

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

December 2011



World Health
Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Ref: RAD 12 (January 13, 2012)

Referrals from Gaza: Summary for December 2011

- Only 4 patients (0.5%) who applied for a permit to cross Erez checkpoint were denied a permit this month. However, 34 patients including 3 children (4.5%) did not receive a response in time and therefore were delayed past the date of their hospital appointment.
- Patients were referred during December mainly for treatment in the following subspecialties: cardiovascular (11%), oncology (10%), ophthalmology (8%), orthopedics (6%) and neurosurgery (6%). These cases represent almost 41% out of the total referrals and 52% of the total estimated costs for referrals for the month.
- Comparing 2010 to 2011 data, there were fewer MoH referrals outside of Gaza and fewer permit applications in 2011, but a higher rate of approvals for permits and lower rate of denials; there was a higher rate for MoH referrals to East Jerusalem, Israeli and Jordan health facilities.

Destinations and reasons for referral for medical treatment

During December 2011, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) referred 1,206 patients to health facilities for specialized treatment not available in MoH facilities in Gaza: of these, 282 patients were referred for specialized treatment within the Gaza Strip (to NGO or private hospitals) and **924 patients were referred outside of Gaza** to hospitals in East Jerusalem (35%), Egypt (27%), Israel (21%), the West Bank (12%) and Jordan (5%). Of these, 674 patients required access through Erez crossing and 250 through Rafah border crossing (see Table 1, below).

Referral Destination	Table 1. Ministry of Health Referrals in 2011, by destination and month*												Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Gaza (Non MoH facilities)	621	447	463	325	389	385	474	357	285	373	228	282	4,629
WB (MoH & NGOs)	70	86	77	111	126	132	135	109	93	142	101	114	1,296
East Jerusalem	294	280	345	268	318	302	337	331	332	300	300	320	3,727
Egypt	531	185	356	314	448	481	382	328	270	315	242	250	4,102
Jordan	22	27	17	16	20	16	21	25	38	50	39	42	333
Israel	246	260	312	243	283	276	241	241	205	220	161	198	2,886
Total	1,784	1,285	1,570	1,277	1,584	1,592	1,590	1,391	1,223	1,400	1,071	1,206	16,973

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

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Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

During December 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 760 patient applications for permits to cross Erez to access hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Israel and Jordan (see Table 2) compared with 711 last month and 864 in October. 87.7% of applications (667) were submitted and financially covered by the MoH, 4.8% (37) by Nour al Alam Foundation, 4% (31) were self-funded, 2.1% (16) by Physicians for Human Rights - Israel, 0.7% (6) by Peres Center for Peace, and the remaining by other charity organizations.

Table 2: Israeli Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez in December 2011, 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	72	57	72	55	0	0	0	2	0	0
4 - 17	80	73	79	73	0	0	1	0	0	0
18- 40	93	89	76	82	2	1	15	6	8	8
41 - 60	100	97	93	97	1	0	6	0	6	1
Over 60	58	41	55	40	0	0	3	1	1	1
Sub-total	403	357	375	347	3	1	25	9	15	10
Total	760		722 (95%)		4 (0.5%)		34 (4.5%)		25	

* 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 December, **95%** (722 patients) of all applications for permits were approved, substantially higher than the 2010 average of 78%. Of the remaining 5% of all patients, 0.5% (4 cases) were denied permission to cross Erez checkpoint. Another 4.5% (34 patients, including 3 children) had their applications delayed beyond their hospital appointment. Of the 34 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities, 25 were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition for receiving answer. **Following their interrogation, 14 patients were still waiting for a GSS response, 6 were approved a permit, and one did not attend the interrogation.**

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.**

Erez and Rafah crossing data for December 2011

Erez crossing was closed on Saturdays. According to the Palestinian Liaison Office at Erez, **697 patients** crossed Erez checkpoint during December 2011, of which 47 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. This compares to **639** patients that exited Gaza in November, including 38 patients via back-to-back ambulance transfer at the checkpoint.

Rafah border crossing was open for humanitarian access for a total of 24 days in December 2011; it was closed on 5 Fridays and on 31 December due to Egyptian elections. The current waiting time for non urgent referrals through Rafah is less than a week. The total number of patients that crossed Rafah border during December was 396, including 64 by ambulances.

Table 3: Data for 2010 and 2011. District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez in 2010 compared to 2011 by month and year, by response and sex

Period	December 2010		December 2011		January – December 2010		January – December 2011	
Total	851 (F:369; M:482)		760 (F:357; M:403)		11,175 (F:4724; M:6451)		10,560 (F:4716; M:5844)	
Approved	691 (F:325; M:366)	81.2%	722 (F:347; M:375)	95.0%	9,112 (F:4097; M:5014)	81.5%	9,478 (F:4376; M:5102)	89.7%
Denied	15 (F:3; M:12)	1.8%	4 (F:1; M:3)	0.5%	646 (F:189; M:457)	5.8%	237 (F:49; M:188)	2.2%
Delayed	145 (F:41; M:104)	17.0%	34 (F:9; M:25)	4.5%	1,418 (F:438; M:980)	12.7%	808 (F:280; M:528)	7.6%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	27 (F:7; M:20)	3.1%	25 (F:10; M:15)	3.3%	421 (F:100; M:321)	3.8%	197 (F:48; M:149)	1.9%

MoH Referrals out of Gaza in 2010 compared to 2011 by month and year, and by geographic location

Period	December 2010		December 2011		January – December 2010		January – December 2011	
Total outside Gaza	1,125		924		12,483		12,344	
West Bank	124	11.0%	114	12.3%	1,476	11.8%	1,296	10.5%
East Jerusalem	238	21.2%	320	34.6%	3,382	27.1%	3,727	30.2%
Egypt	537	47.7%	250	27.1%	4,843	38.8%	4,102	33.2%
Jordan	15	1.3%	42	4.5%	215	1.7%	333	2.7%
Israel	211	18.8%	198	21.4%	2,567	20.6%	2,886	23.4%

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