

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

April 2012



World Health
Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Ref: RAD 4 (May 22, 2012)

Referrals from Gaza: Summary for April 2012

- Of the 1,338 referrals, 1,037 were destined to facilities outside the Gaza Strip, of which 741 required exit through Erez checkpoint. The majority of these (62%) were to Palestinian hospitals in the oPt.
- In April, 724 of 764 referral patients who applied for permits to cross Erez checkpoint were approved, an approval rate of 94.8%. However, 8 patients were denied a permit, and 32 patients (4.2%), including one child, did not receive a response to their permit request in time and missed the date of their hospital appointment. For the first time since WHO began monitoring the data, more female patients than males were called for interrogation by the security services (13 F; 10 M).
- The main reasons for patient referrals during April were for treatment in the following subspecialties: cardiovascular (16%), oncology (15%), ophthalmology (7%), orthopedics (5%) and neurosurgery (5%). These cases represent 48% of the total referrals and 63% of the estimated total referral cost in April, which was NIS 11.7 million (\$3.1 million).

Destinations and reasons for referral for medical treatment

During April 2012, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) referred 1,338 patients (747 males and 591 females) to health facilities for specialized treatment not available in MoH facilities in Gaza. Similar to last month, 22% (301 patients) were referred to NGO or private facilities within the Gaza Strip and **78% (1,037 patients) were referred outside of Gaza to hospitals in East Jerusalem (33%), Egypt (29%), Israel (24%), the West Bank (11%) and Jordan (3%).** Of these, 741 patients required permits to access through Erez crossing and 296 through Rafah border crossing (see Table 1, below).

Referral Destination	MoH Referrals				Total 2012
	January	February	March	April	
Gaza (Non MoH facilities)	289	258	284	301	1,132
West Bank (MoH & NGOs)	110	101	94	115	420
East Jerusalem	374	301	359	344	1,378
Egypt	319	240	270	296	1,125
Jordan	47	53	41	30	171
Israel	254	237	247	252	990
Total	1,393	1,190	1,295	1,338	5,216

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

Patients were referred during April mainly for treatment in the following subspecialties: cardiovascular (16%), oncology (15%), ophthalmology (7%), neurosurgery (5%) and orthopedics (5%). These cases represent 48% of the total referrals and 63% of the estimated total referral cost in April, which was NIS 11.7 million (\$3.1 million). The same cases represented 49% of the total referrals last month and 60% of the total cost.

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

In April 2012, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 764 patient applications for permits to cross Erez to access hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in Israel and Jordan (see Table 2) compared with 768 last month and 766 in February 2012. During this month 93% of applications (714) were submitted and financially covered by the MoH, 4% (29) were self-funded, 0.8% (6) by Peres Center for Peace and (5) by Physicians for Human Rights - Israel, 0.5% (4) by Nour al-Alam Foundation, and the remaining 6 cases by other funds.

Age group	Total		Approved*		Denied		Delayed**		Called for GSS interrogation***	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	62	66	62	66	0	0	0	0	0	0
4 - 17	56	84	56	83	0	0	0	1	0	0
18- 40	100	87	88	73	0	4	12	10	11	7
41 - 60	88	106	86	97	0	4	2	5	2	2
Over 60	48	67	47	66	0	0	1	1	0	1
<i>Sub-total</i>	354	410	339	385	0	8	15	17	13	10
Total	764		724 (94.8%)		8 (1.0%)		32 (4.2%)		23 (3.0%)	

* 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 April, **94.8%** (724 patients) of all patient applications for permits were approved, an improvement over the 2011 approval rate of 89.7%. Of the remaining 5.2% of all patients, 1.0% (8 cases) was denied permission to cross Erez checkpoint. Of the 8 patients denied permits, 2 had been referred for orthopedic treatment, 2 for neurosurgery, 2 for nuclear medicine scan, one for ENT and one for ophthalmic treatment.

Another 4.2% (32 patients, including one child) had their applications delayed beyond their hospital appointment. **For the first time since WHO began monitoring the data, more females than males were called for interrogation: 23 patients (13 female and 10 male) were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition of their permit application.** Following their interrogation, 11 patients were still waiting for a GSS response, 7 were approved, 4 were asked to submit a new request, and one was denied.

Delays in processing applications **can be critical for patients** who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. In 2011, three patients died before receiving permits to travel through Erez crossing to access the hospitals they have been referred to. Since 2008, 70 referral patients were reported to have died before reaching medical care outside Gaza (50 referrals through Erez crossing and 20 through Rafah border crossing).

Point of exiting Gaza	Patients crossing	Ambulance transfers (back-to-back)	Days open in month	Special conditions
Erez crossing (North)	669	47	Open: 20 days including 2 days partially open Closed: 10days (April, 12, 13, 14, 20, 25 and 26 for Israeli holidays in addition to 4 Saturdays)	Only exit point to access medical care in oPt, Israel and Jordan
Rafah crossing (South)	371	74	Open: 25 days Closed: 5 days (April 25 for Egyptian holiday in addition to 4 Fridays)	Only exit point to access medical care in Egypt

Period	April 2011		April 2012		January – April 2011		January – April 2012	
Total	825 (F:354; M:471)		764 (F:354; M:410)		3,730 (F:1574; M:2156)		3,200 (F:1593; M:1607)	
Approved	746 (F:328; M:418)	90.4%	724 (F:339; M:385)	94.8%	3,242 (F:1426; M:1816)	86.9%	2,997 (F:1493; M:1664)	93.6%
Denied	19 (F:5; M:14)	2.3%	8 (F:0; M:8)	1.0%	88 (F:18; M:70)	2.4%	33 (F:12; M:21)	1.0%
Delayed	60 (F:21; M:39)	7.3%	32 (F:15; M:17)	4.2%	400 (F:130; M:270)	10.7%	170 (F:73; M:97)	5.3%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	19 (F:5; M:14)	2.3%	23 (F:13; M:10)	3.0%	56 (F:11; M:45)	1.5%	72 (F:29; M:43)	2.3%

Period	April 2011		April 2012		January – April 2011		January – April 2012	
Total outside Gaza	952		1,037		4,060		4,084	
West Bank	111	12%	115	11%	344	8%	420	10%
East Jerusalem	268	28%	344	33%	1,187	29%	1,378	34%
Egypt	314	33%	296	29%	1,386	34%	1,125	28%
Jordan	16	2%	30	3%	82	2%	171	4%
Israel	243	26%	252	24%	1,061	26%	990	24%

WHO publications are available at: www.emro.who.int/palestine/Comments:advocacy@who-health.org