

October 2012



Ambulances at Rafah crossing

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Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

Ref: RAD 10 (Nov. 27, 2012)

Summary

- **Denied:** 6 patients (3 females; 3 males) including 1 elderly patient were denied permits to exit Erez checkpoint for medical treatment.
- **Interrogated:** 12 patients (3 females; 9 males) who applied for permits in October were requested to appear for Israeli security interviews; two of them were elderly patients.
- **Delayed:** 78 patients (35 females; 43 males) including 30 children, did not receive a response to their permit application and missed their hospital appointments.
- **Reduced number of referrals:** Only 798 patients were referred by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in October – almost 400 fewer than the monthly average for 2012 and the lowest monthly total since 2010 when WHO began monitoring monthly totals. The reduction is due in part to a physicians' strike in Egypt, as well as the MoH recent acquisition of MRI equipment and increased catheterization capacity, and the closure of Jordanian hospitals to new MoH patients as a result of the PA's accrued debt. In October 2012, MoH financially covered 1 referral patient to Jordan; 9 patients applied for permits to cross Erez and travel to Jordan for health care that was self-funded.
- **Medical reasons:** Most October 2012 referrals were for: oncology (15%), ophthalmology (11%), paediatrics (10%), haematology (8%), heart surgery (7%), nuclear medicine (7%), neurosurgery (5%) and heart catheterization (5%). The estimated cost was NIS 9.6 million.

Lowest monthly total of referrals

The number of patients referred by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in October was almost 400 (33%) fewer than the monthly average for 2012 and the lowest since 2010 when WHO began monitoring monthly totals. The reduction is due in part to a physicians' strike in Egypt, as well as the recent MoH acquisition of MRI equipment and increased catheterization capacity and the closure of Jordanian hospitals to new MoH patients as a result of the PA's accrued debt. There was only one MoH referral to Jordan during October.

According to Gaza Referral Abroad Department data, of the 798 MoH referrals, 338 (42.4%) were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem, 181 (22.7%) to Israel, 131 (16.4%) to West Bank hospitals, 97 (12.2%) to Egypt, and 1 (0.1%) to Jordan. The number of patients referred to non-MoH facilities inside Gaza was low 50 (6.3%) with MoH no longer dependent on outside MRI capacity (Table 1). Gaza referral data showed a significant gender gap: 60% were males and 40% were females. 34% of the referrals were children aged 0-17, and representing 45% of the cost of referrals.

Table 1. Palestinian MoH Referrals in 2012, by destination, exit route and month of hospital appointment

Referral Destination	MoH Referrals										Total 2012	
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct		
Within Gaza: 1,874												
Gaza (non-MoH facilities)	289	258	284	301	265	290	76	28	33	50	1,874	
Exit via Erez/Israel: 7,012												
West Bank (MoH and non-MoH)	110	101	94	115	134	120	88	99	111	131	1103	
East Jerusalem	374	301	359	344	416	420	313	336	398	338	3,599	
Jordan	47	53	41	30	21	5	2	0	0	1	200	
Israel	254	237	247	252	304	173	117	164	181	181	2,110	
Exit via Rafah to Egypt: 2,687												
Egypt	319	240	270	296	358	328	237	209	333	97	2,687	
Total	1,393	1,190	1,295	1,338	1,498	1,336	833	836	1,056	798	11,573	

Source: MoH RAD Gaza

Table 2. Medical reason for MoH referrals October 2012

Specialty	October referrals	%
Oncology	123	15
Ophthalmology	85	11
Pediatrics	77	10
Hematology	60	8
Heart surgery	55	7
Nuclear medicine	53	7
Neurosurgery	43	3

Source: MoH RAD Gaza data.



Patient in Nasser Hospital, Khan Younis. © WHO oPt

Patient applications for Israeli-issued permits to cross Erez

In October 2012, 789 patients' applications were submitted 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 compared with 705 in September. 89% of applicants were MoH referrals (see Table 2 and 3). Out of the 789 patient applications, 89.4% (705 patients) were approved permits. Six patients (3 females and 3 males) (0.8%) were denied permits to cross Erez. Five of the 6 denied patients had appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals and one in a West Bank hospital.

Twelve patients (3 females and 9 males) (1.5%) were requested to appear for security interviews with the Israeli GSS as a precondition to process their application; 2 of those requested were over 60 years old). Of the 12, only one patient succeeded in being issued a permit following interrogation.

Table 3: Israeli District Liaison Office decisions on patient permit requests to cross Erez, by age and sex, October 2012.

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office, Gaza

Age group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed		Called for GSS interrogation	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	65	71	58	65	0	0	7	6	0	0
4 - 17	89	90	79	83	0	0	10	7	0	0
18- 40	98	87	86	69	1	0	11	18	3	7
41 - 60	74	104	69	95	2	2	3	7	0	0
Over 60	53	58	49	52	0	1	4	5	0	2
Sub-total	379	410	341	364	3	3	35	43	3	9
Total	789		705 (89.4%)		6 (0.8%)		78 (9.9%)		12 (1.5%)	

Financial coverage source	Number of applications	Percentage
Ministry of Health	695	88.1%
Self-funded	52	6.6%
NourAla Al-Alam	16	2.0%
Peres Center for Peace	12	1.5%
Physicians for Human Rights-Israel	11	1.4%
Others	3	0.4%
Total	789	100%



A patient waits to cross Erez .

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78 (9.9%) patients received no answer to their applications and missed their hospital appointment date; of these 35 had appointments at East Jerusalem hospitals, 26 in West Bank hospitals and 17 in Israeli hospitals. 15 of the 78 patients waited more than 2 weeks for their application to be processed, and 7 waited more than one month. 33 of all delayed patients were children and 37 were females.

The Palestinian General Authority for Civil Affairs registered 644 patients and 625 companions travelling through Erez checkpoint during October. 37 patients were transferred through Erez by ambulances. Since Palestinian ambulances are not permitted to leave Gaza, patients must be transferred from a Palestinian ambulance, and carried on a stretcher to an Israeli ambulance at Erez crossing 200 meters away (see Table 4).

Point of exiting Gaza	Patients crossing	Ambulance transfers (back-to-back)	Days open in month
Erez crossing (North)	644	37	Open: 25 days Closed: 6 days (4 Saturdays, October 6, 13, 20, and 27) + (2 Jewish holidays of Sukkot October 1 and 8)
Rafah crossing (South)	394 (Patient & companion)	50	Open: 24 days Closed: 7 days (October 6, 10, 11, Eid Al-Adha holiday 27, 28 and 29)

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

According to the Emergency Medical Services of MoH in Gaza, their office coordinated the travel of 513 people to Egypt. 50 patients were transferred by ambulance with 69 companions. The remaining 394 were patients and their companions who travelled through Rafah terminal as regular passengers.

Period	October 2011		October 2012		January - October 2011		January - October 2012	
Total	864 (F:407; M:457)		789 (F:379; M:410)		9,089 (F:4021; M:5068)		7,710 (F:3760; M:3950)	
Approved	790 (F:380; M:410)	91.4%	705 (F:341; M:364)	89.4%	8,094 (F:3702; M:4392)	89.1%	7,179 (F:3461; M:3718)	93.1%
Denied	18 (F:2; M:16)	2.1%	6 (F:3; M:3)	0.8%	221 (F:48 M:173)	2.4%	75 (F:26; M:49)	1.0%
Delayed	56 (F:25; M:31)	6.5%	78 (F:35; M:43)	9.9%	774 (F:271; M:503)	8.5%	456 (F:194; M:262)	5.9%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	14 (F:3; M:11)	1.6%	12 (F:3; M:9)	1.5%	145 (F:30; M:115)	1.6%	156 (F:56; M:100)	2.0%

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office in Gaza.