

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip



World Health Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

October 2011

Ref: RAD 10 (November 16, 2011)

Referrals from Gaza: Summary for October 2011

- **2% of patients who applied for a permit to cross Erez checkpoint were denied a permit. The Israeli response to 7% of patients (56 patients including 19 children) was delayed past the date of their hospital appointment.**
- **Shortages were reported for 25% of the items on the essential medications list and for 21% of the items on the essential medical disposables list.**

Destinations and reasons for referral for medical treatment

During October 2011, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) referred 1,400 patients to health facilities for specialized treatment not available in MoH facilities in Gaza: of those, 373 patients were referred for specialized treatment that was within the Gaza Strip (in NGO or private hospitals) and **1,027 patients were referred outside of Gaza** to hospitals in East Jerusalem (29%), Egypt (31%), Israel (21%), the West Bank (14%) and Jordan (5%). Of these, 712 patients required access through Erez crossing and 315 through Rafah border crossing.

The main reasons for 54% of all referrals, representing 60% (NIS 12.6 million) of the estimated cost, in October were: cardiovascular (19%), oncology (10%), urology (8%), ophthalmology (7%), orthopedics (5%) and neurosurgery (5%). In October 2011, RAD referred 146 patients for cardiovascular treatment to non-MoH facilities in Gaza compared to 25 during September (6.4% increase in referrals), as a result of the MoH cardiac catheterization machine being out of order during most of September and October.

Referral Destination	Referrals by month*										Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	
Gaza (Non MoH facilities)	621	447	463	325	389	385	474	357	285	373	4,119
WB (MoH & NGOs)	70	86	77	111	126	132	135	109	93	142	1,081
East Jerusalem	294	280	345	268	318	302	337	331	332	300	3,107
Egypt	531	185	356	314	448	481	382	328	270	315	3,610
Jordan	22	27	17	16	20	16	21	25	38	50	252
Israel	246	260	312	243	283	276	241	241	205	220	2,527
Total	1,784	1,285	1,570	1,277	1,584	1,592	1,590	1,391	1,223	1,400	14,696

*Referrals are recorded according to month of scheduled hospital appointment. Source: MoH RAD Gaza.

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

During October 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 864 patient applications for permits to cross Erez checkpoint to access hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Israel and Jordan (see Table 2). This represents an increase from 822 applications in September 2011.

91% of applications (786) were submitted and financially covered by MoH, 3% (26) by Nour al Alam Foundation, 2% (17) by Peres Center for Peace, 2% (17) by other charity organizations, and the remaining 2% (16) by other or were self-funded.

Table 2: District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez (October 2011, disaggregated by age and sex)

Age group	Total		Approved*		Denied		Delayed**			
	M	F	M	F	M	F	Out of which called for GSS interrogation***			
							M	F	M	F
0 - 3	89	79	87	73	0	0	2	6	0	0
4 - 17	103	75	97	70	0	0	6	5	0	0
18 - 40	99	95	69	88	14	2	16	5	10	3
41 - 60	114	104	106	100	2	0	6	4	1	0
Over 60	52	54	51	49	0	0	1	5	0	0
Sub-total	457	407	410	380	16	2	31	25	11	3
Total	864		790 (91%)		18 (2%)		56 (7%)		14	

* Approvals are typically communicated to the patient only 24 hours in advance of their scheduled appointments.

** Permit applications for patient access through Erez can only be submitted within 10 days of hospital appointments. When there is no timely response from the Israeli Liaison Office, the applications are registered here as “delayed”, meaning that the Palestinian Liaison Office received no response to the permit application prior to the patient’s hospital appointment date. Some patients in this category may eventually receive permit approval --- but after their hospital appointment has passed. They must then reschedule their appointment. Other patients in this category may eventually receive denials or may not receive any response.

*** These are requests for interrogation as communicated by Israeli authorities through the Palestinian Liaison Office. This may be underreported since Israeli authorities sometimes contact patients directly for interrogation.

In October, **91%** (790 patients) of all applications for permits were approved, substantially higher than the 2010 average of 78%. Of the remaining 9% of all patients, 2% (18 cases) were denied permission to cross Erez checkpoint. Another 7% (56 patients, including 19 children) had their applications delayed beyond their hospital appointment.¹ Of the 56 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities, 14 were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition for receiving answer. **Following their interrogation, 5 were approved a permit, one was denied a permit and 7 patients were still waiting for a GSS response. (One did not attend the interrogation and was therefore not eligible to be issued a permit.)**

Delays in processing applications can be critical for patients who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. So far in 2011, **three patients died before receiving permits to travel to through Erez crossing to access the hospital they have been referred to.**

Erez and Rafah crossing data for October 2011

Erez crossing was closed during weekends (Saturdays). According to the Palestinian Liaison Office at Erez, **724 patients** crossed Erez checkpoint during October 2011, of which 50 needed to be transported by ambulance. 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 checkpoint. The same number of patients exited Gaza in September (724) as in October; 44 patients required back-to-back ambulance transfer at the checkpoint.

¹ Of these 56 delayed patients 15 were referred for ophthalmic treatments, 13 for cardiology, 5 for oncology, 5 for neurosurgery and the remaining for 18 for other specialties.

Rafah border crossing was open for humanitarian access for a total of 25 days in October 2011; it was closed on 6 October and on weekends (Fridays). The current waiting time for non urgent referrals through Rafah is 3 weeks. An estimated **33 patients daily** (total of 1000) were able to leave Gaza through Rafah for treatment in Egypt in October. This includes patients who were seeking medical treatment at their own expense and, therefore, traveled without a RAD financial cover, referral document.

Drugs and disposables October 2011

On 15 October 2011, the Central Drug Store in Gaza reported shortages of 120 (25%) essential drugs of the total 480 drugs on the essential list. In addition, 150 (21%) medical disposable items from the list of 700 essential items were out of stock in early October. The shortages of drugs and medical disposables remain at high levels although MoH in Gaza has requested drugs and disposables.

Annex 1: Data from January to October for 2010 and 2011

District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez (total number and %, by response and by sex of applicant)									
Period	October 2010		October 2011		January – October 2010		January – October 2011		
Total	933 (F:404; M:529)		864 (F:407; M:457)		8,917 (F:4040; M:5491)		9,089 (F:4021; M:5068)		
Approved	747 (F:339; M:408)	80.0%	790 (F:380; M:410)	91.4%	7,769 (F:3497; M:4272)	87.1%	8,094 (F:3702; M:4392)		89.1%
Denied	21 (F:7; M:14)	2.3%	18 (F:2; M:16)	2.1%	614 (F:181; M:433)	6.9%	221 (F:48; M:173)		2.4%
Delayed	165 (F:58; M:107)	17.7%	56 (F:25; M:31)	6.5%	1,148 (F:362; M:786)	12.9%	774 (F:271; M:503)		8.5%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	12 (F:4; M:8)	1.3%	14 (F:3; M:11)	1.3%	376 (F:89; M:287)	4.2%	145 (F:30; M:115)		1.6%

Referrals out of Gaza by geographic location (total numbers and %, by response)									
Period	October 2010		October 2011		January – October 2010		January – October 2011		
Total outside Gaza	1,153		1,027		10,216		10,577		
West Bank	113	9.8%	142	13.8%	1,239	12.3%	1,081		10.2%
East Jerusalem	277	19.7%	300	29.2%	2,899	28.6%	3,107		29.4%
Egypt	531	46.0%	315	30.7%	3,841	36.1%	3,610		34.1%
Jordan	33	2.7%	50	4.9%	187	1.7%	252		2.4%
Israel	199	17.3%	220	21.4%	2,050	21.0%	2,527		23.9%

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