F:429; M:473)		777		796 (F:376; M:420)	
Approved	847 (F:410;M:437)	93.9	719	92.5	738 (F:354; M :384)	92.71
Denied	6 (F:1; M:5)	0.67	7	1.0	2 (F:1; M:1)	0.25
Delayed	49 (F:18; M:31)	5.43	51	6.5	56 (F:21; M:35)	7
Of those delayed, called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)	19 (F:5;M:14)	2.1	17	2.1	12 (F:3; M:9)	1.5

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office in Gaza.

Drug Shortages in Gaza

The number of drug items at zero stock in Gaza central drug store for the month of January 2013 was 157 (32.7%) out of 480 on the essential drug list; low stock drug items sufficient for 1-3 months were 72. In addition, 471 (52.2%) medical disposable items were at zero level out of 902 on the medical disposables list in Gaza (expanded in 2012); 107 supply items were sufficient for 1-3 months.