

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

April 2011



World Health Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Summary for April 2011

- Due to strikes by medical staff at Israeli hospitals, 31 patients who had been referred there had to reschedule their hospital appointments.
- 90% of patients who applied for permits to cross Erez checkpoint received an approval from the Israeli authorities in time for their hospital appointment.
- Shortages of essential drugs and disposables remained high within the health system run by the Ministry of Health in Gaza.

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

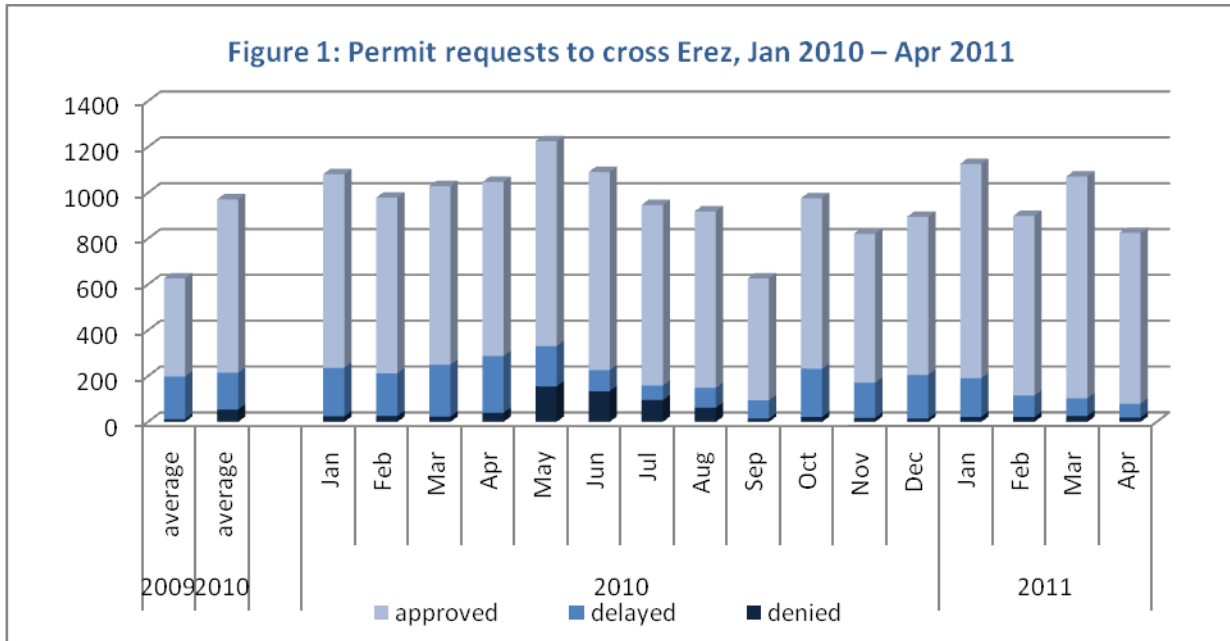
During April 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 825 patient applications for permits to cross Erez checkpoint to access hospitals in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Israel and Jordan (see Table 1). This is substantially less than the 1,071 applications in March.

Age group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed				Did not cross despite approval	
							Out of which called for GSS interrogation					
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0 - 3	71	54	71	54	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4 - 17	87	70	81	68	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	0
18 - 40	120	84	84	65	10	4	26	15	13	5	0	0
41 - 60	122	94	116	90	3	1	3	3	1	0	0	0
Over 60	71	52	66	51	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	0
Sub-total	471	354	418	328	14	5	39	21	14	5	0	0
Total	825		746		19		60		19		0	

90% (746 patients) **of all applications were approved.** This is significantly higher than the average for 2010, which was 78% (see Figure 1). 2% of permit applications to cross Erez checkpoint were denied (19 patients). Another 7% (60 patients, including 8 children) had their applications delayed.

Of the 60 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities, 19 were called for interrogation by the Israeli Intelligence Services, known as General Security Services (GSS). 4 of these patients did not attend the interrogation; 8 patients were still waiting for a response from GSS at the end of the month, after they had undergone interrogation; 2 were asked to submit a new request; 2 had their application approved, and; 3 had their application denied.

57% of delayed patients faced delays of more than one week. Delayed patients generally miss their hospital appointments. In most cases they have to seek new appointments and submit new applications for a permit to cross Erez checkpoint. Delays in processing applications can be critical for patients who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. Some may die while waiting for permission to access the medical facility they have been referred to. **Since the beginning of the year 2009 a total of 36 patients have died before being able to access the hospital they had been referred to.**



Strikes and public holidays reduce flow of patients in April 2011

On 5 and 6 April 2011, doctors at Israeli hospitals went on strike. As a result, only acute and emergency cases were admitted to these hospitals. 25 referred patients from Gaza had to change their hospital appointments. Further, on 13 April, the doctors at Beilinson Hospital in Israel went on strike. Six patients who had appointments at this hospital on that day were turned back by the Israeli authorities at Erez checkpoint and had to reschedule their appointments.

Due to public holidays in Israel, Erez crossing was closed for four days (18-19, 24-25 April), in addition to the regular closure on Saturdays. Only four patients who were critically ill were allowed to pass through Erez in those days.

Destinations and reasons for referral

In April 2011, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) approved and issued 1,277 referral documents compared with 1,570 in March and 1,285 in February. RAD found that 325 patients were able to receive appropriate treatment within the Gaza Strip, in either NGO or private hospitals.

The remaining **952 patients had to leave Gaza** in order to be treated in hospitals in Egypt (33%), East Jerusalem (28%), Israel (26%), the West Bank (12%) and Jordan (2%) (see Figure 2).

In April, the majority of referred patients sought treatment in one of five medical specialties: cardiology i.e. heart diseases (12%), oncology i.e. cancer (11%), ophthalmology i.e. eye conditions (11%), orthopedics (6%) and

neurosurgery (5%)¹. These health conditions accounted for 44% of all referrals from Gaza; together they made up 50% of the total cost of referrals in April, which reached NIS 10.5 million.

Erez and Rafah crossing data for April 2011

According to the Palestinian Liaison Officer at Erez, 694 patients crossed Erez checkpoint during April 2011². Out of these, 42 needed to be transported by ambulance. Because Palestinian ambulances are not permitted to leave Gaza, the patients were transferred from one ambulance to another (back-to-back) at Erez checkpoint. This compares to 892 patients, including 54 via back-to-back ambulances, in March 2011.

Rafah border crossing was open throughout April 2011, except on 24 and 25 April due to holidays. An estimated 350 patients managed 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 referral document.

Update on drugs and disposables in Gaza

Essential drugs and disposables remained in short supply in health facilities run by MoH in Gaza. MoH provides 40% of primary health care and 80% of hospital care in the Gaza Strip. The MoH in Ramallah is responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient supplies in MoH facilities in both the West Bank and Gaza.

In late April 2011, the Central Drugs Store (CDS) in Gaza reported 153 out of 480 essential drugs at “zero stock level” i.e. one month or less supply. 17% of the drugs at zero stock level were antibiotics, and 11% are used for the treatment of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, etc.

In March, 151 essential drugs were at zero stock. A drugs shipment with 118 pallets from MoH in Ramallah that arrived in Gaza on 31 March 2011 was included in the April inventory. Nevertheless, zero level stocks did not change substantially.

Furthermore, 155 essential medical disposables out of 700 on the essential disposable list were at zero stock level (compared with 135 in March). Disposables include a wide variety of essential items such as syringes, filters for dialysis, and medical dressings. A shipment of disposables from MoH in Ramallah arrived in Gaza during the first week of February 2011. Notwithstanding this shipment, medical disposables are still in short supply.

Further information

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¹ These figures include referrals to NGO and private hospitals inside Gaza. For technical reasons it is not currently possible to provide a separate breakdown for patients who have to leave the Gaza Strip.

² The discrepancy between the number of permits approved (746 for April 2011) and the number of patients who crossed in this same month (694), is due to the fact that patients who have their permits approved at the end of one month might only cross the following month.

Annex 1: Historic data

District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez (total number and % per decision for given period)					
Period	Total	Approved	Denied	Delayed	
					Out of which called for GSS interrogation ³
Jan 2010	1081	845 78.2%	24 2.2%	212 19.6%	85 7.9%
Feb 2010	979	767 78.3%	25 2.6%	187 19.1%	38 3.9%
Mar 2010	1029	780 75.8%	23 2.2%	226 22.0%	30 2.9%
Apr 2010	1047	760 72.6%	40 3.8%	247 23.6%	42 4.0%
May 2010	1225	894 73.0%	155 12.7%	176 14.4%	52 4.2%
Jun 2010	1090	864 79.3%	134 12.3%	92 8.4%	61 5.6%
Jul 2010	947	789 83.3%	95 10.0%	63 6.7%	31 3.3%
Aug 2010	919	770 83.8%	87 9.5%	62 6.7%	20 2.2%
Sep 2010	626	532 85.0%	14 2.2%	80 12.8%	15 22.4%
Oct 2010	976	744 76.2%	21 2.2%	211 21.6%	6 0.6%
Nov 2010	821	650 79.2%	17 2.1%	154 18.8%	13 1.6%
Dec 2010	895	690 77.1%	15 1.7%	190 21.2%	20 2.2%
Jan 2011	935	744 79.6%	22 2.4%	169 18.1%	15 1.6%
Feb 2011	899	784 87.2%	21 2.3%	94 10.5%	11 1.2%
Mar 2011	1071	968 90.4%	26 2.4%	77 7.2%	11 1.0%
Apr 2011	825	746 90.4%	19 2.3%	60 7.3%	19 2.3%
2010	11635	9085 78.1%	650 5.6%	1900 16.3%	413 3.5%
2009	7514	5130 68.3%	149 2.0%	2235 29.7%	636 8.5%

³ The percentage rates for patients called for an interrogation with GSS are calculated from the total number of permit applications submitted.

Referrals out of Gaza by geographic location
(total numbers and % per destination for given period)

Period	West Bank	East Jerusalem	Egypt	Jordan	Israel
Jan 2010	125	327	172	11	189
	15.2%	39.7%	20.9%	1.3%	22.9%
Feb 2010	148	327	167	21	168
	17.8%	39.4%	20.1%	2.5%	20.2%
Mar 2010	87	364	204	10	205
	10.0%	41.8%	23.4%	1.1%	23.6%
Apr 2010	97	299	280	7	183
	11.2%	34.5%	32.3%	0.8%	21.1%
May 2010	176	342	209	9	230
	18.2%	35.4%	21.6%	0.9%	23.8%
Jun 2010	125	301	443	10	186
	11.7%	28.3%	41.6%	0.9%	17.5%
Jul 2010	140	253	470	14	203
	13.0%	23.4%	43.5%	1.3%	18.8%
Aug 2010	129	323	388	11	257
	11.6%	29.2%	35.0%	1.0%	23.2%
Sep 2010	99	212	414	8	206
	10.5%	22.6%	44.1%	0.9%	21.9%
Oct 2010	114	285	496	24	189
	10.3%	25.7%	44.8%	2.2%	17.1%
Nov 2010	108	246	429	10	216
	10.7%	24.4%	42.5%	1.0%	21.4%
Dec 2010	124	238	537	15	211
	11.0%	21.2%	47.7%	1.3%	18.8%
Jan 2011	70	294	531	22	246
	6.0%	25.3%	45.7%	1.9%	21.2%
Feb 2011	86	280	185	27	260
	10.3%	33.4%	22.1%	3.2%	31.0%
Mar 2011	77	345	356	17	312
	7.0%	31.2%	32.2%	1.5%	28.2%
Apr 2011	111	268	314	16	243
	11.7%	28.2%	33.0%	1.7%	25.5%
2010	1472	3517	4209	150	2443
	12.5%	29.8%	35.7%	1.3%	20.7%
2009	1327	2453	3203	364	1158
	15.6%	28.8%	37.7%	4.3%	13.6%