

MONTHLY REPORT

March 2018



Security corridor leading to Erez checkpoint at Beit Hanoun, north Gaza © WHO

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **2,721**

referrals issued to Gaza patients to health facilities outside the Palestinian Ministry of Health

 **54%**

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

60% Gaza patients
47% Gaza patient companions

 **83%**

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

 **10**

Gaza patients called for security interview and two patient companions arrested at Erez

CASE STUDY

16 year-old athlete denied exit from Gaza loses his leg following a gunshot wound

Part 1 Referrals

March Referrals by the Ministry of Health

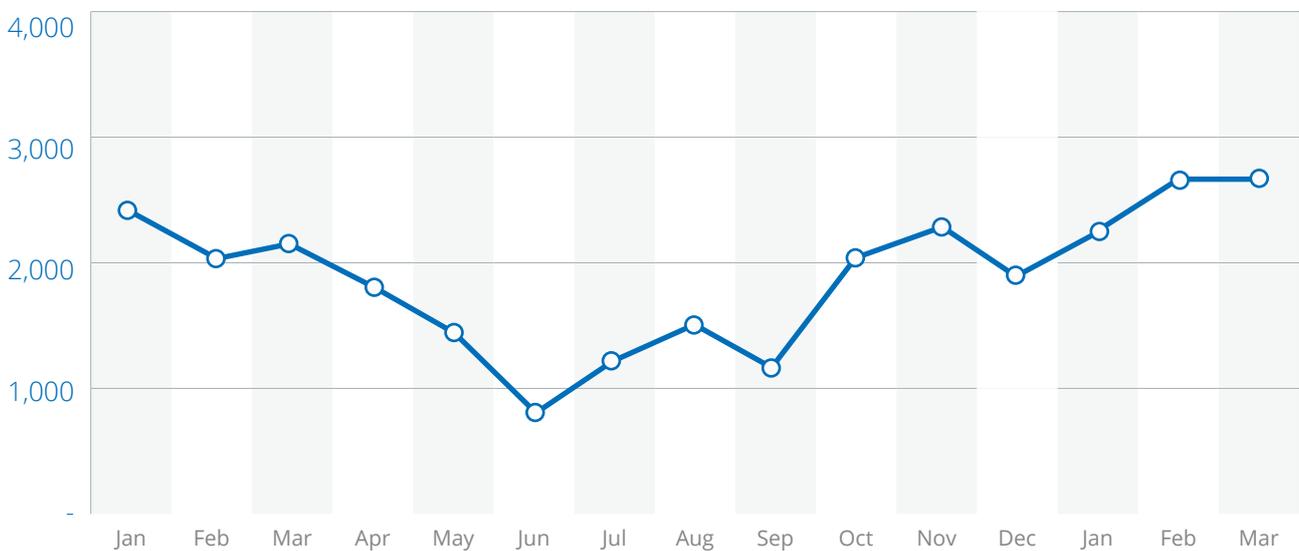
In March, the Palestinian Ministry of Health approved 2,721 referral requests for Palestinian patients from Gaza to non-Ministry of Health facilities, the highest number of referrals issued for Gaza patients in a month, according to WHO records. 1,986 (73%) referrals were for health care outside the Gaza Strip, with 1,871 (69%) requiring access through Erez terminal to Israel and 115 (4%) requiring access through Rafah terminal to Egypt.

Chart 1 shows the number of referral documents issued to patients in Gaza from January 2017 to March 2018.

 **2,721**
referrals

approved for financial coverage for Gaza patients outside the Palestinian Ministry of Health

Chart 1: Total number of referrals approved for Gaza patients, Jan 2017 - Mar 2018



Part 2 ACCESS

The Gaza Strip

Of 1,856 applications to cross Erez for health care in March, approximately a third (29%) were for children under age of 18 and almost one in five (18.5%) were for patients over the age of 60. Almost half (49%) of applications were for female patients and 93% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Approximately three in every five (58%) applications to cross Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, a quarter (24%) were for Israeli hospitals and a fifth (18%) for hospitals in the West Bank. Makassed Hospital (27%) and Augusta Victoria Hospital (25%), both in East Jerusalem, were the receiving hospitals for more than half of referrals. The top five specialties accounted for almost two thirds of referrals (64%): oncology (30%); cardiology (10%); paediatrics (9%); haematology (7.5%) and orthopaedics (7.5%). The remaining 36% were for 24 other specialties.

Approved permit applications: 1,122 (M: 558; F: 564), or 60% of the 1,856 applications to cross Erez in March 2018 were approved. Chart 2 shows a 12-month trend of Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications. Two in five (39%) of those approved were children under age of 18 and about a quarter (24%) were elderly people over 60 years of age.



1,856

patients applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to access health care



60%

approved



11%

denied

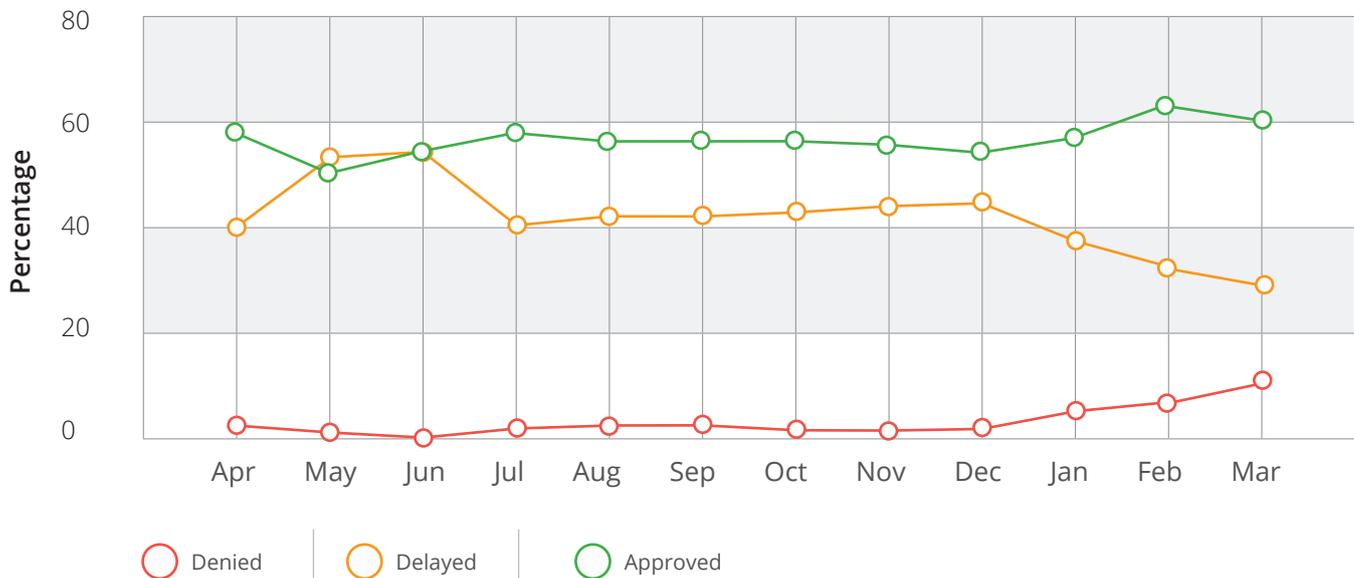


28%

delayed

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, Apr 2017- Mar 2018



Denied care: 207 patient applications (113 male; 94 female), or more than 11% of the total, were denied permission to cross Erez for health care in March, an increase from the denial rate for January and February (7%) and more than three times the average denial rate for 2017 (3%). Those denied included eight children under the age of 18 years and 15 patients aged 60 years or older.

Delayed care: 527 patient applications (276 male; 251 female), or 28% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. Of these, 91 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 63 applications were for patients aged 60 years or older. More than half of applications (55%) were for the top four specialties: 26% for oncology, 12% for cardiology, 9% for orthopaedics, and 7% for hematology. 20% of the delayed patients submitted their applications more than 30 days prior to their hospital appointment.

Security interrogation

Ten adults (7 male; 3 female) patients were called for security interviews by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS), among them a man over 60 years old. Four of the patients had been referred for cancer treatment or investigation and the other six were for six other medical specialties. None of the ten applications was approved during the month.

 **10**

patients called for security interrogation

 **10 not approved**

Patient companions:

In March, there were 2,144 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 relative is permitted to accompany each Gaza patient and permits are conditional to security clearance. In March, 1,017 (47%) patient companion applications were approved, 320 applications (15%) were denied and 807 (38%) remained pending by the date of the patient's medical appointment. Chart 3 shows the trend over the last 12 months for Israeli responses to patient companion applications.

 **2,144**
patient companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients

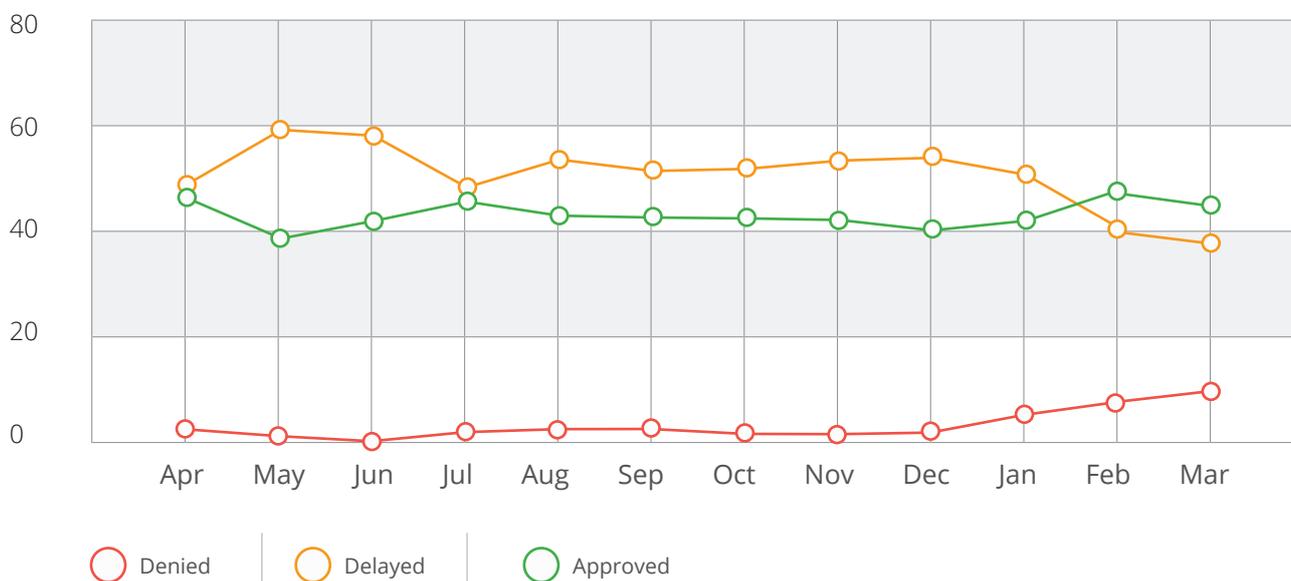
 **47% approved**

 **15 % denied**

 **38% delayed**

Chart 3

Israeli responses to Gaza patient companion applications, Apr 2017- Mar 2018



Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,069 Gaza patients and 964 companions crossed Erez in March to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. 104 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulances, with 101 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 26 days for daytime working hours and closed on five days (five Saturdays).

 **1,069**
patients
crossed Erez for health

 **964**
patient companions
crossed Erez

Two patient companions arrested during security interrogation at Erez in March

Eiad, a 42-year-old man from Gaza City submitted an application to accompany his father of 68 years with laryngeal cancer for treatment outside Gaza. He was requested for a security interrogation by Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a prerequisite to processing his application. He went to Erez on Sunday 18th March early in the morning for the interrogation but did not return. At 10pm the family was informed by the Palestinian Authority of Civil Affairs (PACA) that the father's companion was arrested at Erez crossing. Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights report that Eiad was released on 11th April.

Naiem, a 44-year-old man from Jabalia was arrested after he applied to accompany his son Mohammed (19), who suffers with a blood disorder, for an appointment at Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem on 30th March 2018. According to his family, Naiem was requested on the evening 14th March to attend Erez for security interrogation on Thursday 15th March, as a prerequisite to his application. Naiem went to attend early in the morning on 15th but did not return. The family raised their concern to the Palestinian Authority of Civil Affairs (PACA), who informed the family in the evening that Naiem had been arrested. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) report that Naiem was released on 3rd April without any indictment or charges brought against him.

Rafah crossing – Egypt



The Rafah border terminal was open in both directions for 2 days and for return for only one day during March. According to the terminal authority, 679 travelers crossed towards Egypt, among them 83 patients with 103 companions. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah during the month.

The West Bank

In March, there were 17,425 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 17,425 applications, 83.5% (14,548) were approved, 16.0% (2,799) were unsuccessful and 0.5% (78) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.

 **17,425**
patient and companion
applications

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

 **83.5% approved**

 **16.0% denied**

 **0.5% pending**
at the time of monthly
reporting

Case Study

Mohamed, a 16-year-old athlete, receives an above-knee amputation

Mohamed is a 16-year-old who grew up in Jabalia refugee camp in the north of the Gaza Strip. His family is originally from Najd, approximately 5 kilometres northeast of the Gaza barrier. On 30th March, Mohamed attended a demonstration that was part of the Great Return March, where Palestinians in Gaza demonstrated their desire to return to their land and villages beyond the Gaza barrier.

“When they started to fire tear gas at people, I wanted to help. We had brought onions so I took these forward to the people who had been affected. As I was handing out the onions I got shot in the leg. I was far from any medical point, so the people around me took the kufiyya [Palestinian scarf] I was wearing and tied this around my leg to stop the bleeding. Then they put me on a motorbike to take me to the paramedics, and from there I was taken to Al Awda Hospital [in the north of the Gaza Strip]. After that I was referred here to Shifa Hospital [in Gaza City].”

In spite of their best efforts, vascular surgeons in Gaza’s Shifa Hospital were unable to save Mohamed’s right leg and he had an above-knee amputation on 9th April. Mohamed had been referred on 1st April for specialist vascular care and follow up outside Gaza, but his permit application to Israeli authorities was denied. He now hopes to travel via Rafah terminal to Egypt, and onto Turkey to receive a limb prosthesis and rehabilitation. However, traveling to receive this treatment would be expensive for his family. Mohamed’s father has been unable to find a stable job, with 44% unemployment in Gaza.

Mohamed is a keen athlete. In February 2018, a month before his injury, he had participated in an inter-school competition for athletics in the north of the Gaza Strip, winning the 100 metres for his age group. When asked how he feels, Mohamed replied simply “adi” (it’s normal). Mohamed wants his life to return to normal and to go back to school. He still hopes to be able to participate in sports, which are his passion.



“

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