



MONTHLY REPORT

December 2021

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **8,941**

referrals issued to access health facilities outside the Palestinian MoH

2,129 Gaza

6,641 West Bank

 **60%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

38%

of Gaza companion permit applications approved

 **83%**

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

78%

of West Bank companion permit applications approved

 **0**

No Gaza patients called for security interrogation

IN FOCUS

Right to Health Barriers in 2021

Part 1 Referrals

December referrals by the Ministry of Health

In December, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 8,941 referrals to health care services delivered by non-MoH providers, 15% higher than the monthly average (7,768) for the first half of 2021. Referrals from the West Bank comprised 74% (6,641) of the total, including 993 referrals for patients from East Jerusalem, while the West Bank population comprises approximately 60% of the total population in the oPt. Referrals for the Gaza Strip accounted for 24% (2,129) of the total. One referral was issued for a Palestinian patient present in Jordan, while the origin of 170 referrals (2%) was not reported.

Palestinian MoH referrals to hospitals in the West Bank, outside East Jerusalem, comprised 45% of referrals in December; to East Jerusalem hospitals 39%; within the Gaza Strip 6%; to Israeli hospitals 6%; to Egypt 4%; to Jordan 0.5% (43 referrals) and 0.04% (4) to Turkey.

The top needed specialties for referrals were oncology (28%); cardiac catheterization (8%); cardiology (7%); urology & nephrology (4%); ophthalmology (4%); haematology (4%); medical imaging (4%); endoscopy (3%); radiation therapy (3%); paediatrics (3%); and laboratory tests (3%). The remaining 29% were for 24 other medical specialties.

Referrals for patients under 18 years of age comprised 22% (1,949) of the total, while 28% (2,477) were for those aged 60 years or older. Referrals for female patients comprised 46% of the total.

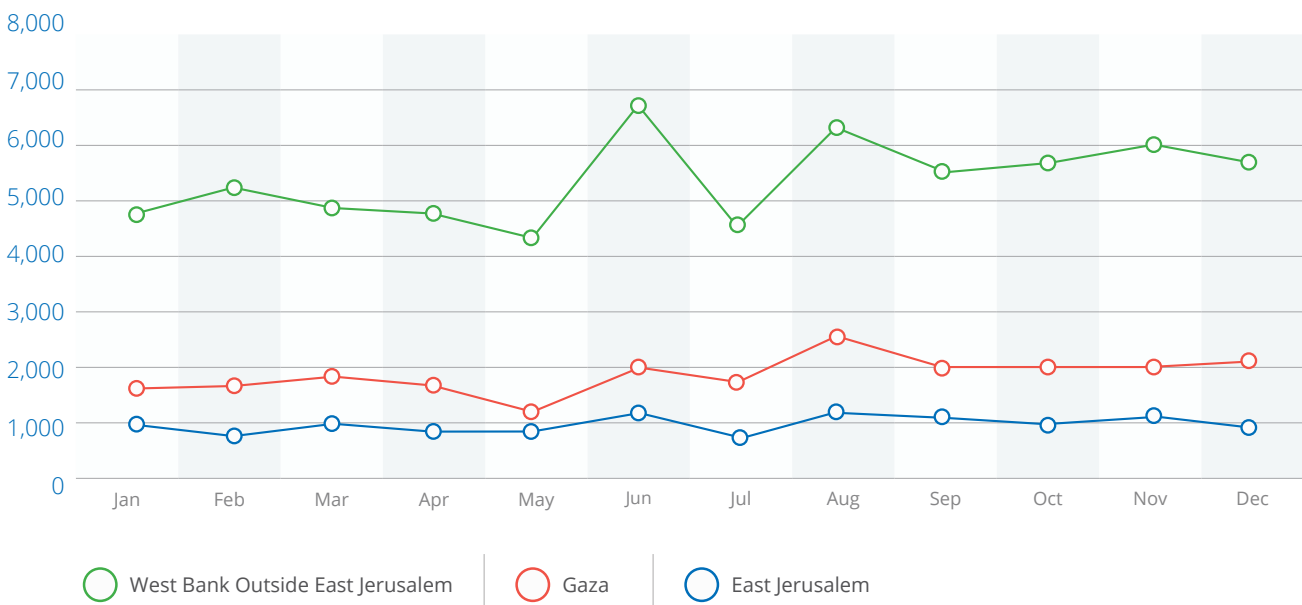
 **2,129**
Gaza Strip

 **6,641**
West Bank

referrals approved financial coverage for health care outside the Palestinian Ministry of Health

Chart 1

Number of referrals issued by the Palestinian MoH by place of origin, January to December 2021



Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip


There were 1,529 (M: 853; F: 676) patient permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in December 2021.

Close to a third (29%) of applications were for children under 18 and nearly a fifth (18%) were for patients over 60 years old. 44% were for female patients, while 82% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Half (51%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 32% for West Bank hospitals outside East Jerusalem; 17% for Israeli hospitals; and 1 application for a hospital in Jordan. More than two fifths (44%) of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (22%) or Makassed Hospital (22%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 71% of permit applications: oncology (34%); cardiology (12%); haematology (10%); ophthalmology (8%); and paediatrics (7%). The remaining 29% of applications were for 25 other specialties.

A further 109 permit applications for patients and companions were submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs during December for travel by shuttle to Jordan, which requires approval of Israeli and Jordanian authorities for direct transfer from Beit Hanoun/Erez to the King Hussein Bridge crossing to Jordan, without formal entry to Israel or the West Bank. Jordanian hospitals issue an open appointment (rather than specifying a date) for these permit applications. Of the 109 applications, 71 (65%) were approved, 36 (33%) were denied and 2 (2%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 923 (M: 498; F: 425) or 60% of the 1,529 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez in December 2021 were approved, 12% lower than the average approval rate (72%) before the escalation, from January to May 2021. In May 2021, the approval rate for patient applications dropped to 31% during the military escalation then improved afterwards, reaching 74% in July. In August and September, the approval rate declined to 64% and 54%, respectively, while for the last 3 months of the year it was stable with a mean of 60%.

The approval rate for patient permits varies by age and sex. In December, female patients had a higher approval rate overall compared to male patients, at 63% compared to 59%. Men aged 18 to 40 years had the lowest approval rate (47%), while men over 60 years had the highest (75%), see Table 1. Similarly, approval rates vary by referred specialty. In December, specialties with an approval rate higher than the average of 60% included cancer care (oncology) at 76%, blood disorders (haematology) at 71% and heart surgery at 68%. The approval rate for children's medicine (paediatrics) was similar to the average, at 60%. Meanwhile, cardiology (54%), orthopaedics (49%), ophthalmology (41%), urology (41%), neurosurgery (39%), and nuclear medicine (18%) all had approval rates below the average.

 **1,529**
patient applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez to access health care

 **60%**
approved

 **1%**
denied

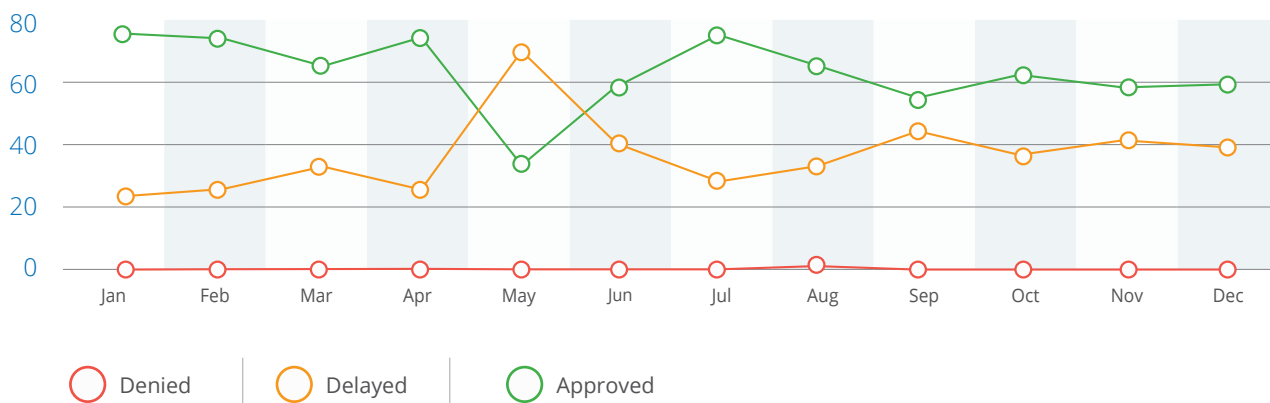
 **39%**
delayed

Table 1 Approval rate for patient permit applications in December 2021, by age and sex

AGE	M	F
00 - 3	67%	63%
04 - 17	63%	55%
18 - 40	47%	57%
41Y -60	48%	69%
Over 60	75%	72%
Average	59%	63%
60%		

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, January to December 2021



Denied care: 10 (M: 4; F: 6) patients were denied in December: three adults aged 18 to 40; four adults aged 41 to 60 years; and three patients over 60 years old. Four patients were referred for oncology, 3 for cardiology, 2 for ophthalmology, and 1 for neurosurgery. Six patients were referred to hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, and four were referred to East Jerusalem.

Delayed care: 596 (M: 351; F: 245) patient permit applications, or 39% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. 29% (173 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 11% (67) were over 60 years. A fifth (20%) of those delayed had appointments for cancer care (oncology); 13% for cardiology; 11% for ophthalmology; 8% for haematology; 8% for paediatrics; 6% for orthopaedics; 6% for neurosurgery; 5% for internal medicine and 4% for urology. The remaining 17% were for 20 other specialties. Of delayed applications, 46% were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, 35% for the West Bank, and 19% for Israeli hospitals. Most delayed applications (577 or 97%) were 'under study' at the time of appointment.

44% of applications destined to Israeli hospitals, 42% of those destined to the West Bank and 35% of those destined to East Jerusalem hospitals were delayed.

Security interrogation and arrests

No patients called for security interrogation in December. Also, there were no arrests of patients or companions during the month.

Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 1,870 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in December. These applications include parents or other companions applying to travel with children. Patients are eligible to apply to Israeli authorities for one companion to accompany them for health care outside the Gaza Strip. In December, 719 companion permit applications (38% of the total) were approved, 38 applications (2%) were denied and the remaining 1,113 (60%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's appointment.



0

Gaza patient

called for security interrogation



1,870

companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez to accompany patients



38% approved



2% denied



60% delayed

Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,075 Gaza patients and 844 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in December to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of the 1,075 patients, 76 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 76 companions. These numbers show that **a fifth 231 (21%) of patients** crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. The bodies of 18 deceased patients were returned to Gaza in December. During the month, Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint was open for 27 days for daytime working hours and closed on 4 days (4 Saturdays).



1,075
patients
exited through Beit
Hanoun/Erez



844
companions
exited through Beit
Hanoun/Erez

Rafah crossing - Egypt



In December, there were 9,152 entries and 11,248 exits through Rafah crossing. A further 588 Palestinians seeking to exit were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The crossing was open on 22 days and closed on 9 days (over weekends). The crossing has been open in both directions since 9 February 2021. Specific data on patient crossings during the month has not been made available by the Rafah terminal authorities. The ambulance service of the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that their ambulances transferred 138 patients from the Palestinian side to the Egyptian side of the terminal during the month.

The West Bank

In December 2021, there were 7,348 permit applications by patients and 7,909 by patient companions from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel.

Most Palestinians from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem require permits to enter Jerusalem or Israel. Requirements are waived for certain sections of the Palestinian population, while Israelis do not require permits to enter Area C of the West Bank. All Palestinians with East Jerusalem identity cards do not require permits to enter the city or Israel. Meanwhile, many women older than 50 years of age, men older than 55 years of age, and children under 13 years traveling with an approved adult are exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel to Israel or East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday, before 8am or after 7pm.

Of 7,348 West Bank patient applications, 6,077 (83%) were approved, 934 (13%) were unsuccessful (denied) and 337 (5%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

Of the 7,909 West Bank companion applications, 6,161 (78%) were approved, 1,401 (18%) were unsuccessful and 347 (4%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

7,348
patient permit applications

for Israeli permits to access healthcare in East Jerusalem and Israel

83% approved

13% unsuccessful

5% pending
at the time of monthly reporting

7,909
patient companion applications

to access healthcare in East Jerusalem and Israel

78% approved

18% unsuccessful

4% pending
at the time of monthly reporting

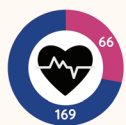
In Focus

Right to Health Barriers, 2021

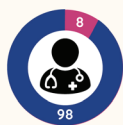
RIGHT TO HEALTH BARRIERS 2021



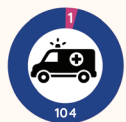
HEALTH ATTACKS



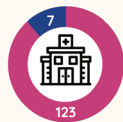
235
Health Attacks



106
Health Workers Injured

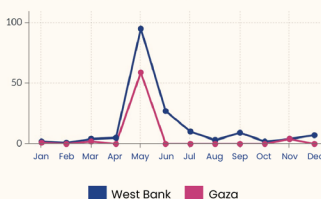


105
Health Vehicles Affected

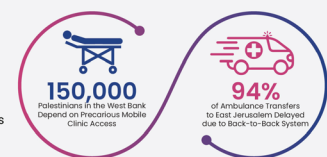
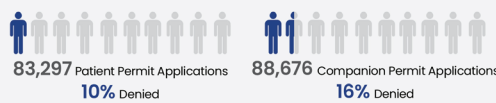


130
Health Facilities Affected

Health Attacks in Numbers



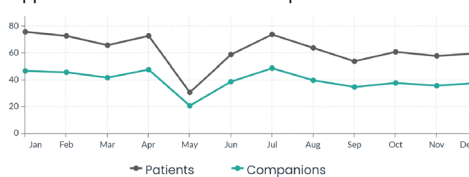
WEST BANK HEALTH ACCESS



GAZA HEALTH ACCESS



Approval Rate for Patient and Companion Permits



27%
of Patient Permit Applications for Children

41%
of Permit Applications for Cancer Patients

47%
of Permit Applications for Female Patients

Destination for Gaza Patient Permits

