



MoH Referral Abroad Office, Gaza

Ref: RAD 8 (September 2012)

### August 2012

## Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

### Summary

- **Rafah closure:** During August 2012, Egyptian authorities closed Rafah border for 17 days. As a result several hundred patients and their companions were unable to reach their hospital appointments in Egypt.
- **Died while waiting for permit:** A female patient suffering from breast cancer died while waiting for a permit to cross Erez and access the health care she was referred to.
- **Interrogated:** 10 patients were reported to have been called for Israeli interrogation (2 females; 8 males).
- **Denied:** 7 patients (1 female; 6 males) were denied permits to exit Erez crossing for medical treatment.
- **Delayed:** 35 patients (12 females; 23 males) did not receive a response to their permit applications and missed their hospital appointments.
- **MoH referrals requiring permits:** The number of referred patients needing access through Erez was 599 (336 to East Jerusalem, 164 to Israel, and 99 to the West Bank). 209 patients were referred to Egypt which requires special clearance at the border.
- **Medical reasons:** Most August referrals were for: oncology (19%), ophthalmology (11%), nuclear medicine (9%), pediatrics (8%), hematology (7%), neurosurgery (5%), cardiology (5%). The estimated cost for referrals was NIS 8,223,563 about \$2,108,389.
- **Decreased internal Gaza referrals:** Only 28 referrals were made in August by the Ministry of Health to private or non-governmental health facilities in Gaza, compared to 289 internal referrals in January. According to the RAD in Gaza, one explanation for the drop is that both the MRI and cardiac catheterization in Gaza European Hospital began functioning again, replacing the need for outside referrals.

### Closure of Rafah crossing

The travel of patients out of Gaza for specialised medical treatment in Egypt was interrupted due to the closure of the Rafah border crossing for a total of 17 days during August. August registered the lowest number of referrals to Egypt during 2012: only 209 cases were referred by the MoH due to the border situation.

## No referrals to Jordan

MoH referrals of Gaza patients to Jordan totally stopped in August 2012, reflecting the financial crisis of the Palestinian Authority as well as a policy begun in May of reducing referrals to the most costly destinations.

According to RAD data for August 48% of referrals were female patients and male patients were 52%.

Referral Destination	MoH Referrals								Total 2012
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	
<b>Within Gaza: 1,791</b>									
Gaza (non-MoH facilities)	289	258	284	301	265	290	76	28	<b>1,791</b>
<b>Exit via Erez/Israel: 5,671</b>									
West Bank (MoH and non-MoH)	110	101	94	115	134	120	88	99	<b>861</b>
East Jerusalem	374	301	359	344	416	420	313	336	<b>2,863</b>
Jordan	47	53	41	30	21	5	2	0	<b>199</b>
Israel	254	237	247	252	304	173	117	164	<b>1,748</b>
<b>Exit via Rafah to Egypt: 2,257</b>									
Egypt	319	240	270	296	358	328	237	209	<b>2,257</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,393</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>1,295</b>	<b>1,338</b>	<b>1,498</b>	<b>1,336</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>9,719</b>

Source: MoH RAD Gaza

## Patient applications for Israeli-issued permits to cross Erez

In August 2012, 585 patient applications were submitted to the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) for permits to cross Erez to access hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, or in Israel and Jordan compared with 764 in July (see Table 3). 88% were MoH referrals (see Tables 2 and 3).

In August, 93% (543 patients) were approved permits; 7 patients (one female and six males) were denied permits to cross Erez checkpoint (1.2%). The patients were seeking treatment for orthopedics (4), and neurosurgery; neurology and ophthalmology (1 each).

35 patients (6%), including 13 children, received no answer to their applications and missed their hospital appointment date (9-ophthalmic treatment; 4-oncology; 4-pediatrics; 4-orthopedic treatment; 3-rehabilitation and the remaining 11 for other specialties).

10 patients (2 females and 8 males) were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) after applying for a permit. Following their interrogation, 6 patients received no response from the GSS about their permit application, 2 were approved, 2 were asked to resubmit their request.

Financial coverage source	Number of applications	Percentage
Ministry of Health	514	87.9%
Self-funded	31	5.3%
Nour Ala Al-Alam	6	1.0%
Peres Center for Peace	12	2.0%
Physicians for Human Rights-Israel	14	2.4%
UNRWA	3	0.5%
Others	5	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office, Gaza

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

Age group	Total		Approved <sup>1</sup>		Denied		Delayed <sup>2</sup>		Called for GSS interrogation <sup>3</sup>	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	40	41	39	39	0	0	1	2	0	0
4 - 17	56	73	51	68	0	0	5	5	0	0
18- 40	85	66	80	51	1	4	4	11	2	6
41 - 60	65	75	65	70	0	2	0	3	0	2
Over 60	36	48	34	46	0	0	2	2	0	0
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>585</b>		<b>543 (93%)</b>		<b>7 (1.2%)</b>		<b>35 (6%)</b>		<b>10 (1.7%)</b>	

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office, Gaza

**Table 4: Crossing data for treatment outside Gaza, August 2012**

Point of exiting Gaza	Patients crossing	Ambulance transfers (back-to-back)	Days open in month
Erez crossing (North)	494	42	Open: <b>27 days</b> Closed: <b>4 days</b> (4 Saturdays)
Rafah crossing* (South)	404 (Patient & companion)	53	Open: <b>14 days</b> Closed: <b>17 days</b> (August 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24 and 31) including 5 Fridays and 5 days for Eid holiday.

\*Only including patients and ambulances that have been coordinated in advance.

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

### Case Study: Young Woman Twice Delayed by Erez, Dies Before Receiving Permit

**Death of patient;** A 34-year-old female patient suffering from breast cancer, and who was referred by MoH to Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, died while waiting for permit to access health care outside Gaza. Her hospital appointment had been on July 15, 2012. On July 12, her application for a permit to cross Erez was submitted to the Israeli District Liaison Office, which responded that she had to make a new appointment because they needed more time to investigate her case. Another appointment was obtained for August 5, 2012, and on that day the Israeli authorities requested that the patient again reschedule her appointment. When this was communicated to the patient's family they explained that she had died on July 29, 2012.

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

Period	August 2011		August 2012		January - August 2011		January - August 2012	
<b>Total</b>	<b>668</b> (F:317; M:315)		<b>585</b> (F:282; M:303)		<b>7,403</b> (F:3240; M:4163)		<b>6,216</b> (F:3012; M:3195)	
<b>Approved</b>	<b>601</b> (F:289; M:312)	90.0%	<b>543</b> (F:269; M:274)	92.3%	<b>6,558</b> (F:2970; M:3588)	88.6%	<b>5,827</b> (F:2787; M:3040)	93.7%
<b>Denied</b>	<b>14</b> (F:4; M:10)	2.1%	<b>7</b> (F:1; M:6)	0.7%	<b>183</b> (F:42; M:141)	2.5%	<b>53</b> (F:16; M:37)	0.8%
<b>Delayed</b>	<b>53</b> (F:24; M:29)	7.9%	<b>35</b> (F:12; M:23)	7.1%	<b>662</b> (F:228; M:434)	8.9%	<b>336</b> (F:139; M:197)	5.4%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	<b>18</b> (F:7; M:11)	2.7%	<b>10</b> (F:2; M:8)	2.1%	<b>116</b> (F:25; M:91)	1.6%	<b>132</b> (F:51; M:81)	2.1%

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office in Gaza.