



Sequelae of fracture of spine
Injury of unspecified intra-abdominal organ
Other injuries of spine and trunk, level unspecified
Crushing injury of head
Injury of eye and orbit
Traumatic amputation at level between knee and ankle
Sequelae of injuries involving multiple body regions
Injury of eye and orbit
Injury of unspecified intra-abdominal organ
Unspecified injury of abdomen, lower back and pelvis
Other injuries of lower limb, level unspecified

Examples of injuries of casualty patients who required Israeli approval for medical access outside Gaza via Erez checkpoint, August 2014. © WHO

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

Ref: RAD 8 (Sept. 28, 2014)

Summary: August 2014

The Gaza emergency which began July 7 continued until August 26 and resulted in more than 2,145 killed and 11,231 injured in addition to widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure, including health facilities. Fewer patients were referred for routine specialized medical care during this period due to the severe security restrictions and Ministry of Health priorities of addressing the emergency health situation and treating casualties.

Access

- **Casualty patients:** 356 casualty patients were referred (and travel was coordinated as urgent):
 - 260 patients with war-related injuries crossed Erez: these patients were referred from Gaza hospitals to outside hospitals by the Ministry of Health during August, although access within Gaza to Erez checkpoint was difficult due to the security situation.
 - 96 patients with war-related injuries exited Gaza via ambulance at Rafah for treatment in Egypt.
- **Erez – fewer permit applications and approval rate drops:** 946 patients had applied for Israeli permits to exit Gaza via Erez to outside referral hospitals in August, a drop of 43%. Only 82.77% of applicants were approved. **20 patients (7 females and 13 males, including 2 children and 2 elderly) were denied permits (2.11%); one casualty patient was among those denied.** 143 patients (45 females and 98 males, including 24 children and 9 elderly people over 60) 15.12% of applicants, received no response to their applications; their medical treatment was delayed as a result.
- **13 patients interrogated:** 13 patients (including 3 females) aged between 18-60 years were requested to attend Israeli security interviews after applying for a permit to cross Erez.
- **Rafah:** Egypt permitted 284 people to cross Rafah border for medical reasons, in addition to the 96 casualty patients, the highest number since December 2013.

Referrals

- **Regular referrals down by 55%:** In August, especially during the escalation of violence, the number of non-casualty patients referred to hospitals outside of Ministry of Health (MoH) facilities in Gaza by the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) dropped to 839, only 45% of the monthly average for 2014.
- **Gender gap:** The gender gap in referrals widened: 59.12% male patients versus 40.88% female patients. 25.6% of all referrals were for children aged 0-17 years and 17.4% were for patients aged over 60 years.

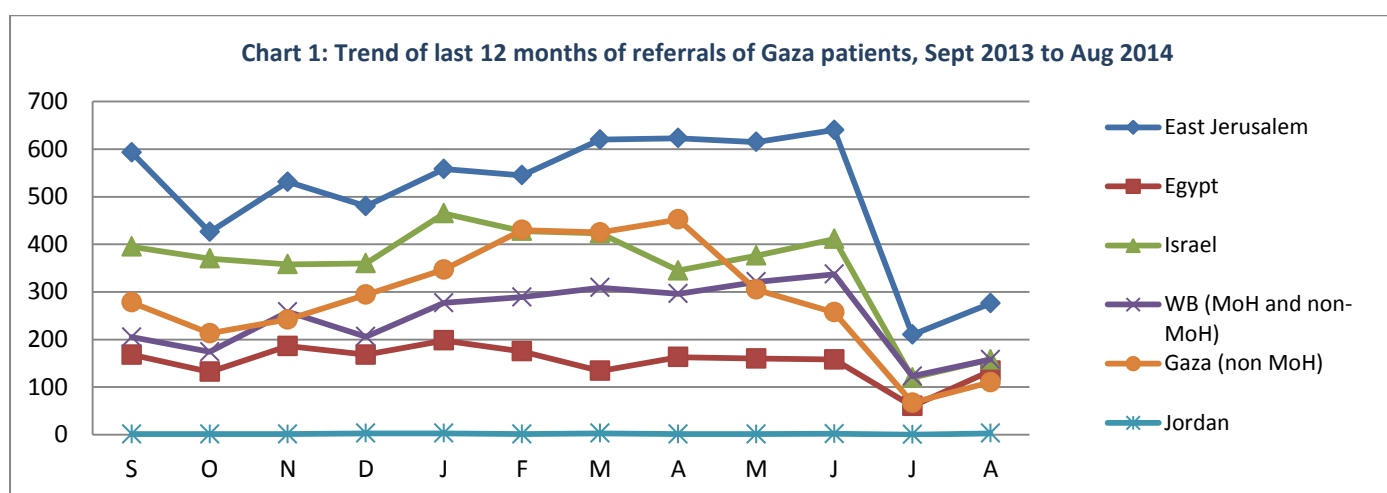
Referrals of Gaza patients dramatically decreased during the war in July and August because of the crisis

The Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 839 referrals for chronic patients in Gaza in August, 259 more than the previous month, but less than half of the monthly average (1849) for the first half of the year 2014 (**Table 1** and **Chart 1**). (Referral data exclude patients referred for treatment of war casualties which are not reflected in the RAD system.)

Table 1: Palestinian MoH Referrals, by destination and planned exit route January – August 2014

Referral Destination	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Total	Semi- annual monthly average 2014
Gaza (non-MoH facilities)	347	430	425	452	305	257	67	110	2,393	369
WB (MoH and non-MoH)	277	289	309	296	321	337	123	158	2,110	305
East Jerusalem	558	545	620	623	615	640	210	276	4,087	600
Jordan	3	1	3	1	1	2	0	3	14	2
Israel	465	428	423	345	376	411	120	158	2,726	408
Egypt	198	175	134	163	160	158	60	134	1,182	165
Total	1,848	1,868	1,914	1,880	1,778	1,805	580	839	12,512	1,849

Source: MoH Referral Abroad Department, Gaza



Patients had difficulty in traveling to the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the MoH due to the general lack of security. The Ministry of Health employees in the RAD office also had difficulty with access and much of the referral processing work was completed at home. 71% of applications for referral were processed by RAD within one week, the rest 29% took longer.

25.6% of patients referred were children aged 0-17 years and 17.4% were elderly patients over 60. Female referral patients were 40.88% of the total. 50.42% of all Gaza Strip referrals were requested by Shifa hospital and 59.36% for Gaza governorate residents. Referral destinations need coordination for exit through Erez crossing were 595 (70.92%) out of 839 referrals during August in addition to 260 war casualties. The total number of all referrals including chronic patients and war casualties was 64.6% of the monthly average of referrals in the first half of 2014.

Medical reasons for referrals of chronic patients: The top ten specialties requiring referrals for treatment were: oncology—202 referrals (24.08%), heart catheterization—65 (7.75%), nuclear medicine—61 (7.27%), haematology—58 (6.91%), paediatrics—48 (5.72%), ophthalmology—43 (5.13%), cardiology — 42 (5.01%), neurosurgery—37 (4.41%), orthopaedics—36 (4.29%), and MRI —33 (3.93%). The remaining 214 (25.51%) of referrals were to 19 other specialities. Estimated cost of referrals of Gaza in the main RAD in Ramallah for August 2014 was NIS 5,305,612 for 976 referrals.

Casualty patients referred outside: In addition to the usual cases of referral patients, the Ministry referred 356 war-related casualties to hospitals outside of Gaza. Hosting countries offered to treat war casualties free of charge as a humanitarian support to the Palestinians (Table 2).

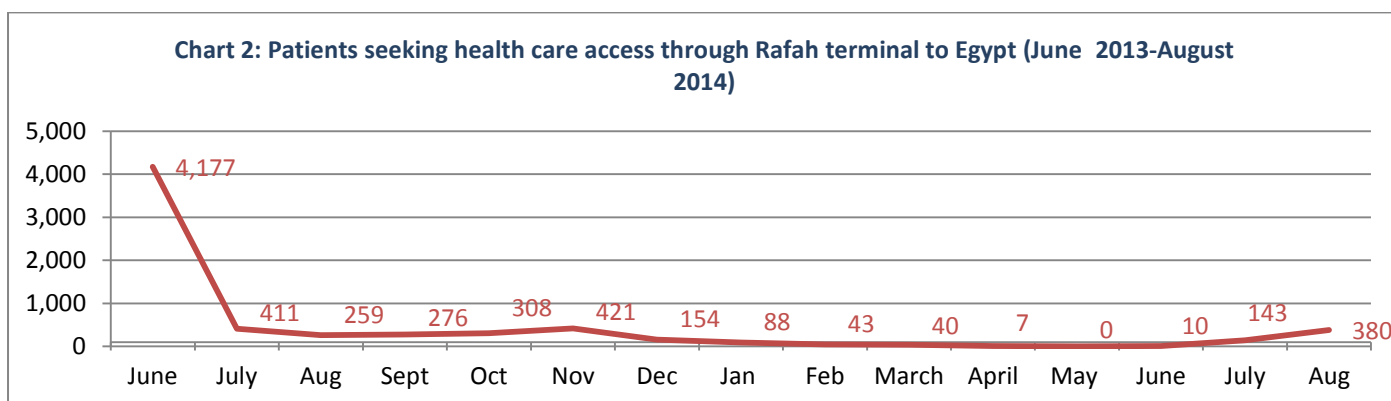
Destination	Number
West Bank	162
Egypt	96
Turkey	89
Jordan	6
Germany	3
Total	356

Source: Palestinian District Coordination office, MoH -Gaza.

Patients' access to Egypt remains restricted: According to the Palestinian side of the Rafah terminal, the terminal was declared open by the Egyptian authorities for 31 days from 9:00- 16:00 in August. 11,155 persons attempted to cross from Gaza to Egypt, including 380 seeking medical care, of which 96 were war-related casualties. 11.4% were refused access by Egypt. Travelers were mainly people holding Egyptian or foreign passports. No pilgrims crossed in August (Table3). Access to Egypt has been restricted since July 2013 (Chart 2).

Item	Number
Total registered and tried to cross towards Egypt	11,155
Seeking medical treatment (patients)	380
:Of which were war-related casualties transferred by ambulances	96
Denied access and returned by Egypt	1,275
Total crossed	9,880

Source: Rafah terminal, Palestinian side



Limited access to Gaza for medical delegates and medical aid via Rafah

The Palestinian authorities of Rafah terminal reported that 3 medical delegations were allowed to cross into Gaza from Egypt during August; a delegation of the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent (9 persons), a delegation of the Jordanian Medical Society (8 persons), and a Sudanese medical delegation of 8 persons.

The terminal authorities also reported that 3 shipments of medical aid entered Gaza during August, 67 tons of drugs and disposables, 465 pallets of IV fluids, 12 containers of drugs and disposables in addition to 6 trucks transferring a mobile hospital and 2 ambulances.

Patient referral access through Erez

In August there was a sharp drop in the total number of permit applications (which includes casualty patients as well as the usual referral patients) from the monthly average of the first half of 2014 (Chart 3).

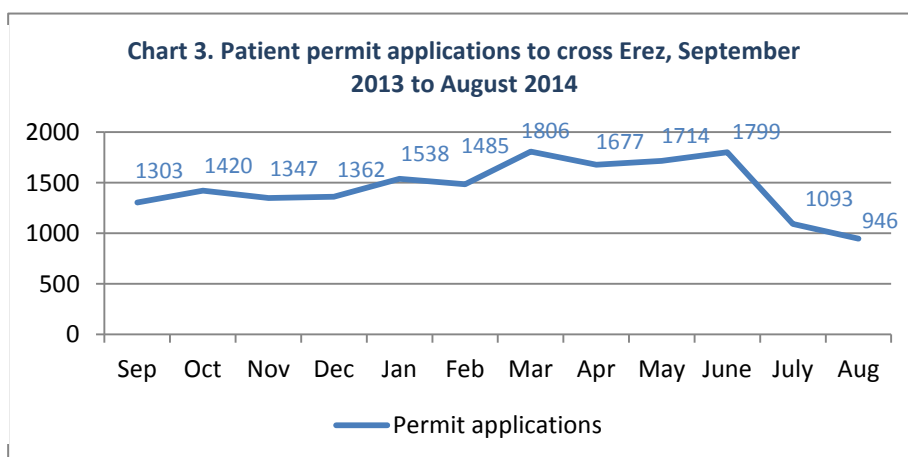


Table 4: Decisions by Israeli District Liaison Office on patient permit applications to cross Erez by age, sex and GSS risk, Aug. 2014

Age group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed		Called for GSS interrogation	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	27	47	27	42	0	0	0	5	0	0
4 - 17	67	113	55	104	1	1	11	8	0	0
18- 40	127	192	100	129	4	6	23	57	2	7
41 - 60	109	142	101	114	1	5	7	23	1	3
Over 60	51	71	46	65	1	1	4	5	0	0
Sub-total	381	565	329	454	7	13	45	98	3	10
Total	946		783 (82.77%)		20 (2.11%)		143 (15.12%)		13 (1.37%)	

Source: Palestinian District Coordination office, MoH -Gaza.

In August, only 82.77% of patients' permit applications were approved, less than the average approval rate for the first half of 2014 of 84%. The volume of permit applications for the period from January-August this year was 44.5% higher than the same period in 2013, while the approval rate for the same period was 4.39%

lower. 311 patients have been denied access in 2014 compared to 15 patients denied in 2013 during the same period indicating an increase in barriers to health access (Table 5).

Table 5: Decisions by Israeli District Liaison Office on permit requests to cross Erez, by response, sex of applicant and comparison with corresponding periods in 2013 and 2014 (number and %)

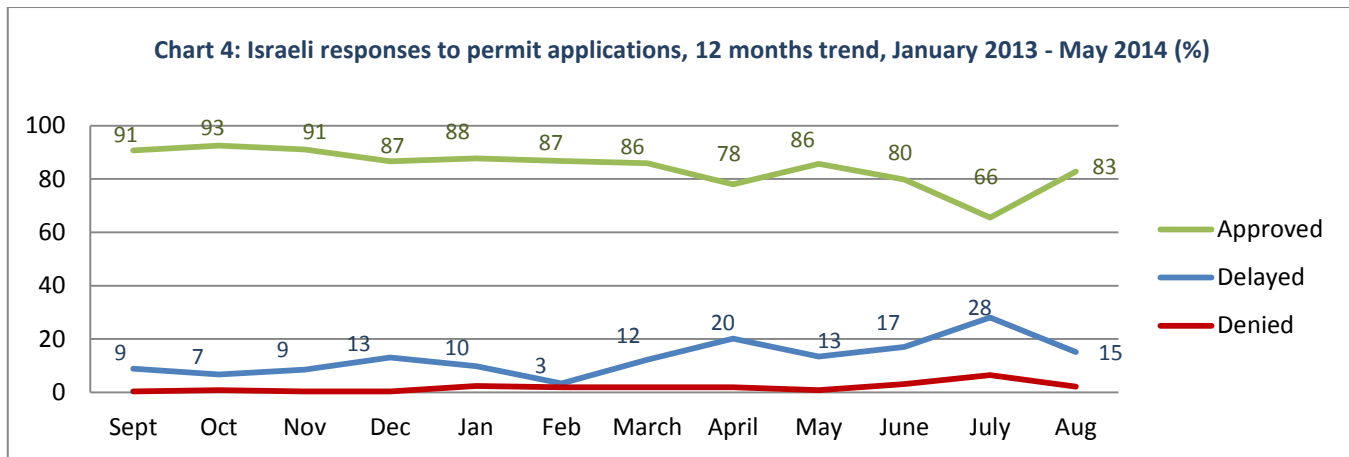
Period	August 2013		August 2014		January-August 2013		January – August 2014	
Total	1,023 (F:460; M:563)		946 (F:381; M:565)		8,344 (F:3,920; M:4,424)		12,058 (F:5,523;M:6,535)	
Approved	932 (F:430; M:502)	91.1%	783 (F:329; M:454)	82.77%	7,216 (F:3,496; M:3,720)	86.48%	9,905 (F:4,766;M:5,139)	82.14%
Denied	2 (F: 0; M:2)	0.2%	20 (F:7; M:13)	2.11%	15 (F:2; M:13)	0.18%	311 (F:104;M:207)	2.58%
Delayed	89 (F:30; M:59)	8.7%	143 (F:45; M:98)	15.12%	1,113 (F:422; M:691)	13.34%	1,842 (F:653;M:1189)	15.28%
-- called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)	14 (F:3;M:11)	1.37%	13 (F:3; M:10)	1.37%	121 (F:24; M:97)	1.45%	112 (F:16;M:96)	0.93%

Source: Palestinian District Coordination office, MoH -Gaza.

Denied: 20 patients (7 females; 13 males) were denied permits to access through Erez, including 2 children and 2 elderly persons over 60 years. The number of denied patients was less than the average (37) for the first half of 2014. 15 of the denied patients had appointments in East Jerusalem and West Bank hospitals, 4 in Israel, and 1 in Jordan.

16 of the denied patients were funded by the MoH, 2 were self-funded, 1 by Peres Center, and 1 was a war-related casualty funded by the receiving hospital. 6 patients waited 8-14 days, 1 patient waited 15-30 days and 1 waited more than 30 days before their applications were denied. 8 out of the 20 people denied had appointment for orthopedics, 6 for neurosurgery, the rest were for other 5 specialties.

Among the denied one war casualty, a 46 year old man with multiple fractures in the vertebral column and in the right leg. He received treatment in Shifa hospital in Gaza and was supposed to be referred to Jordan for further treatment. His permit was denied and he is currently suffering from paraplegia in the lower limbs and staying in the rehabilitation center of Al-hilal hospital in Khan Yunis.



Source: Palestinian District Coordination office, MoH -Gaza.

Delayed: According to the Palestinian District Coordination office, 143 patient applicants (98 males; 45 females), including 24 children and 9 patients over the age of 60, received no response to their applications and consequently lost their hospital appointments. Of the 143 patients delayed, 71.33% had scheduled appointments in East Jerusalem or West Bank hospitals, 11.19% in Israel, 9.79% in Turkey and 7.69% in Jordan. The Ministry of Health financially covered 67.83% of these referrals, 15.38% were for war casualties covered by the receiving hospitals in West Bank including Jerusalem, 9.79% by Turkey, 6.29% were self-funded, 0.7% covered by Physicians for Human Rights.

Patients should apply 10 days prior to their appointments and Israeli authorities should give a response to applicants within that time. Of the patients delayed, 70.63% of applications (101 of 143) were submitted within 1 week prior to the scheduled appointment. 27 patients were still awaiting a response up to 2 weeks, 6 up to one month and 9 after one month. Out of the 143 applications, 9 were eventually approved but after the appointment date had passed.

Security Interviews: 13 patients (10 males; 3 female) were called for security interviews by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition to process their application.

Financial Coverage: In August, 68.6% of all patients applying for Israeli permits were referrals from the Palestinian MoH, 17.12% were war casualties funded by the receiving hospitals in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 9.41% were war-related casualties covered by Turkey, 2.01% self-funded, 0.95% were funded by the Peres Center for Peace, 0.74% by the Jordanian field hospital, 0.74% by Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, 0.32% by Nour Al-Alam foundation, and 0.11% by the Palestinian Military Medical Services. Patients and companions often face financial problems during long stays in hospitals due to uncovered costs such as transportation, companion costs and some patient care items such as medicines not available in the hospital supply.

Access through Erez crossing

The staff of the Palestinian General Authority for Civil Affairs at Erez crossing worked in dangerous conditions during August. Military activities in the area prevented them from reaching their offices so they used the ambulance station in Gaza city as the daily gathering place for coordinating with casualty and regular patients who had been approved permits. On days when military activities were affecting the road to Erez terminal, both casualty and regular patients were transferred by ambulance from Gaza city to Erez with special coordination. The Israeli authorities reported that Erez terminal was open for humanitarian cases in the regular working hours during the month of August.

The office of the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that data were not registered systematically during the emergency conditions and therefore Erez crossing information during August may be incomplete. The Ministry of Health District Liaison office in Gaza reported that the travel of 54 ambulances was coordinated to Erez during the month.