

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

September 2011



World Health
Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Ref: RAD 9 (October 14, 2011)

Referrals from Gaza: Summary for September 2011

- During the Israeli Jewish New Year holiday, September 29 and 30, Erez checkpoint was closed; only one patient was allowed to cross for urgent medical care.
- 2% of permit applications of patients (20 patients, including 1 child) to cross Erez checkpoint were denied. 7% of applications of patients (including 7 children) were delayed.

Destinations and reasons for referral for medical treatment

During September 2011, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) referred 1,223 patients to health facilities for specialized treatment not available through MoH facilities in Gaza: of those, 285 patients were referred to NGO or private hospitals within the Gaza Strip and **938 patients were referred outside of Gaza** to hospitals in East Jerusalem (35%), Egypt (29%), Israel (22%), the West Bank (10%) and Jordan (4%). 668 patients required access through Erez crossing and 270 through Rafah border crossing.

The main reasons for 48% of all referrals, representing 55% (\$10 million) of the estimated cost, in September were: cardiovascular (11%), oncology (11%), ophthalmology (9%), urology (7%), orthopedics (6%) and neurosurgery (4%). This pattern is similar to previous months.

Referral Destination	Table 1: Referrals by month*									Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	
Gaza (Non MoH facilities)	621	447	463	325	389	385	474	357	285	3,746
WB (MoH & NGOs)	70	86	77	111	126	132	135	109	93	939
East Jerusalem	294	280	345	268	318	302	337	331	332	2,807
Egypt	531	185	356	314	448	481	382	328	270	3,295
Jordan	22	27	17	16	20	16	21	25	38	202
Israel	246	260	312	243	283	276	241	241	205	2,307
Total	1,784	1,285	1,570	1,277	1,584	1,592	1,590	1,391	1,223	13,296

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

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

During September 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 822 patient applications for permits to cross Erez checkpoint to access hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Israel and Jordan (see Table 1). This compares to 668 applications August 2011. 87% of applications (715) were submitted and financially covered by MoH, 5% (41) by Nour al Alam Foundation, 3% (25) by Peres Center for Peace, and the remaining 3% (25) by other charity agencies or were self-funded.

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

Age group	Total		Approved*		Denied		Delayed**			
							Out of which called for GSS interrogation***			
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0 - 3	71	61	71	59	0	0	0	2	0	0
4 - 17	106	71	104	67	0	1	2	3	0	0
18 - 40	108	108	71	97	8	2	29	9	11	2
41 - 60	114	88	100	86	8	0	6	2	2	0
Over 60	49	46	48	43	0	1	1	2	0	0
Sub-total	448	374	394	352	16	4	38	18	13	2
Total	822		746 (91%)		20 (2%)		56 (7%)		15	

* 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 September, **91%** (746 patients) of all applications were approved, substantially higher than the 2010 average of 78%. Of the remaining 9%, 2% (20 cases including 1 child) were denied permission to cross Erez checkpoint. Another 7% (56 patients, including 7 children) had their applications delayed beyond their hospital appointment.¹ Of the 56 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities, 15 were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS). **Following their interrogation 4 patients are still waiting for the GSS response, 10 were approved permits and one was denied 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 through Erez crossing to access the hospital they had been referred to. Some patients are detained by the Israeli authorities at Erez checkpoint, despite having obtained a permit to cross Erez.** The increase in the number of patients seeking treatment in Egypt over other destinations, especially for males aged 18-40 years, may be due in part to increase their chances of exiting Gaza, and to avoid the personal security risks involved with applying for an Israeli permit through Erez. In 2010, only half of applications by males and two thirds by female in this group for permits through Erez were approved.

Erez and Rafah crossing data for September 2011

Erez crossing was closed during the weekends and also from September 29 and 30, when only one patient -- an urgent case -- received permission to cross. According to the Palestinian Liaison Officer at Erez, **724 patients** crossed Erez checkpoint during September 2011, of which 44 needed to be transported by ambulance. Since Palestinian ambulances are not permitted to leave Gaza, the patients were transferred from the Palestinian ambulance, carried on a stretcher to an Israeli ambulance at Erez checkpoint. This compares to the exit of 584 patients, including 26 via ambulances, in August.

¹ Of these 56 delayed patients 13 were referred for ophthalmic treatments, 10 for orthopedic treatments, 5 for neurosurgery and the remaining 27 for other specialties.

Rafah border crossing was open for humanitarian reasons for 25 days throughout August 2011, and closed during weekends. An estimated **33 patients daily** (total of 1000) were able 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 financial cover referral document.

Annex 1: Permit Application Data from January to September 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	September 2010		September 2011		January – September 2010		January – September 2011		
Total	679 (F:285; M:322)		822 (F:374; M:448)		8,670 (F:3245; M:4496)		8,225 (F:3614; M:4611)		
Approved	534 (F:259; M:275)	78.6%	746 (F:352; M:394)	90.1%	7,022 (F:3158; M:3864)	80.1%	7,304 (F:3322; M:3982)		88.8%
Denied	14 (F:6; M:8)	2.1%	20 (F:4; M:16)	2.4%	593 (F:174; M:419)	6.8%	203 (F:44; M:159)		2.5%
Delayed	59 (F:20; M:39)	8.7%	56 (F:18; M:38)	6.8%	983 (F:304; M:679)	11.3%	718 (F:246; M:472)		8.7%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	26 (F:7; M:19)	3.8%	18 (F:2; M:13)	2.2%	370 (F:85; M:285)	4.3%	134 (F:27; M:104)		1.6%

Referrals exiting Gaza by geographic location (total numbers and %, by response)									
Period	September 2010		September 2011		January – September 2010		January – September 2011		
Total outside Gaza	957		938		9,161		9,550		
West Bank	91	9.5%	93	9.9%	1,126	12.3%	939		9.8%
East Jerusalem	220	23.0%	332	35.4%	2,622	28.6%	2,807		29.4%
Egypt	437	45.7%	270	28.8%	3,310	36.1%	3,295		34.5%
Jordan	8	0.8%	38	4.1%	154	1.7%	202		2.1%
Israel	201	21.0%	205	21.9%	1,931	21.0%	2,307		24.2%

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