

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

May 2011



World Health Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Summary for May 2011

- 92% of applications for a permit to cross Erez were approved.
- A 29-year-old male patient with a valid permit was detained at Erez crossing.
- 44% of referred patients were transferred for the following health conditions: cardiovascular diseases, oncology, orthopaedics, ophthalmology and neurosurgery.
- 37% of essential drugs and 27% of essential medical disposables were at zero stock level (less than one month supply).

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

During May 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 1,076 patient applications for permits to cross Erez checkpoint to access hospitals in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Israel and Jordan (see Table 1). This number was higher than the 825 applications processed in April 2011 – a month that was impacted by Israeli holidays and medical personnel on strike in Israeli hospitals.

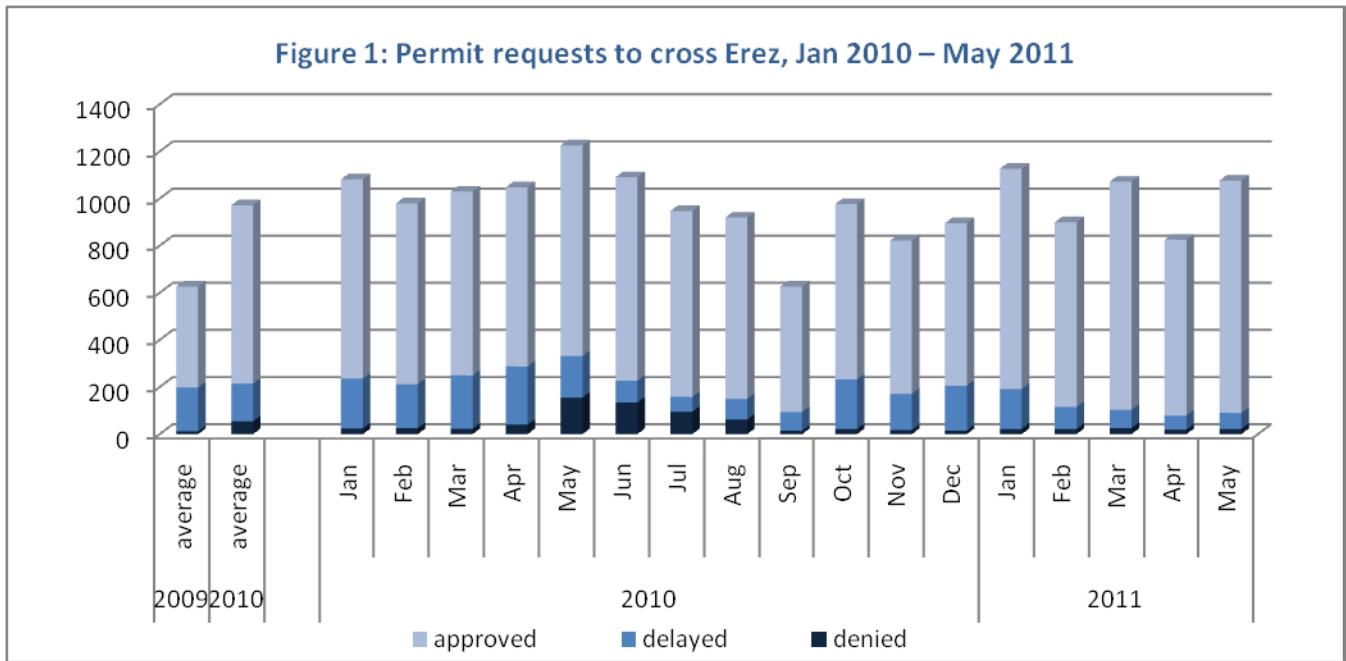
Age group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed				Did not cross despite approval	
	M	F	M	F	M	F			Out of which called for GSS interrogation		M	F
							M	F	M	F		
0 - 3	84	80	83	78	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
4 - 17	140	100	134	97	1	0	5	3	0	0	0	0
18 - 40	139	122	106	98	11	3	22	21	8	1	0	0
41 - 60	149	120	135	118	6	1	8	1	3	0	0	0
Over 60	70	72	67	70	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0
Sub-total	582	494	525	461	18	0	39	29	11	1	0	0
Total	1076		986		22		68		12		0	

In May 2011, **92%** (986 patients) of all permit applications to cross Erez checkpoint were approved. This figure is substantially higher than the average for 2010, which was 78% (see Figure 1). 2% of permit applications were denied (22 patients); another 6% (68 patients, including 11 children) were delayed.

Of the 68 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities, 12 were called for interrogation by the Israeli intelligence services known as General Security Services (GSS). 2 of these patients did not attend the

interrogation; 4 patients, who underwent interrogation, are still waiting for a response from GSS at the end of the month; 3 had their application approved, and; 3 had their application denied.

62% of delayed patients faced delays of more than a week. Delayed patients generally miss their hospital appointments. In most cases they have to seek new appointments and submit new applications for a permit to cross Erez checkpoint. Delays in processing applications can be critical for patients who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. Some may die while waiting for permission to access the medical facility they have been referred to. **Since the beginning of the year 2009 a total of 36 patients have died while waiting for permission to access the hospital they had been referred to.**



Destinations and reasons for referral

During May 2011, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) approved and issued 1,584 referral documents compared with 1,277 for April. RAD found that 389 patients were able to receive appropriate treatment within the Gaza Strip, in either NGO or private hospitals.

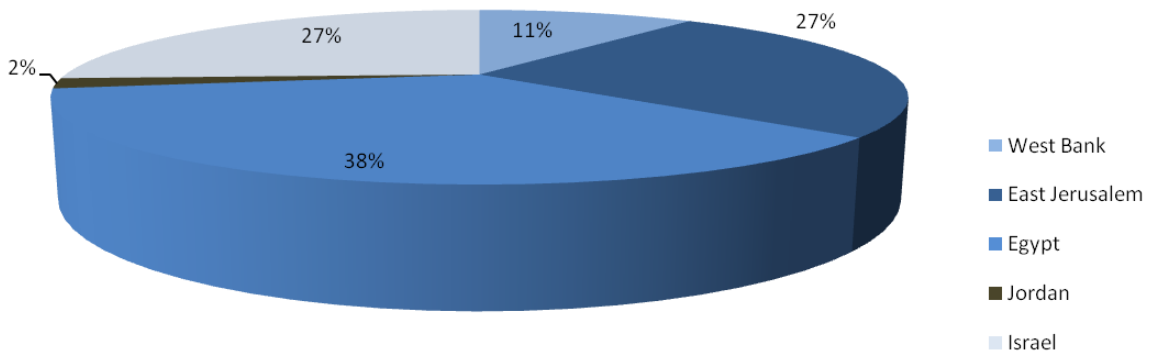
The remaining **1,195 patients had to leave Gaza** in order to be treated in hospitals in Egypt (38%), East Jerusalem (27%), Israel (24%), the West Bank (11%) and Jordan (2%)¹ (see Figure 2). There was an increase in referrals to Egypt in May, compared with April (33%). Some patients prefer to be referred to Egypt in order to avoid the lengthy and uncertain process of obtaining a permit to cross through Erez. This is particularly true for men aged 18-40, who have only a 50% success rate in of obtaining an Israeli-issued permit.

The main reasons for referrals in May were: cardiovascular (13%), oncology (12%), ophthalmology (9%), orthopaedics (6%) and neurosurgery (5%)². Similarly to the month of April, these health conditions accounted for 44% of all referrals from Gaza; together, they made up 48% of the total cost of referrals in May, which reached NIS 13.5 million.

¹ These figures have been rounded up to full percentages.

² These figures include referrals to NGO and private hospitals inside Gaza. For technical reasons it is not currently possible to provide a separate breakdown for patients who have to leave the Gaza Strip.

Figure 2: Referrals out of Gaza by destination - May 2011



Erez and Rafah crossing data for May 2011

According to the Palestinian Liaison Officer at Erez, 916 patients crossed Erez checkpoint during May 2011. Out of these, 57 needed to be transported by ambulance. Because Palestinian ambulances are not permitted to leave Gaza, the patients were transferred from one ambulance to another (back-to-back) at Erez checkpoint. This compares to 694 patients, including 42 via back-to-back ambulances, in April and 892 patients, including 54 via back-to-back ambulances, in March 2011.

Rafah border crossing was open throughout May 2011, except during weekends. An estimated 500 patients managed to leave Gaza through Rafah for treatment in Egypt. This includes patients who were seeking medical treatment at their own expense and, therefore, traveled without a RAD referral document.

A 29-year-old patient with a valid permit detained at Erez crossing

Waleed Abu Lihia, a 29-year-old man, was detained by the Israeli authorities at Erez crossing despite carrying a valid permit.

Mr Abu Lihia suffers from cancer of the esophagus. For more than a year he was treated at Shifa Hospital, in Gaza City. As his condition continued to deteriorate, his doctor decided to refer him to Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem. He scheduled an appointment there for 17 May 2011 in order to receive further treatment. On 16 May 2011, the Israeli authorities approved Mr Abu Lihia's permit application to cross Erez checkpoint.

On the day of his hospital appointment, Mr Abu Lihia and his companion travelled to Erez crossing. When they arrived, Mr Abu Lihia was interrogated by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS). After a four-hour wait, his companion was informed by GSS that Mr Abu Lihia had been detained.

As of June 14 Mr Abu Lihia was still in detention.

Update on drugs and disposables in Gaza

The essential drugs list comprises 480 drugs while the essential medical disposables list comprises 700 items. These drugs and disposables are considered necessary for the provision of essential health care. The MoH in Ramallah is responsible for sending these items to Gaza and for ensuring that there are no shortages.

At the end of May 2011, the Central Drug Store (CDS) in Gaza declared that 178 drugs were at zero stock level (compared with 153 in April). Stocks of 69 additional drugs were considered sufficient to last for less than 3 months.

Of the drug items at zero stock level, almost 17% were antibiotics, 10% were for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, 9% were chemotherapy drugs, 8% were analgesics, narcotics and anti-inflammatory drugs, 8% were psychotherapeutics and anticonvulsants, 7% were for blood disorders, 6% were for ophthalmological disorders, and 5% were for immune system disorders.

In addition, 190 essential medical disposable items out of 700 were at zero stock level. This is in comparison to April, when 155 items were at zero stock level. Stocks of 75 additional medical disposables were estimated to constitute less than a 3-month supply. The last shipment of medical disposables from the MoH in Ramallah to Gaza was in February 2011.

The zero stock figures in May were higher than the figures during the preceding three months, reflecting the further deterioration in the availability of drugs and disposables in Gaza.

Further information

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Annex 1: Historic data

District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez (total number and % per decision for given period)					
Period	Total	Approved	Denied	Delayed	
					Out of which called for GSS interrogation ³
Jan 2010	1081	845 78.2%	24 2.2%	212 19.6%	85 7.9%
Feb 2010	979	767 78.3%	25 2.6%	187 19.1%	38 3.9%
Mar 2010	1029	780 75.8%	23 2.2%	226 22.0%	30 2.9%
Apr 2010	1047	760 72.6%	40 3.8%	247 23.6%	42 4.0%
May 2010	1225	894 73.0%	155 12.7%	176 14.4%	52 4.2%
Jun 2010	1090	864 79.3%	134 12.3%	92 8.4%	61 5.6%
Jul 2010	947	789 83.3%	95 10.0%	63 6.7%	31 3.3%
Aug 2010	919	770 83.8%	87 9.5%	62 6.7%	20 2.2%
Sep 2010	626	532 85.0%	14 2.2%	80 12.8%	15 22.4%
Oct 2010	976	744 76.2%	21 2.2%	211 21.6%	6 0.6%
Nov 2010	821	650 79.2%	17 2.1%	154 18.8%	13 1.6%
Dec 2010	895	690 77.1%	15 1.7%	190 21.2%	20 2.2%
Jan 2011	935	744 79.6%	22 2.4%	169 18.1%	15 1.6%
Feb 2011	899	784 87.2%	21 2.3%	94 10.5%	11 1.2%
Mar 2011	1071	968 90.4%	26 2.4%	77 7.2%	11 1.0%
Apr 2011	825	746 90.4%	19 2.3%	60 7.3%	19 2.3%
May 2011	1076	986 91.6%	22 2.0%	68 6.3%	12 1.1%
2010	11635	9085 78.1%	650 5.6%	1900 16.3%	413 3.5%
2009	7514	5130 68.3%	149 2.0%	2235 29.7%	636 8.5%

³ The percentage rates for patients called for an interrogation with GSS are calculated from the total number of permit applications submitted.

Referrals out of Gaza by geographic location
(total numbers and % per destination for given period)

Period	West Bank	East Jerusalem	Egypt	Jordan	Israel
Jan 2010	125	327	172	11	189
	15.2%	39.7%	20.9%	1.3%	22.9%
Feb 2010	148	327	167	21	168
	17.8%	39.4%	20.1%	2.5%	20.2%
Mar 2010	87	364	204	10	205
	10.0%	41.8%	23.4%	1.1%	23.6%
Apr 2010	97	299	280	7	183
	11.2%	34.5%	32.3%	0.8%	21.1%
May 2010	176	342	209	9	230
	18.2%	35.4%	21.6%	0.9%	23.8%
Jun 2010	125	301	443	10	186
	11.7%	28.3%	41.6%	0.9%	17.5%
Jul 2010	140	253	470	14	203
	13.0%	23.4%	43.5%	1.3%	18.8%
Aug 2010	129	323	388	11	257
	11.6%	29.2%	35.0%	1.0%	23.2%
Sep 2010	99	212	414	8	206
	10.5%	22.6%	44.1%	0.9%	21.9%
Oct 2010	114	285	496	24	189
	10.3%	25.7%	44.8%	2.2%	17.1%
Nov 2010	108	246	429	10	216
	10.7%	24.4%	42.5%	1.0%	21.4%
Dec 2010	124	238	537	15	211
	11.0%	21.2%	47.7%	1.3%	18.8%
Jan 2011	70	294	531	22	246
	6.0%	25.3%	45.7%	1.9%	21.2%
Feb 2011	86	280	185	27	260
	10.3%	33.4%	22.1%	3.2%	31.0%
Mar 2011	77	345	356	17	312
	7.0%	31.2%	32.2%	1.5%	28.2%
Apr 2011	111	268	314	16	243
	11.7%	28.2%	33.0%	1.7%	25.5%
May 2011	126	318	448	20	283
	10.5%	26.6%	37.5%	1.7%	23.7%
2010	1472	3517	4209	150	2443
	12.5%	29.8%	35.7%	1.3%	20.7%
2009	1327	2453	3203	364	1158
	15.6%	28.8%	37.7%	4.3%	13.6%