

MONTHLY REPORT

August 2022



Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory



August data on referrals was not available

 **58%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

32%

of Gaza companion permit applications approved

 **83%**

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

76%

of West Bank companion permit applications approved

 **9**

Gaza patients called for interrogation

IN FOCUS

Prevention of health access during closure of Erez (Beit Hanoun) check-point and referral of patients injured during military bombardment

Part 1 Referrals

August referrals by the Ministry of Health

Referrals data for August was not available by 27 September following cyberattack on the IT system.

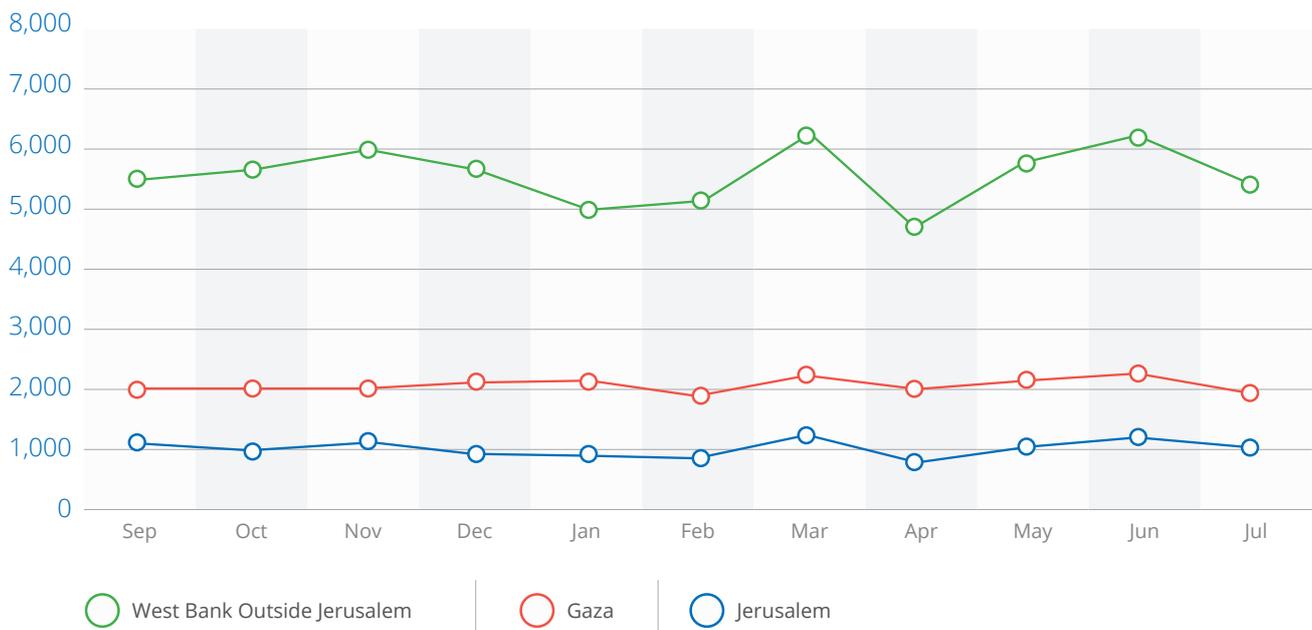


August data on referrals was not available



Chart 1

Number of referrals issued by the Palestinian MoH by place of origin, September 2021 to July 2022



Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip

There were 2,067 (M: 1066; F: 1001) patient permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in August, the highest number of applications since December 2019 when the total number of applications was (2,198). Just under a third (31%) of applications were for children under 18 and close to a fifth (19%) were for patients over 60 years old. 48% were for female patients, while 84% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Half (51%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 31% for West Bank hospitals outside East Jerusalem; and 18% for Israeli hospitals. Over two-fifths (44%) of applications were for appointments at either Augusta Victoria Hospital (24%) or Makassed Hospital (20%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 72% of permit applications: oncology (34%); cardiology (11%); haematology (11%); paediatrics (10%); and ophthalmology (6%). The remaining 28% of applications were for 21 other specialties.

Travel by shuttle direct from Erez (Beit Hanoun) checkpoint to King Hussein (Allenby) Bridge, the crossing between the West Bank and Jordan, requires approval by Israeli and Jordanian authorities. In August, there were 150 permit applications submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs (GACA) for patients and companions. Meanwhile, GACA received 62 responses for patient and companion permit applications submitted in August or before. Of 62 responses received, 36 (58%) were approved, 10 (16%) were denied and 16 (26%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 1,195 (M: 579; F: 616) or 58% of the 2,067 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez in August 2022 were approved, 5% lower than the average approval rate (63%) for the first half of the year. The approval rate for patient permit applications varies by sex and age of patients. In August, men aged 18 to 40 had an approval rate of 44%, while women over 60 had an approval rate of 77% - see Table 1.

 **2,067**
patient applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez to access health care

 **58%**
approved

 **1%**
denied

 **41%**
delayed

Table 1

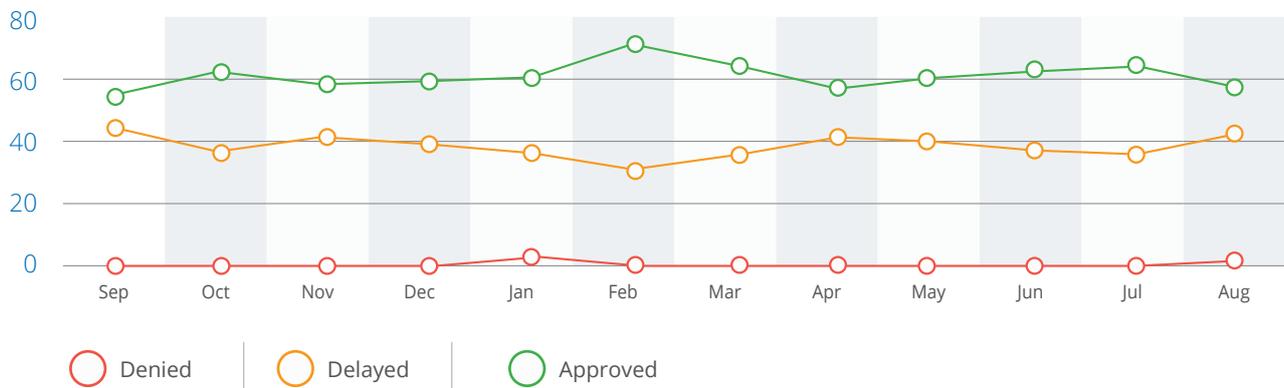
Approval rate for patient permit applications in August 2022, by age and sex

August 2022 AGE	Number of applications		Approved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-3	92	59	60%	59%
4-17	276	218	51%	52%
18-40	271	273	44%	56%
41-60	218	270	56%	66%
over 60	209	181	68%	77%
sub-total	1066	1001	54%	62%
Total	2,067			
Overall approval rate for patient applications			58%	

Approval rates also vary by referred specialty. In August, specialties with an approval rate higher than 70% with more than one application included maxillo-facial surgery (2 applications) at 100%, heart surgery (7) at 86%, vascular surgery (17) at 76%, intensive care (34) at 74%, and haematology (219) at 70%. Specialties with an approval rate lower than 50% included internal medicine (83) and ENT (51) at 49%; paediatrics (200) and ophthalmology (123) at 45%; urology (39) and nephrology (32) at 41%; neurology (37) at 35%, respiratory medicine (12) and plastic surgery (6) at 33%; infertility (12) at 25%; and endocrinology (5) at 20% and laboratory analysis (2) at 0% approval.

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, September 2021 to August 2022



Denied care: 28 (M: 18; F: 10) patient permit applications, comprising 1.3% of the total for Gaza, were denied in August, the highest number of applications denied since January this year. These included five children under 18 years, eleven adult aged 18 to 40 years, five adults aged 41 to 60, and seven over 60 years old. They were referred for oncology (9); cardiology (3); ENT, endocrinology, ophthalmology, and orthopaedics (2 each); paediatrics, urology, general surgery, haematology, internal medicine, nephrology, neurology, and neurosurgery (1 each). 20 patients were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem and eight were referred to hospitals in the West Bank outside East Jerusalem.

Delayed care: 844 (M: 469; F: 375) patient permit applications, or 41% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. 35% (295 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 12% (99) were for patients over 60 years old. Of delayed applications, 50% were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, 31% for the West Bank, and 19% for Israeli hospitals. The major delayed specialties included cancer care (27%), paediatrics (13%), cardiology (11%), ophthalmology (8%), haematology (8%), and orthopaedics (7%).

Most delayed applications (818 or 97%) were 'under study' at the time of appointment. Two applications were delayed based on the assertion by Israeli COGAT that suitable care is available within Gaza, though no evidence was provided to support this claim. Nine were delayed due to requests to change companions.

Interrogation and arrests

9 (M: 3; F: 6) patients from the Gaza Strip were requested for interrogation as a prerequisite to their permit applications in August. One was a child less than 18 years, four were in the age group 18-40 years, and four were 41-60 years. Three had appointments for cancer care (oncology), with the remainder applying for ophthalmology, neurosurgery, haematology, orthopedics, vascular surgery, and paediatrics (1 each). Six of the patients had applied to reach hospitals in East Jerusalem, two to hospitals in the West Bank and one to an Israeli hospital. One patient was approved permit after interrogation; six remained pending under study; and two were waiting an appointment for interrogation.



9

Gaza patients

called for security interrogation



0

Gaza patients or companions

arrested

Patient companions

The Health Liaison Office submitted 2,720 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in August. These applications include parents or other companions applying to travel with children. Patients are eligible to apply to Israeli authorities for one companion to accompany them for health care outside the Gaza Strip. In August, 876 companion permit applications (32% of the total) were approved, 67 applications (2%) were denied and the remaining 1,777 (65%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's hospital appointment.

Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

Israeli authorities closed Erez (Beit Hanoun) checkpoint from 2 to 7 August, which included the dates of military bombardment from 5 to 7. On 8 August, access was restricted to humanitarian cases only, with return to previous functioning on 9 August. Over the month, the checkpoint was open for 22 days and closed on nine.

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,310 Gaza patients and 987 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in August to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of the 1,310 patients, 78 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 75 companions. These numbers show that **323 (25%) of patients** crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. The bodies of 17 deceased patients were returned to Gaza across Beit Hanoun/Erez.

A month-old child, Abdelraziq Abu-Aita, died after exit for treatment via Erez (Beit Hanoun) checkpoint on 3 August. The child's body was denied re-entry to Gaza for burial on 4 August, with military bombardment beginning the following day. His family decided to bury his body in Ramallah, with assistance from a relative. Abdelraziq had been accompanied by his grandmother. None of the rest of his immediate family, including his mother, father and three siblings, saw him before he was buried.

 **2,720**
companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez to accompany patients

 **32% approved**

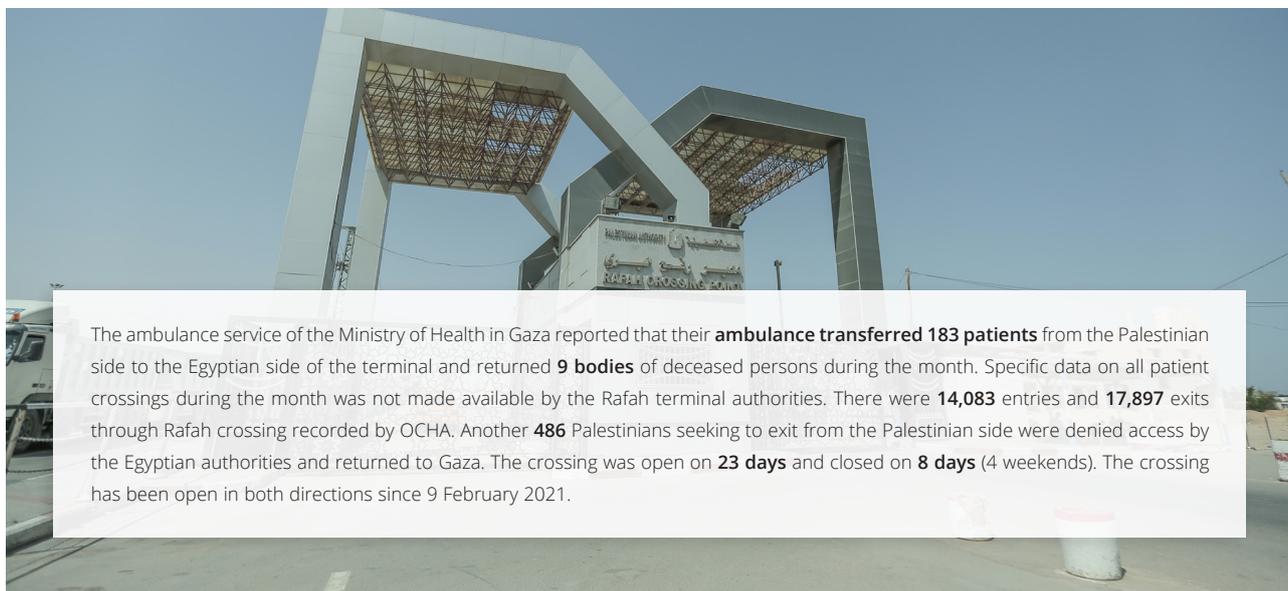
 **2% denied**

 **66% delayed**

 **1,310**
patients
exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez

 **987**
companions
exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez

Rafah crossing - Egypt



The ambulance service of the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that their **ambulance transferred 183 patients** from the Palestinian side to the Egyptian side of the terminal and returned **9 bodies** of deceased persons during the month. Specific data on all patient crossings during the month was not made available by the Rafah terminal authorities. There were **14,083 entries** and **17,897 exits** through Rafah crossing recorded by OCHA. Another **486** Palestinians seeking to exit from the Palestinian side were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The crossing was open on **23 days** and closed on **8 days** (4 weekends). The crossing has been open in both directions since 9 February 2021.

The West Bank

Restrictions on the movement of Palestinians from the West Bank to Israel and East Jerusalem are less severe for certain sections of the population. Many women older than 50 years of age and men older than 55 years of age are exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday, before 8am or after 7pm.

Patients: In August 2022, there were 8,422 permit applications by patients from the West Bank outside Jerusalem to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and in Israel. 4,645 (55%) were for female patients; 1,719 (20%) were for children under the age of 18 years; and 817 (10%) were for patients over 60 years. 74% of patient applications were for appointments in East Jerusalem Hospitals and 26% in Israeli hospitals or clinics. Of the 8,422 West Bank patient applications in August, 7,009 (83%) were approved, 1,135 (13%) were unsuccessful (denied) and 278 (3%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

Companions: In August 2022, there were 10,272 patient companion permit applications to Israeli authorities from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. 5,587 (54%) were for female companions, while 88% of companion permit applications were for companions aged from 18-59 years. Of the 10,272 West Bank companion applications, 7,767 (76%) were approved, 1,974 (19%) were unsuccessful and 531 (5%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

 **8,422**
patient permit
applications

for Israeli permits to access
healthcare in East Jerusalem
and Israel

 **83% approved**

 **14% unsuccessful**

 **3% pending**
at the time of monthly
reporting

 **10,272**
patient companion
applications

to access healthcare in East
Jerusalem and Israel

 **76% approved**

 **19% unsuccessful**

 **5% pending**
at the time of monthly
reporting

In Focus

Prevention of health access during closure of Erez (Beit Hanoun) checkpoint and referral of patients injured during military bombardment

Israeli authorities enforced near-complete closure of the Gaza Strip from 2 to 7 August, including the dates of military bombardment from 5 to 7 August. On 8 August, only humanitarian cases were permitted passage with return to previous functioning from 9 August.

During the period of closure, 294 patients had medical appointments scheduled, of whom 289 (152 male; 137 female) lost those appointments while just five critical cases (4 male; 1 female) were permitted transfer via ambulance with one companion each on 2 August (three cases) and 3 August (two cases). A third (31%) of appointments during the period were for cancer care, while other major referred specialties included paediatrics (14%) and cardiology (12%). Of the 294, 96 (33%) had been approved though only five of these could travel; meanwhile, nine (3%) were denied and 189 (64%) had permit applications delayed. Two-fifths (40%) of appointments were for children, 17% were for patients over 60 years of age, while half (53%) were for appointments at hospitals in East Jerusalem (24% for the rest of the West Bank; 22% for Israeli hospitals).

According to data from the Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs, on 8 of August, the first day of reopening of Erez (Beit Hanoun) checkpoint, 65 patients crossed out of Gaza with 51 companions to seek health care. An additional 7 patients were transferred by ambulance with 7 companions out of Gaza in the same day. The number of patients exiting (72) was higher than the average daily number of patients exiting in the month (60 per day).

Amal, 38, misses two appointments in three months for brain catheterization and scan

Amal, a 38-year-old woman from Gaza, was found to have a brain aneurysm (the potentially life-threatening ballooning of a blood vessel) in March 2022.

On 5 June 2022, Amal was referred to An-Najah University Hospital in Nablus, in the West Bank, for brain catheterization and scan (angiography), a procedure not available in the Gaza Strip. She made one permit application for an appointment on 16 June that was delayed. Amal was approved a permit to travel on 3 August but following closure of Erez (Beit Hanoun) checkpoint by Israeli authorities on 2 August she was unable to exit the Gaza Strip to receive care.

Table 2

Amal's hospital appointments and permit outcomes

Hospital appointment date	Permit outcome
16 June 2022	Delayed
3 August 2022	Approved (closure prevented travel)
1 September 2022	Approved (initially notified her application was under study)

Talking about the outcome of her first application, Amal said, "I don't know why I am prevented, I have been waiting so long! I need to have this test so the doctor can make a clear diagnosis and give me proper treatment. I suffer and worry every day."

Amal received a further hospital appointment at An-Najah University Hospital for 1 September. She was eagerly awaiting a text message from the Palestinian Health Liaison Office, hoping for a positive response, when WHO spoke with her the day before her appointment. She received the text at 5pm that day and called to ask, "I've just received a text message from the Liaison Office. It says under study. What does it mean?" After her initial disappointment, she received another message later that evening saying that she had been approved and could travel the next day.

Amal finally travelled and received the scan she needed. Doctors advised the best course of action would be to manage her condition with medicines, which she now takes daily. "I finally had the tests and I feel so grateful that I won't need brain surgery after all. The doctors at An-Najah reassured me and prescribed me some medicines. They recommended that I will need follow up to keep an eye on things," Amal said.

Five patients critically injured transferred out of Gaza for treatment

Five Palestinians critically injured during the August escalation were referred urgently by the Palestinian Ministry of Health for treatment in the West Bank. They comprised a boy aged 2 years, a boy 8 years, a boy 10 years, a girl 10 years and a man 39 years of age. The patients had all suffered severe head injuries. They were transferred by ambulance on 9 August (four patients) and 11 August (one patient) for intensive care (4) and neurosurgery (1) at Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem (4) and Ramallah Hospital (1).

Lian Ashaer (pictured) was ten years old. She was in a car travelling to the beach with her family when there was a nearby airstrike close to Khan Yunis. Lian and five other family members were injured (2 adults, 3 children). Lian had the most serious injuries among them. She was initially admitted to the intensive care unit at Naser Hospital in Khan-Yunis, and on 9 August was transferred to the West Bank for intensive care treatment. Lian died on 11 August at Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem.

