



Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

Ref: RAD 12 (Jan.21, 2013)

Summary

- **Patients interrogated:** 37 patients (7 F; 30 M) who had applied for permits in December to cross Erez checkpoint were requested to appear for Israeli security interviews.
- **Patients delayed:** 70 patients (27 F; 43 M) did not receive a response to their permit application and missed their hospital appointments.
- **Referrals to Jordan:** Only one patient received financial coverage from the Ministry of Health for treatment in Jordanian hospitals.
- **Referrals to non-MoH facilities inside Gaza increased:** 157 cases were referred to private and NGO facilities (78 for lithotripsy, 45 for MRI, 33 for cardiac catheterization and 1 for intensive care).
- **Medical reasons for referrals:** Most December 2012 referrals were for: oncology (14%), nuclear medicine (11%), urology (10%), ophthalmology (7.5%), orthopaedics (7%), paediatrics (6%), heart surgery (5%), haematology (5%), neurosurgery (5%), and general surgery (4%). The estimated cost was NIS 11.4 million.

Referrals reflect fragile health care system

The total number of Gaza patients referred by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in December was 1,188, an increase from the previous month but below the monthly average in the first half of the year 2012 of 1,340. In the second half of the year the average number of referrals dropped to 937, due primarily to MoH budget limitations as a result of the financial crisis facing the Palestinian Authority.

According to the Gaza Referral Abroad Department (RAD) data, of the 1,188 MoH referrals, 374 (31.5%) were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem, 344 (29%) to Egypt, 181 (15%) to Israel, 131 (11%) to West Bank hospitals, only 1 (0.08%) to Jordan and 157 (13%) to NGO and private hospitals inside the Gaza Strip (Table 1). The number of referrals inside Gaza to non-MoH facilities rose significantly in December compared with the previous 5 months because the lithotripsy machine for treating kidney stones in the European Gaza Hospital (EGH) was out of order. Referrals for MRI also increased, especially for children who require anesthesia during the test. The only MRI machine still functioning in MoH facilities, located in the EGH, lacks a monitor for children and is overloaded with cases.

Gaza referral data for December show a gender gap: 56% of referrals were males and 44% were females. 27% of all referrals were children aged 0-17 years and 18% were elderly over 60 years. 85% of all referrals were for admission as inpatients while 15% were to outpatient clinics. The total estimated cost for all referrals was NIS 11,392,762. Heart surgery, hematology and neurosurgery were the highest in cost per case. Nasser hospital in Cairo, Makassed hospital and Augusta Victoria hospital in East Jerusalem received the highest number of referrals respectively.

Referral Destination	MoH Referrals												Total 2012
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Within Gaza: 2,125													
Gaza (non-MoH facilities)	289	258	284	301	265	290	76	28	33	50	94	157	2,125
Requiring exit via Erez/Israel: 8,294 (total 2012)													
WB (MoH and non-MoH)	110	101	94	115	134	120	88	99	111	131	106	131	1,340
East Jerusalem	374	301	359	344	416	420	313	336	398	338	337	374	4,310
Jordan	47	53	41	30	21	5	2	0	0	1	2	1	203
Israel	254	237	247	252	304	173	117	164	181	181	150	181	2,441
Requiring exit via Rafah to Egypt: 3,255 (total 2012)													
Egypt	319	240	270	296	358	328	237	209	333	97	224	344	3,255
Total	1,393	1,190	1,295	1,338	1,498	1,336	833	836	1,056	798	913	1,188	13,674

Source: MoH RAD Gaza.

Health access: patient applications for Israeli-issued permits to cross Erez

In December 2012, applications were submitted for 894 patients to the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) for permits to cross Erez and access hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, in Israel or Jordan. Of the total, 820 patients (91.72%) received permits to cross Erez and 4 (0.45%) were denied (**Table 2**). The 4 denied patients were all men between 20 and 40 years old, and had been referred to Makassed hospital in East Jerusalem, 3 for orthopedic treatments and 1 for internal medicine. 70 patients (25 females and 45 males, 7.8% of the total applicants) did not receive a response and therefore lost their appointments in the hospitals: 16 had had appointments in Israeli hospitals and the rest in the West Bank including in East Jerusalem. Among the 70 patients, 5 were oncology patients, 9 were cardiac, and 12 were ophthalmic cases. 37 patients (4%) were called for interrogation by Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition to process their application, representing an increase in GSS calls for patients compared to previous months.

Age group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed		Called for GSS interrogation	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	54	69	53	67	0	0	1	2	0	0
4 - 17	76	112	71	103	0	0	5	9	0	0
18- 40	114	105	100	80	0	4	14	21	6	22
41 - 60	93	116	88	110	0	0	5	6	1	7
Over 60	69	86	67	81	0	0	2	5	0	1
Sub-total	406	488	379	441	0	4	27	43	7	30
Total	894		820 (91.72%)		4 (0.45%)		70 (7.83%)		37 (4.1%)	

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office in Gaza.

In December, 88% of Israeli permit applicants were referrals financially covered by MoH. The rest were covered by different sources (**Table 3**).

Financial coverage source	Number of patients	%
Ministry of Health	785	87.8
Self-funded	48	5.4
Peres Center for Peace	26	2.9
Physicians for Human Rights-Israel	20	2.3
NourAla Al-Alam	12	1.3
Others	3	0.3
Total	894	100

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office in Gaza.

The Palestinian General Authority for Civil Affairs registered 752 patients and 673 companions travelling through Erez checkpoint towards Israel during December. 51 patients were transferred by ambulance through Erez; 6 were urgent cases and transferred during off-duty hours. Since Palestinian ambulances are not permitted to leave Gaza, patients must be transferred from a Palestinian ambulance, and carried on a gurney to an Israeli-plated ambulance at Erez crossing 200 meters away (Table 4).

Point of exiting Gaza	Patients crossing	Ambulance transfers (back-to-Back)	Days open in month
Erez crossing (north)	752	51	Open: 26 days Closed: 5 days (5 Saturdays)
Rafah crossing (south)	743 (patients and companions)	70	Open: 31 days Closed: 0 days

Source: General Authority of Civil Affairs and Emergency Medical Services in the MoH in Gaza.

According to the Emergency Medical Services of MoH in Gaza, their office coordinated the travel of 743 people to Egypt. 70 patients were transferred by ambulance with 91 companions. The remaining 582 were patients and their companions who travelled through Rafah terminal as regular passengers.

	December 2011		December 2012		January –December 2011		January – December 2012	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)
Total	760 (F:357; M:403)	(%)	894 (F:406; M:488)	(%)	10,560 (F:4,716; :5,844)	(%)	9,329 (F:4,498;M:4,831)	(%)
Approved	722 (F:347;M:375)	95	820 (F:379; M :441)	91.72	9,478 (F:4,376;M:5,102)	89.8	8,628 (F:4,485;M:4,143)	92.5
Denied	4 (F:1; M:3)	0.5	4 (F:0; M:4)	0.45	237 (F:49 M:188)	2.2	84 (F:26; M:58)	0.9
Delayed	34 (F:9; M:25)	4.5	70 (F:27; M:43)	7.83	845 (F:291; M:554)	8	617 (F:250; M:367)	6.6
Of those delayed, called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)	25 (F:10; M:15)	3.3	37 (F:7; M:30)	4.1	197 (F:48; M:149)	1.9	206 (F:65; M:141)	2.2

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office in Gaza.

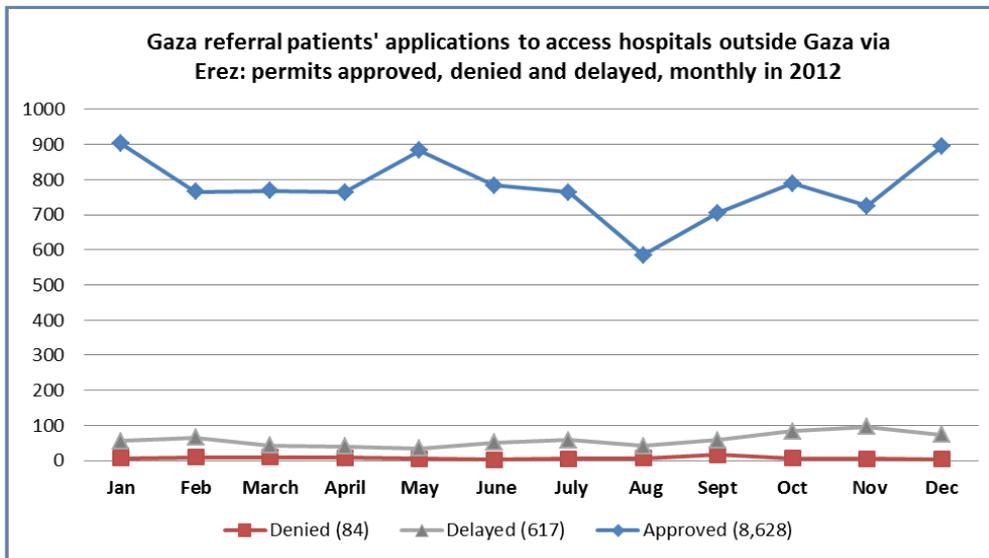
Humanitarian assistance: patients transferred within the region

Tunisia: Four seriously injured patients from Gaza were transferred to Tunisia on December 7. The patients --- two boys, aged 10 years and 14 years, and two young men, aged 18 --- had sustained injuries in the recent 8-days of attacks on Gaza. The four patients were transferred through Rafah terminal to Al Arish airport where they were evacuated by a Tunisian aircraft to Tunis. They were accompanied by the Tunisian medical delegation that had been visiting Gaza after the ceasefire. The delegation coordinated the transfer with the MoH in Gaza through the Tunisian embassy in Cairo.

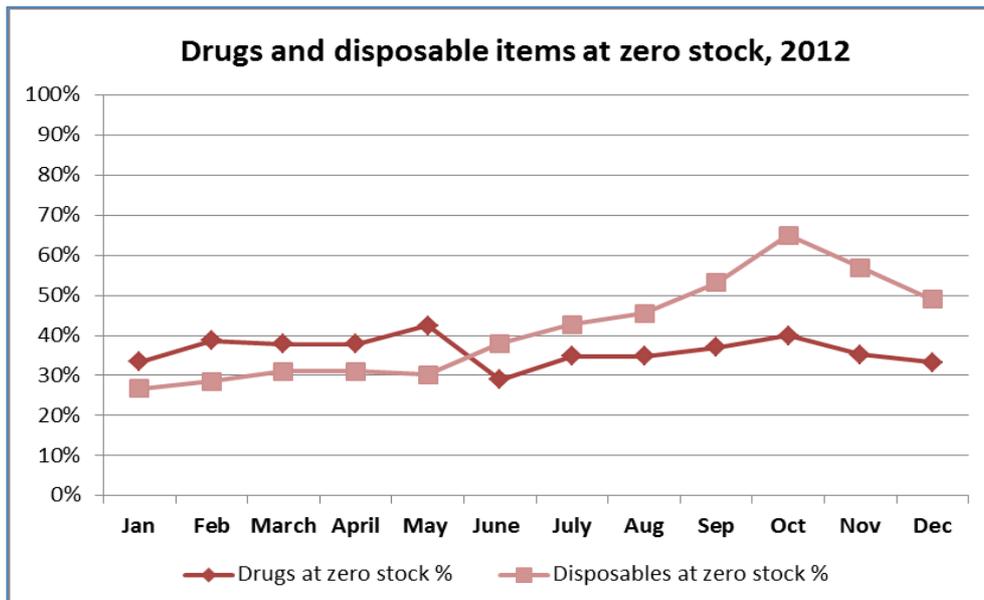


Turkey: Three Palestinian patients in Shifa Hospital in Gaza were referred to Atatürk Training and Research Hospital in Ankara, Turkey, on 4 December 2012. The patients and their companions were transferred to Turkey via al-Arish Airport in Egypt by ambulance aircraft provided by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Turkey. The transfers between Rafah Border Gate and Al Arish Airport were coordinated by the embassies of Palestine and Turkey in Cairo. Two women, aged 34 and 48, and an 18-year-old young man were transferred; the latter two sustained injuries as a result of the attacks on Gaza in November.

Preliminary Summary Monitoring Data, Gaza, 2012



Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office in Gaza.



Source: MoH Gaza, Central Drug Store.