

# MONTHLY REPORT

## Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

### February 2012



World Health  
Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Ref: RAD 2 (March 9, 2012)

#### Referrals from Gaza: Summary for February 2012

- In February, 91.5% (701 patients) of all patient applications for permits were approved, an improvement over the 2011 average of 90%. However, 10 patients (1.3%) who applied for a permit to cross Erez checkpoint were denied a permit during February, and 55 patients, including 15 children (7.2%), did not receive a response to their permit request before the date of their hospital appointment.
- The main reasons for patient referrals during February were for treatment in the following subspecialties: cardiovascular (13.8%), oncology (12.7%), ophthalmology (7.3%), orthopedics (5.9%) and neurosurgery (5.5%). The cases represent 45% of the total referrals and 51% of the total estimated cost for referrals for the month of \$3.2 million.
- A 23-year-old male patient with a valid Israeli issued permit was detained at Erez crossing.

#### Destinations and reasons for referral for medical treatment

During February 2012, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) referred 1,190 patients to health facilities for specialized treatment not available in MoH facilities in Gaza (15% fewer than during January). Of the referrals, 22% (258 patients) were referred to NGO or private facilities within the Gaza Strip and 78% (932 patients) were referred outside of Gaza to hospitals in East Jerusalem (32%), Egypt (26%), Israel (25%), the West Bank (11%) and Jordan (6%). Of these, 692 patients required permits to access through Erez crossing and 240 through Rafah border crossing (see Table 1, below).

Referral Destination	MoH Referrals		Total 2012
	January	February	
Gaza (Non MoH facilities)	289	258	547
West Bank (MoH & NGOs)	110	101	211
East Jerusalem	374	301	675
Egypt	319	240	559
Jordan	47	53	100
Israel	254	237	491
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,393</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>2,583</b>

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

Patients were referred during February mainly for treatment in the following subspecialties: cardiovascular (13.8%), oncology (12.7%), ophthalmology (7.3%), orthopedics (5.9%) and neurosurgery (5.5%). These cases

represent slightly above 45% of the total referrals and 51% of the estimated total referral cost in February, which was NIS 12.3 million (\$3.2 million).

### Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

In February 2012, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 766 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 902 last month and 760 in December 2011. During this month 87% of applications (666) were submitted and financially covered by the MoH, 5.4% (42) by Nour al Alam Foundation, 4.4% (34) were self-funded, 1.3% (10) by Physicians for Human Rights - Israel, 1% (9) by Peres Center for Peace, and the remaining 0.9% (7) by other charity organizations.

Age group	Total		Approved*		Denied		Delayed**		Called for GSS interrogation***	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	55	70	52	69	0	0	3	1	0	0
4 - 17	86	87	80	82	0	0	6	5	0	0
18- 40	77	89	63	73	3	4	11	12	5	7
41 - 60	84	105	79	96	0	3	5	6	2	6
Over 60	49	64	47	60	0	0	2	4	0	1
<i>Sub-total</i>	<b>351</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>766</b>		<b>701 (91.5%)</b>		<b>10 (1.3%)</b>		<b>55 (7.2%)</b>		<b>21</b>	

\* 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 February, **91.5%** (701 patients) of all patient applications for permits were approved, an improvement over the 2011 average of almost 90%. Of the remaining 8.5% of all patients, 1.3% (10 cases) were denied permission to cross Erez checkpoint. All the 10 denied patients had been referred for orthopedic treatment. Another 7.2% (55 patients, including 15 children) had their applications delayed beyond their hospital appointment. **21 patients were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition for their permit application.** Following their interrogation, 13 patients were still waiting for a GSS response, 6 were asked to submit a new request, one was approved a permit, and one was denied.

**Delays in processing applications can be critical for patients** who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. During 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).

Place of exiting Gaza	Patients crossing	Ambulance transfers (back-to-back)	Days open in month	Special conditions
Erez crossing	696	47	25 (closed four Saturdays)	Only access point for medical care in oPt, Israel and Jordan
Rafah crossing	475	86	24 (closed February 4 and four Fridays)	Only access point to medical care in Egypt

### Detention of Patient Kamel Hikmate Kamel Taramsi, 23 years old

Kamel Hikmat Kamel Taramsi, a 23-year-old resident of Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, has suffered from painful swelling of his hands and feet since 2002, and diagnosed in 2011 as acromegaly due to a pituitary disorder. On January 26, 2012, the Palestinian MoH referred Kamel to Al Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem for further evaluation and treatment. Kamel applied for and received a permit to cross Erez for his appointment, with his mother as his companion. On February 19, the day of his hospital appointment, he travelled to Erez crossing but instead of crossing was detained by Israeli authorities at the checkpoint and interrogated. After several hours, Kamel was taken, handcuffed and blindfolded, to Ashkelon prison where his interrogation continued. In the evening Kamel was taken back to Erez crossing to return to Gaza without being able to access his medical treatment in East Jerusalem. Kamel is now awaiting the results of a second application for a permit.

**Table 4: District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross (number and %, by response and by sex of applicant)**

Period	February 2011		February 2012		January – February 2011		January – February 2012	
<b>Total</b>	<b>899</b> (F:388; M:511)		<b>766</b> (F:415; M:351)		<b>1,834</b> (F:755; M:1079)		<b>1,668</b> (F: 844; M:824)	
<b>Approved</b>	<b>784</b> (F:358; M:426)	87.2%	<b>701</b> (F:321; M:380)	91.5%	<b>1,528</b> (F:665; M:863)	83.3%	<b>1,548</b> (F:731; M:817)	92.8%
<b>Denied</b>	<b>21</b> (F:2; M:19)	2.3%	<b>10</b> (F:3; M:7)	1.3%	<b>43</b> (F:7; M:36)	2.3%	<b>16</b> (F:4; M:12)	1.0%
<b>Delayed</b>	<b>94</b> (F:28; M:66)	10.5%	<b>55</b> (F:27; M:28)	7.2%	<b>263</b> (F:83; M:180)	14.3%	<b>104</b> (F:45; M:59)	6.2%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	<b>11</b> (F:2; M:9)	1.2%	<b>21</b> (F:7; M:14)	2.7%	<b>26</b> (F:5; M:21)	1.4%	<b>40</b> (F:12; M:28)	2.4%

**Table 5: Referrals out of Gaza by geographic location (total numbers and %, by response)**

Period	February 2011		February 2012		January – February 2011		January – February 2012	
<b>Total outside Gaza</b>	<b>838</b>		<b>932</b>		<b>2,001</b>		<b>2,036</b>	
<b>West Bank</b>	86	10.3%	101	10.8%	156	7.8%	211	10.4%
<b>East Jerusalem</b>	280	33.4%	301	32.3%	574	28.7%	675	33.1%
<b>Egypt</b>	185	22.1%	240	25.8%	716	35.8%	559	27.5%
<b>Jordan</b>	27	3.2%	53	5.7%	49	2.4%	100	4.9%
<b>Israel</b>	260	31.0%	237	25.4%	506	25.3%	491	24.1%

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