

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

January 2011



World Health
Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Summary for January 2011

- A 20-year-old man suffering from a rare liver disease died while waiting for referral through Erez checkpoint.
- One in five patients who applied to leave the Gaza Strip through Erez checkpoint for medical treatment were unable to attend their hospital appointment because they were delayed (18.1%) or their permits were denied (2.4%).
- On 30 January, Rafah border crossing was closed until further notice by the Egyptian authorities. This raises concerns for patients who need medical treatment in Egypt.

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

During January 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 935 patient applications for permits to cross Erez checkpoint to access hospitals in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Israel and Jordan (see Table 1 below). This compares to 895 processed applications in December 2010 and 821 in November.

Age group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed				Did not cross despite approval	
	M	F	M	F	M	F			Out of which called in for GSS interview		M	F
							M	F	M	F		
0 - 3	76	52	71	48	0	0	5	4	0	0	0	0
4 - 17	124	71	108	60	0	1	16	10	0	0	0	0
18 - 40	149	102	67	70	13	3	69	29	10	3	0	0
41 - 60	146	86	119	79	4	1	23	6	2	0	0	0
Over 60	73	56	72	50	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0
Sub-total	568	367	437	307	17	5	114	55	0	0	0	0
Total	935		744		22		169		15		0	

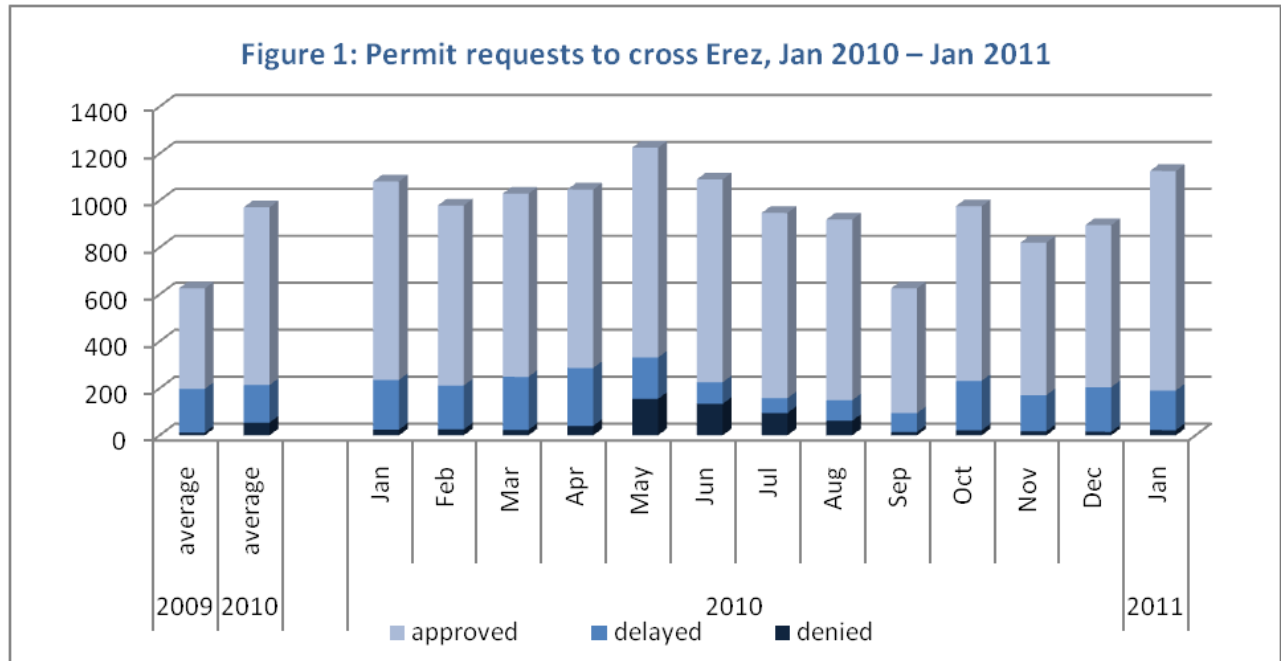
79.6% (744 patients), of all applications were approved in January 2011, which is slightly higher than the 2010 average of 78.1% (see Figure 1 below). 2.4% of all patients were denied permits to cross Erez checkpoint. A further 18.1% (169 patients), including 35 children, had their application delayed.

Of the 169 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities, 15 (8.8%) were called for questioning by the Israeli Intelligence Services, known as General Security Services (GSS). Nine of these

patients did not attend the appointment. Four patients were asked to submit a new application after they had been questioned, and two received approval to exit through Erez checkpoint.

64% of delayed patients faced delays of more than a 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. (See “Death of Anas Jomaa Saleh” below.)

Since the beginning of the year 2009 a total of 35 patients have died before being able to access the hospital they had been referred to.



Destinations and reasons for referral

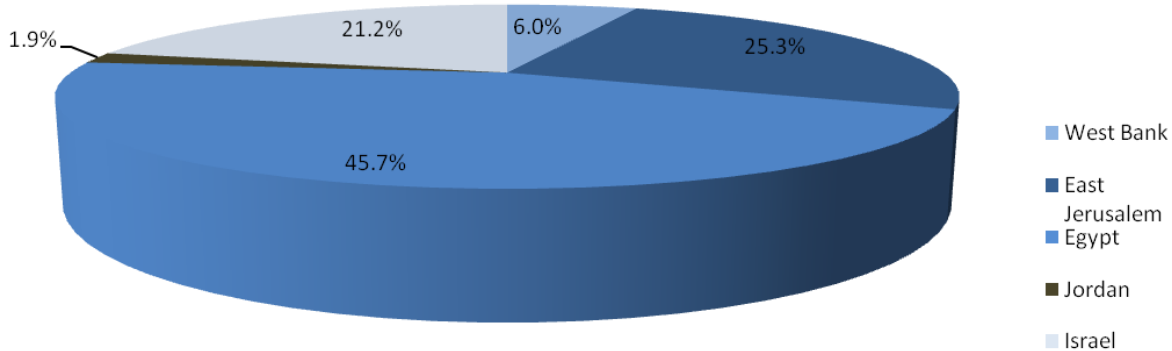
During January 2011, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) approved and issued 1,784 referral documents. RAD found that 621 patients were able to receive appropriate treatment within the Gaza Strip, in either NGO or private hospitals.

The remaining **1,163 patients had to leave Gaza** in order to be treated in hospitals in Egypt (45.7%), East Jerusalem (25.3%), Israel (21.2%), the West Bank (6.0%) and Jordan (1.9%).

The main reasons for referrals in January were: cardiovascular i.e. heart diseases (22.5%), oncology i.e. cancer (7.6%), ophthalmology i.e. eye conditions (7.5%), orthopedics (6.9%), and neurosurgery (6.5%)¹. These health conditions accounted for 51.0% of all referrals from Gaza; however, together they made up 59.2% of the total cost of referrals in January 2011, which reached NIS 14.1 million.

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.

Figure 2: Referrals out of Gaza by destination - January 2011



Erez and Rafah crossing data for January 2011

According to the Palestinian Liaison Officer at Erez, 709 patients crossed Erez checkpoint during January 2011². 37 of these patients 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 669 patients, including 41 via back-to-back ambulances, in December 2010.

An estimated 600 patients crossed Rafah border in January 2011 to access Egyptian hospitals. This includes patients who were seeking medical treatment at their own expense and, therefore, traveled without a RAD referral document.

Closure of Rafah border crossing

On Sunday 30 January 2011, the Egyptian authorities announced that Rafah border crossing would remain closed until further notice due to the political situation in Egypt. The crossing had been open on a daily basis from June-November 2010, which had led to a substantial rise in the number of patients crossing into Egypt. In late November it became customary for Rafah border to close on the weekends (Friday/Saturday) i.e. to be open five days per week only.

Given that the closure of Rafah crossing was in effect for only two days in January 2011, the impact has yet to be seen and is not reflected in the above-mentioned crossing data. All the same it is clear that the ongoing closure of Rafah crossing raises concerns for patients referred to hospitals in Egypt.

² The discrepancy between the number of permits approved (744 for January 2011) and the number of patients who crossed in this same month (709), is due to the fact that patients who have their permits approved at the end of one month might only cross the following month.

Death of Anas Jomaa Saleh (20 years old)

Anas Jomaa Saleh, a 20-year-old man, died on 1 January 2011 while waiting for permission to cross Erez checkpoint. He was suffering from Budd-Chiari-syndrome, a rare disease caused by obstruction of the liver veins. His doctors in Gaza referred him to Al Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem, where he was due to undergo surgery on 26 December 2010.

On 13 December, his application to cross Erez checkpoint was submitted to the Israeli authorities, who called him for questioning by the General Security Service (GSS). However, the appointment with GSS was scheduled for 30 December 2010 – four days after Anas was due to have surgery in East Jerusalem.

In the meantime, Anas' health condition had deteriorated to a point where he had to be treated in the intensive care unit at Gaza's Shifa Hospital. On 30 December, the Palestinian DCL submitted an urgent application for a permit for Anas to cross Erez checkpoint, emphasizing the severity of his health condition and explaining his inability to attend the GSS appointment. No response was received from the Israeli authorities.

Anas Jomaa Saleh died on the evening of 1 January 2011.

Further information

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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 in for GSS interview 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%
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 interview 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%
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%