

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip in July 2011



World Health
Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Ref: RAD 7 (August 17, 2011)

Referrals from Gaza: Summary for July 2011

- A 33-year-old male heart disease patient died after his two requests to cross Erez checkpoint to access the hospital to which he was referred by the Palestinian Ministry of Health were both denied by Israeli authorities.
- 92 patients (9%), including 16 children, of 978 patients who applied for permits to cross Erez checkpoint in July, were either denied or did not receive a response in time for their hospital appointment. 14 of these patients were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Service (11 males and 3 females).
- Similar to the last 3 months, 42% of patient referrals were for the following health conditions: cardiovascular (14%), oncology (11%), ophthalmology (8%), orthopedics (5%) and neurosurgery (5%), representing about 56% of the total estimated cost of referrals.

Destinations and reasons for referral for medical treatment

During July 2011, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) referred 1,590 patients to health facilities for specialized treatment not available in MoH facilities in Gaza: **474 patients** were referred for specialized treatment within the Gaza Strip, in either NGO or private hospitals, and **1,116 patients** were referred outside of Gaza to hospitals in Egypt (34%), East Jerusalem (30%), Israel (22%), the West Bank (12%) and Jordan (2%). 734 patients required access through Erez crossing and 382 through Rafah border crossing.

The main reasons for 42% of all referrals, and 56% (\$3.2 million) of the estimated costs, in July were: cardiovascular (14%), oncology (11%), ophthalmology (8%), orthopedics (5%) and neurosurgery (5%).

Referral Destination	Table 1: Referrals by month*							Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	
Gaza (Non MoH facilities)	621	447	463	325	389	385	474	2,630
WB (MoH & NGOs)	70	86	77	111	126	132	135	602
East Jerusalem	294	280	345	268	318	302	337	1,807
Egypt	531	185	356	314	448	481	382	2,315
Jordan	22	27	17	16	20	16	21	118
Israel	246	260	312	243	283	276	241	1,861
Total	1,784	1,285	1,570	1,277	1,584	1,592	1,590	

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

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

During July 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) processed 978 patient applications for permits to cross Erez checkpoint to access hospitals in West Bank including East Jerusalem, Israel and Jordan (see Table 1). 85% of applications (831) were submitted and financially covered by MoH, 5% (49) by Peres Center for Peace, 5% (49) by Nour al Alam Foundation, and 1% (10) by the Save a Child's Heart Association; the remaining 4% (39) were self-funded.

Table 2: District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez (July 2011, disaggregated by age and sex)

Age group	Total		Approved*		Denied		Delayed**			
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	Out of which called for GSS interrogation***	
									M	F
0 - 3	78	67	77	63	0	0	1	4	0	0
4-17	128	105	122	100	0	0	6	5	0	0
18 - 40	126	104	91 ⁱ	90 ⁱ	16	7	19	7	8	2
41 - 60	138	109	123 ⁱ	104	8	1	7	4	3	1
Over 60	71	52	67	49	0	1	4	2	0	0
Sub-total	541	437	480	406	24	9	37	22	11	3
Total	978		886 (91%)		33 (3.4%)		59 (6%)		14	

* 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.

ⁱ Approved after interrogation.

In July, **91%** (886 patients), of all applications for permits were approved, a substantially higher rate than the 2010 average of 78%. Of the remaining 9% of patients, 3.4% of all patients (33 cases) were denied permission to cross Erez checkpoint and another 6% (59 patients, including 16 children) had their applications delayed beyond the date of their hospital appointment. Of the 59 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities, 14 were called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS). **Following their interrogation, 9 patients are still waiting for the GSS response, 3 were approved permits and 2 were denied permits.**

Delays in processing applications can be critical for patients who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. So far in 2011, **three patients died before receiving permits to travel through Erez crossing to access the hospital they had been referred to.** (See “Death of Raid Azzam Al Mughari” below).

Erez and Rafah crossing data for July 2011

According to the Palestinian Liaison Officer at Erez, **842 patients** crossed Erez checkpoint during July 2011, of which 51 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 807 patients, including 41 via back-to-back ambulances, in June and 916 patients, including 57 via back-to-back ambulances, in May 2011.

Rafah border crossing was open for humanitarian reasons throughout July 2011, except on 23 July (official national holiday in Egypt) and during week-ends. An estimated **40 patients daily** (total of 1,200) were able 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 for financial cover.

Death of Raid Azzam Al Mughari (33 years old)

Gaza resident Raid Azzam Al Mughari, 33 years, a chronic heart disease patient, was referred by his treating physician at Shifa Hospital to the Arab Heart Center in Nablus for complex open heart surgery not available in Gaza. After obtaining the official referral from the MoH, an urgent application for a permit was made through the Palestinian District Liaison Office in Gaza to the Israeli authorities on 17 July for a permit to allow the patient to exit Gaza via Erez checkpoint. (The patient had previously received a permit to leave Gaza for medical reasons on 11 June.) On 19 July, the Israeli authorities denied his application together with that of his companion (his father-in-law). His family then submitted a new urgent application to the Israeli authorities on 20 July, without a companion. On 24 July the second application was also denied by Israeli authorities in writing to the District Liaison Office.

His treating doctors at Shifa Hospital performed emergency surgery on July 25 but Raid Moghari died in the operating theatre.

Annex 1: Data from January to July for 2010 and 2011

District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez (total number and %, by response and by sex of applicant)									
Period	July 2010		July 2011		Jan – July 2010		Jan – July 2011		
Total	931 (F:422; M:509)		978 (F:437; M:541)		7086 (F:2947; M:4139)		6735 (F:2923; M:3812)		
Approved	791 (F:375; M:416)	85.0%	886 (F:406; M:480)	90.6%	5717 (F:2535; M:3182)	80.7%	5957 (F:2681; M:3276)		88.5%
Denied	95 (F:35; M:60)	10.2%	33 (F:9; M:24)	3.4%	493 (F:141; M:352)	7.0%	169 (F:36; M:133)		2.5%
Delayed	45 (F:12; M:33)	4.8%	59 (F:22; M:37)	6.0%	876 (F:271; M:605)	12.4%	609 (F:204; M:405)		9.0%
<i>Out of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)</i>	27 (F:5; M:22)	2.9%	14 (F:3; M:11)	1.4%	320 (F:73; M:247)	4.5%	98 (F:18; M:80)		1.5%

Referrals out of Gaza by geographic location (total numbers and %, by response)									
Period	July 2010		July 2011		Jan – July 2010		Jan – July 2011		
Total outside Gaza	1080		1116		6502		7578		
West Bank	140	7.0%	135	12.1%	898	13.8%	737		9.7%
East Jerusalem	253	31.2%	337	30.2%	2213	34.0%	2144		28.3%
Egypt	470	32.2%	382	34.2%	1945	29.9%	2697		35.6%
Jordan	14	1.5%	21	1.9%	82	1.3%	139		1.8%
Israel	203	28.2%	241	21.6%	1364	21.0%	1861		24.6%

WHO publications are available at: <http://issuu.com/who-opt/docs> Comments: rad-report@who-health.org