

MONTHLY REPORT

Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip in June 2011



World Health
Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

Ref: RAD 6 (July 11, 2011)

Referrals from Gaza: Summary for June 2011

- 11% of patients, including 28 children, who applied for permits to cross Erez checkpoint to access health services outside Gaza were denied permits or did not receive permits in time for their medical appointments. 89% were approved, higher than the 2010 average rate of 78%.
- Similar to the last 3 months, 42% of referred patients were referred for treatment in the following health areas: cardiovascular diseases, oncology, orthopedics, ophthalmology and neurosurgery. Some referrals are made necessary by the shortages of essential drugs, for example, chemotherapy drugs for oncology patients. At the end of June, 29% of essential drugs and 21% of essential medical disposables were at zero stock level (less than one month supply).

Destinations and reasons for referral for medical treatment

During June 2011, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) approved and issued 1,592 referral documents for Gaza patients to non-MoH facilities, compared to 1,584 in May and 1,277 in April. Of these, 385 patients were referred for treatment within the Gaza Strip in either NGO or private hospitals, while the remaining number (1,207 patients) were referred outside of Gaza, via either Rafah border crossing to Egypt (40%), or via Erez checkpoint to East Jerusalem (25%), Israel (23%), the West Bank (11%) and Jordan (1%). There was a slight increase in referrals to Egypt, compared with the previous two months (33% and 38%), reflecting the preference of some patients (especially young adult males) for medical treatment in Egypt rather than engaging in the difficult application process for permits to cross Erez.

The main health services (42% of total) sought through referrals inside or outside of Gaza in June were: cardiovascular (12%), oncology (11%), ophthalmology (9%), orthopedics (6%) and neurosurgery (4%).

Referral Destination	Table 1: Referrals by month in 2011*						Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	
Gaza (Non MoH facilities)	621	447	463	325	389	385	2,630
WB (MoH & NGOs)	70	86	77	111	126	132	602
Jerusalem	294	280	345	268	318	302	1,807
Egypt	531	185	356	314	448	481	2,315
Jordan	22	27	17	16	20	16	118
Israel	246	260	312	243	283	276	1,620
Total	1,784	1,285	1,570	1,277	1,195	1,592	

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

Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

During June 2011, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DLO) processed 951 applications for permits for patients to cross Erez checkpoint to access hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel and Jordan (see **Table 2**). This compares to 1,076 applications last month and 825 in April 2011.

Regarding financial sponsorship: 85% of applications (808) were submitted through the MoH, 7% (67) by Peres Center for Peace, 4% (38) by Nour al Alam Foundation, and the remaining 4% (38) were by other charities or were self-funded.

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

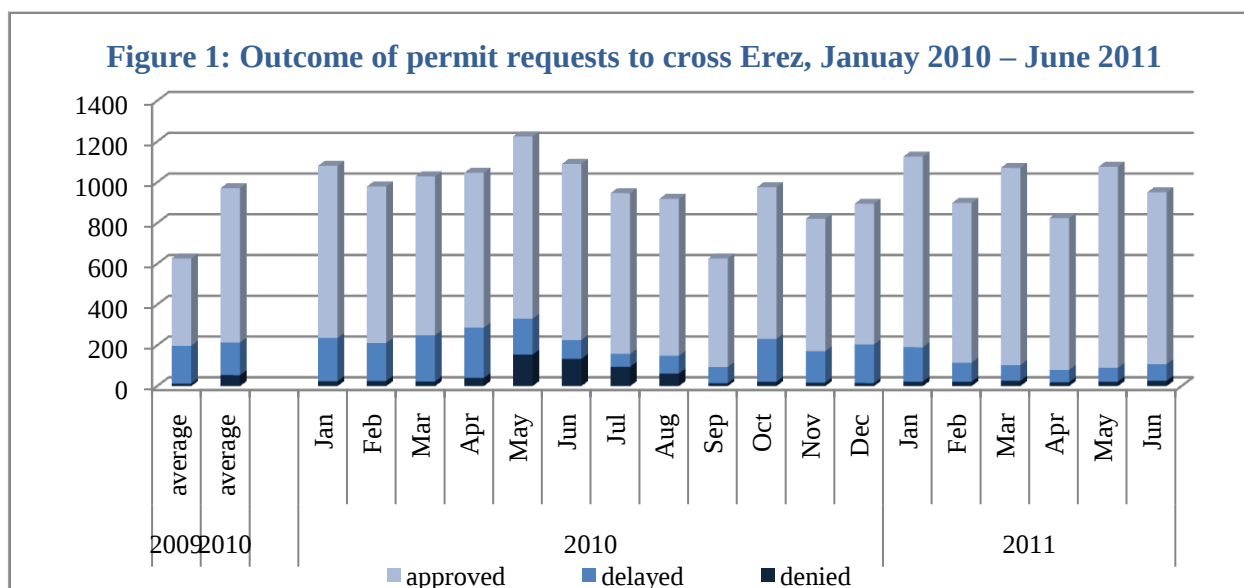
Age group	Total		Approved*		Denied		Delayed			
									Out of which called for GSS interrogation**	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0 - 3	83	65	78	64	0	0	5	1	0	0
4-17	138	83	125	74	0	0	13	9	0	0
18 - 40	134	109	91	92	15	5	28	12	8	3
41 - 60	116	96	102	95	4	1	10	0	4	0
Over 60	62	65	59	63	0	1	3	1	1	0
Sub-total	533	418	455	388	19	7	59	23	13	3
Total	951		843		26		82		16	

* Approvals are typically communicated to the patient only 24 hours in advance of their scheduled appointments.

** 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.

Permit applications can only be submitted 10 days before the patient's scheduled hospital appointment. **In June, 89% (843 patients) of all permit applications were approved**, a higher rate than the average in 2010 of 78% (see **Figure 1**). However, 3% of patients who applied for permits (26 cases) were denied permission to cross Erez checkpoint and 8% of patients (54 adults and 28 children) received no response to their applications before the date of their hospital appointments. Delayed patients in most cases obtain new hospital appointments and submit new applications for a permit to cross Erez checkpoint. Of the 82 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities and who therefore missed their appointments, 16 had been called for interrogation by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) during the application process. (Two of these patients did not attend the interrogation, 8 patients were still waiting for the GSS response after the interrogation, one was belatedly approved and 5 were denied after the interrogation.)

Delays in processing applications can contribute to adverse health consequences for patients who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. Some patients may die while waiting for permission to access the medical facility they have been referred to. **Two patients died before receiving permits to travel through Erez so far in 2011.** A 20-year-old man with a rare blood disease of the liver applied on December 13, 2010, for a permit to cross Erez for an appointment in Makassed Hospital in Jerusalem December 26. Instead of receiving a permit, he was called for an interrogation meeting on December 30; while waiting, his medical condition deteriorated and he was admitted to the ICU at Shifa Hospital in Gaza, where he died on January 1, 2011. A three-year-old child died March 3 after her father was denied permission to accompany her to Sheba Hospital in Israel for an appointment February 14, and while waiting for her mother's application for a permit to be approved. (Children must be accompanied by a caretaker-companion.)



Erez and Rafah crossing data for June 2011

According to the Palestinian Liaison Officer at Erez, 807 patients actually crossed Erez checkpoint during June 2011, including 41 patients who required back-to-back ambulance transfer in order to pass through the checkpoint. In the two previous months, 916 patients, including 57 ambulance transfers, crossed in May and 694 patients, including 42 ambulance transfers, crossed in April 2011. During June, Erez crossing was closed on Saturdays and 8 June.

Rafah border crossing was open daily for humanitarian access during June, with the exception of Fridays and one day (June 6) when exit was not allowed. An estimated 650 patients exited Gaza through Rafah for treatment in Egypt in June, including MoH referred patients as well as persons seeking medical treatment at their own expense.

Status of drugs and disposables in Gaza in June

On June 30, the Central Drugs Stores (CDS) in Gaza reported a shortage of 140 drug items at zero level in addition to 70 items sufficient for less than 3 months use. During June, MoH Ramallah shipped 10 truckloads to Gaza containing 80 essential drug items (30 items were adequate supplies for one month, 27 items for up to 3 months, and the remaining for more than 3 months), and 10 truckloads of essential medical disposables containing 120 items (35 items had been at zero level, and 32 were at low stock of less than 3 months). The MoH shipment included 53 essential disposable items that were in sufficient supply and had not been requested by Gaza CDS, but were shipped at the request of donors who had allocated the items for Gaza. In addition to MoH shipments, the CDS-Gaza also received donations totaling 13 essential drugs items from the Turkish Red Crescent, 11 items from Miles of Smiles campaign and 5 items from the Physicians Syndicate in Egypt. The donated amounts were enough for 1 to 2 months consumption.

Table 3: Shortages in Essential Drugs and Medical Disposables in Gaza, June 30

Total Drug List (480)	Zero Stock Items	%	Low Stock Items	%
May 2011	178	37	68	14
June 2011	140	29	70	15
Total Supplies List (700)				
May 2011	190	27	70	10
June 2011	150	21	60	9

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 for GSS interrogation ¹	
Jan 2011	935	744	79.6%	22	2.4%	169	18.1%	15	1.6%
Feb 2011	899	784	87.2%	21	2.3%	94	10.5%	11	1.2%
Mar 2011	1071	968	90.4%	26	2.4%	77	7.2%	11	1.0%
Apr 2011	825	746	90.4%	19	2.3%	60	7.3%	19	2.3%
May 2011	1076	986	91.6%	22	2.0%	68	6.3%	12	1.1%
Jun 2011	951	843	88.6%	26	2.7%	82	8.6%	16	1.7%
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%

Referrals out of Gaza by geographic location (total numbers and % per destination for given period)										
Period	West Bank		East Jerusalem		Egypt		Jordan		Israel	
Jan 2011	70	6.0%	294	25.3%	531	45.7%	22	1.9%	246	21.2%
Feb 2011	86	10.3%	280	33.4%	185	22.1%	27	3.2%	260	31.0%
Mar 2011	77	7.0%	345	31.2%	356	32.2%	17	1.5%	312	28.2%
Apr 2011	111	11.7%	268	28.2%	314	33.0%	16	1.7%	243	25.5%
May 2011	126	10.5%	318	26.6%	448	37.5%	20	1.7%	283	23.7%
Jun 2011	132	10.9%	302	25.0%	481	39.9%	16	1.3%	276	22.9%
2010	1472	29.8%	3517	29.8%	4209	35.7%	150	1.3%	2443	20.7%
2009	1327	15.6%	2453	28.8%	3203	37.7%	364	4.3%	1158	13.6%

¹ The percentage rates for patients called for an interrogation with GSS are calculated from the total number of permit applications submitted.