



Rafah terminal was closed in both directions during January

MONTHLY REPORT

January 2018

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **8,870**

referrals to health facilities outside the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

2,174 Gaza patients

6,696 West Bank patients

 **49%**

of Gaza patient and companion permit applications to Israeli authorities for exit via Erez approved.

56% Gaza patients

42% Gaza patient companions

 **84%**

of West Bank patient and companion permit applications to Israeli authorities approved

 **24**

Gaza patients called for security interview

CASE STUDY

Children from Gaza rely on older relatives to accompany them for health care

Part 1 Referrals

January referrals by the Ministry of Health

In January, the Palestinian Ministry of Health approved 8,870 referral requests for Palestinian patients to non-Ministry of Health facilities. This included 6,696 referrals for West Bank patients and 2,174 referrals for Gaza patients. Chart 1 shows the number of referral documents issued to patients in Gaza and the West Bank from January 2017 to January 2018.



8,870
referrals

approved for financial coverage
to health facilities outside the
Palestinian Ministry of Health



6,696

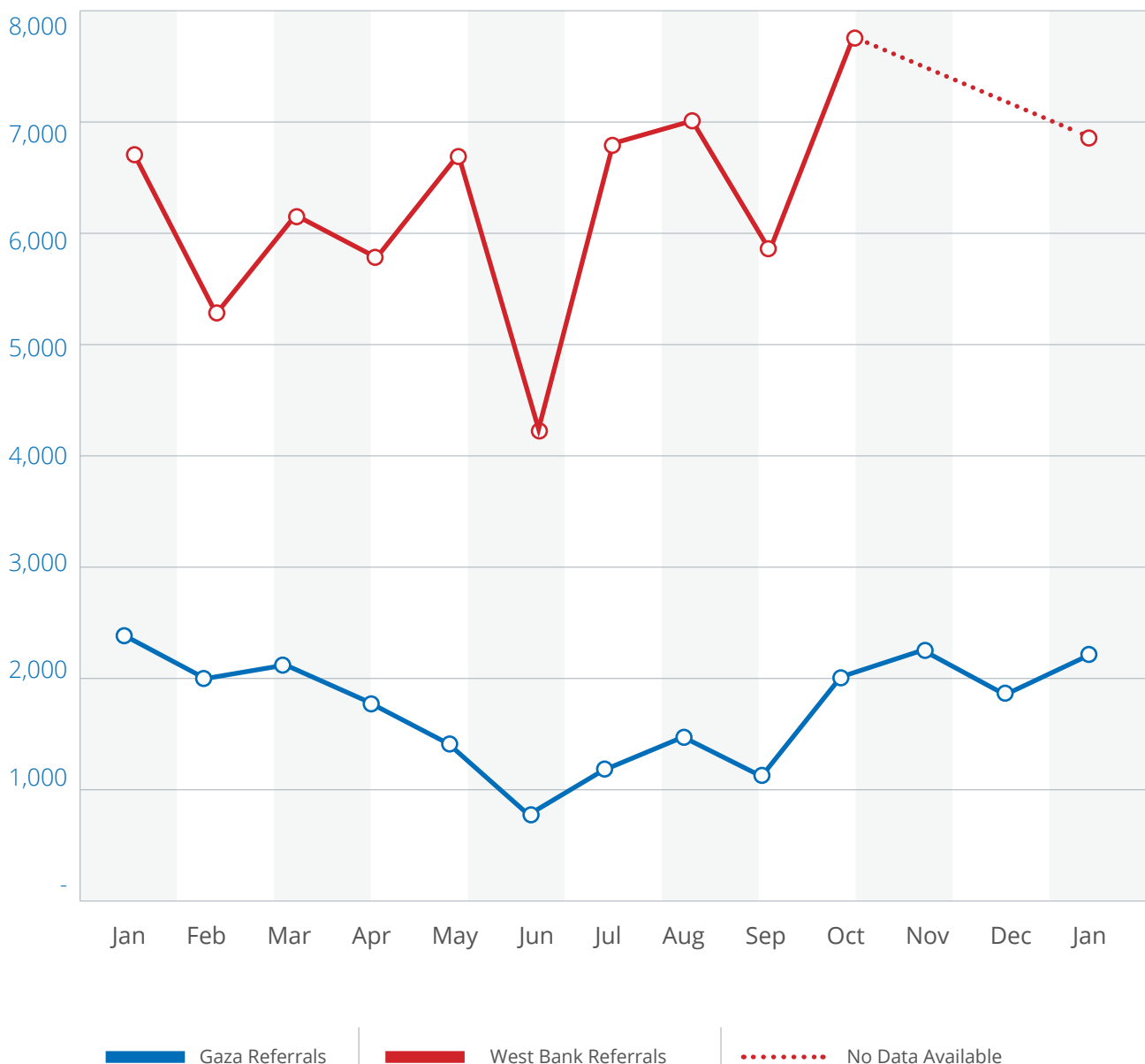
referrals for West Bank
patients



2,174

referrals for Gaza
patients.

Chart 1: Total referrals approved for West Bank and Gaza patients, Jan 2017 - Jan 2018



Part 2 ACCESS

The Gaza Strip

Of 2,007 applications to cross Erez for health care in January, approximately one in three (30%) were for children under age of 18 and one in six (16%) for patients over age of 60. Almost half (49%) of applications were for female patients and 92% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Three-fifths (61%) of applications to cross Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; a quarter (25%) for Israeli hospitals; and 14% for hospitals in the West Bank. Makassed Hospital (28%) and Augusta Victoria Hospital (28%), both in East Jerusalem, were the receiving hospitals for more than half of appointments. The top four specialties accounted for more than half of referrals: oncology (29%); cardiology (10%); haematology (9%); and paediatrics (9%).

Approved permit applications: 1,118 (M: 553; F: 565) or just over half (56%) of the 2,007 applications to cross Erez in January 2018 were approved, see Chart 2. Over a third (37%) of those approved were children under age of 18 and a quarter (23%) were elderly people over age of 60 years.

Denied care: 124 patient applications (69 male; 55 female), or 6% of the total, were denied permission to cross Erez for health care in January. These included eight children under age of 18 years and 12 patients aged 60 years or older. Approximately a quarter (28 patients) of those denied had been referred for orthopaedics; a tenth (14 patients) for oncology; and a tenth (13 patients) for surgery.

Delayed care: 765 patient applications (404 male; 361 female), or 38% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by their hospital appointment date. Of these, 179 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 58 applications for patients aged 60 years or older. A higher proportion of delayed patient applications had been for oncology (174 or 23%), with 12% (89) for cardiology 9% (72) for hematology, 7% (51) for orthopaedics and 7% (50) for paediatrics.



2,007

Patients applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to access health care



56%

approved



6%

denied

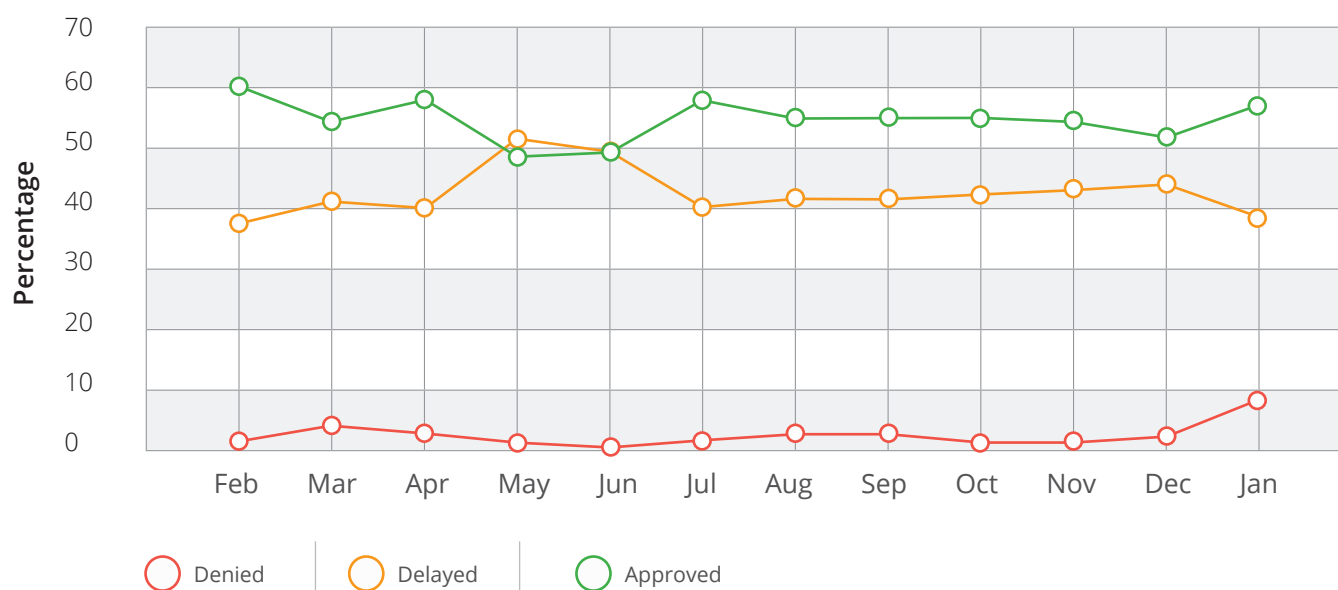


38%

delayed

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, Feb 2017 – Jan 2018





Security interrogation


24 adult patients (14 male; 10 female), were called for security interviews by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS) among them a man over 60 year old. Seven of these patients were referred for cancer treatment or investigations. After interrogation, five patients were approved, one was denied and the remaining 18 patients' applications remained pending.

 **24**  **14 Male**
 **10 Female**

patients called for security
interrogation

 **5 approved**

 **1 denied**


 **18 delayed**

Patient companions:


There were 2,350 applications to Israeli authorities by relatives for permits to cross Erez to accompany patients. These include parents or other companions applying to accompany children. Only one first-degree relative is permitted to accompany a Gaza patient and permits are conditional to security clearance. In January, 993 (42%) patient companion applications were approved; 178 (8%) were denied and 1,179 (50%) remained pending by the date of the patient's medical appointment.

 **2,350**
patient companion
applications

to Israeli authorities to cross
Erez to accompany patients

 **42% approved**


 **8% denied**

 **50% delayed**

Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 986 Gaza patients and 862 companions crossed Erez in January to access Palestinian or Israeli hospitals. 78 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulances, with 77 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 27 days for daytime working hours and closed on five days (Four Saturdays).

 **986** crossed
patients Erez for
health care

 **862**
patient companions
crossed Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



The Rafah border terminal was closed in both directions during the month of January. No travelers were allowed to exit or enter Gaza during the month including patients. A body of a dead person was returned to Gaza with a special coordination. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah during the month.

The West Bank

In January, there were 16,780 applications by West Bank patients and patient companions to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. Restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank are less severe for certain sections of the population, with many women older than 50 years of age and men older than 55 years of age exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday or before 8am.

Of the 16,780 applications, 84.3% (14,146) were approved, 14.3% (2,402) were unsuccessful and 1.4% (232) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.



16,780

patient and companion
applications

to Israeli authorities to access
health care in East Jerusalem
and Israel



84.3% approved



14.3% denied



1.4% pending
at the time of monthly
reporting

Case Study

Children from Gaza rely on older relatives to accompany them for health care: Amal and Mohamed

Mohamed was diagnosed with a cancer in his right hip when he was 7 years old. He was referred out of Gaza for treatment and investigation at Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, the main Palestinian cancer centre. He has been accompanied by his grandmother, Amal, in his journeys to access treatment in Jerusalem. Amal states:

"The hospital has been fantastic and very kind to us. But Muhammed and I miss our family. I miss my children and my grandchildren. Muhammed misses his two sisters and parents. It's hard for him that his mother is not next to him. But luckily he feels close to me."

In the Gaza Strip, certain patients and patient companions must undergo additional lengthy security checks before any decision is made about whether an application can be accepted or denied. For patients, women older than 35 years of age and men older than 55 years of age are in most cases exempted from these additional checks. For patient companions, the majority of women older than 45 years of age and men older than 55 years of age are exempted.

In practice, this has meant a heavy reliance on older, often elderly, relatives to accompany children for hospital appointments. This separation of children from their parents can be distressing. Amal comments:

"We're good friends. We play together and I give him lots of cuddles. Still, I am no substitute for a mother or father. A child needs his parents."



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*I miss my children
and my grandchildren.
Muhammed
misses his two sis-
ters and parents.*

*It's hard for him
that his mother is
not next to him.*

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