



MONTHLY REPORT

May 2018

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **2,100**

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

 **52%**

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

59% Gaza patients

46% Gaza patient companions

 **83%**

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

 **24**

Gaza patients called for security interview, 3 approved

IN FOCUS

A patient and patient companion arrested at Erez

Part 1 Referrals

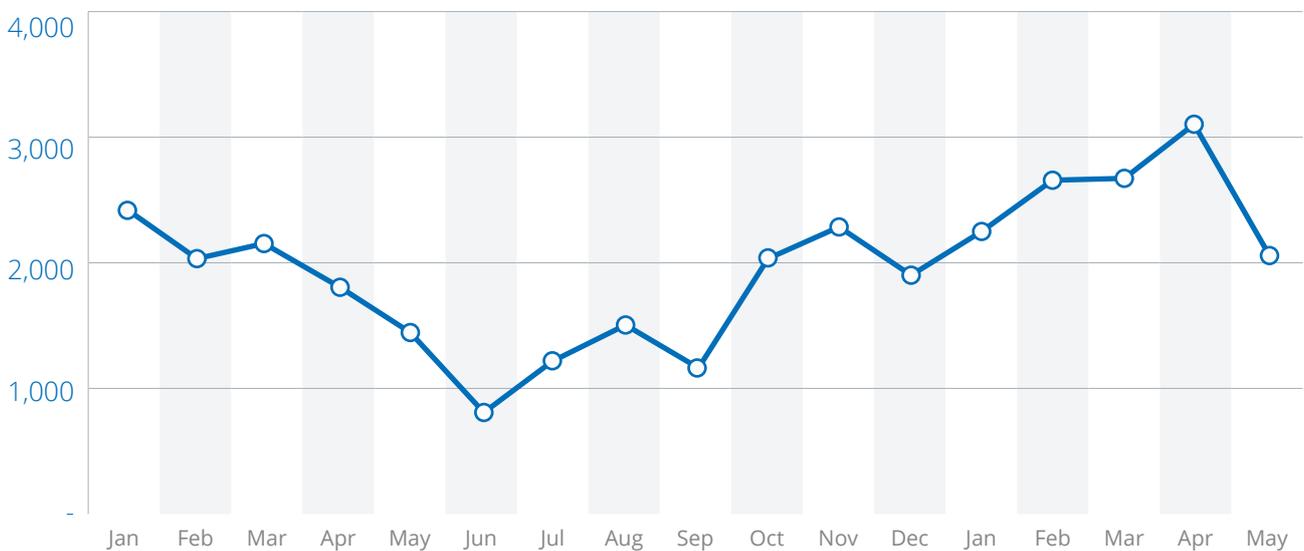
May Referrals by the Ministry of Health

In May, the Palestinian Ministry of Health approved 2,100 referral requests for Palestinian patients from Gaza to non-Ministry of Health facilities with an estimated cost of 8,895,567 NIS. 45% of referrals were for female patients; 26% were for children under the age of 18 years and 24% were for patients aged 60 years or older. A quarter (25%) of referrals were for cancer treatment and follow up. 1,642 (78%) referrals were for health care outside the Gaza Strip, with 1,488 (71%) requiring access through Erez crossing to Israel and 154 (7%) requiring access through Rafah terminal to Egypt. The remaining 458 (22%) were referred to non-Ministry of Health facilities in Gaza.

 **2,100**
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 - May 2018



Part 2 ACCESS

The Gaza Strip

Of 2,224 applications to cross Erez for health care in May, approximately a third (30%) were for children under age of 18 and almost one in six (17%) were for patients over the age of 60. Just under half (47%) of applications were for female patients and 91% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Approximately three in every five (59%) applications to cross Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, a fifth (22%) were for Israeli hospitals and a fifth (19%) for hospitals in the West Bank. Makassed Hospital (26%) and Augusta Victoria Hospital (25%), both in East Jerusalem, were the receiving hospitals for more than half of referrals. Permit applications for the top five needed specialties accounted for three-fifths of referrals (61%): oncology (29%); cardiology (10%); paediatrics (8%); haematology (8%) and orthopaedics (6%). The remaining 39% were for 24 other specialties.

Approved permit applications: 1,305 (678 male; 627 female), or 59% of the 2,224 applications to cross Erez in May 2018 were approved. Chart 2 shows a 12-month trend of Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications. Two in five (38%) of those approved were children under age of 18 and more than a fifth (22%) were elderly people over 60 years of age. Some specialties are more likely to be approved for Israeli permits. In May, 74% of paediatric applications and 70% of cancer applications were approved, in comparison to 36% of orthopaedic applications and 40% of general surgery applications.



2,224

patients applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to access health care



59%

approved



9%

denied

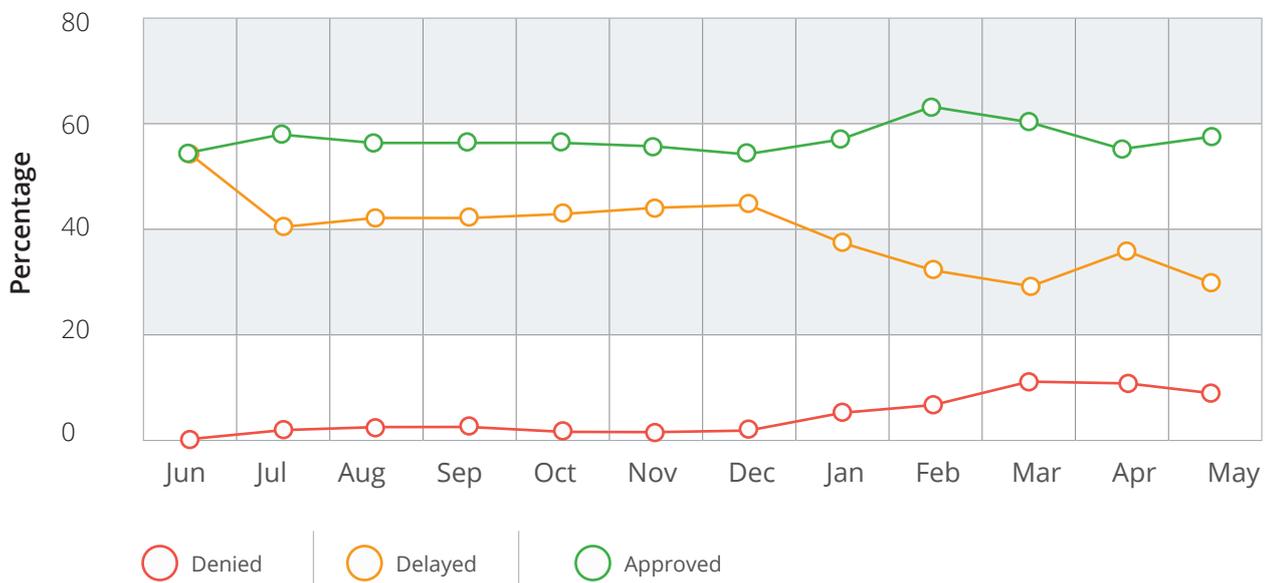


32%

delayed

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, June 2017- May 2018



Denied care: 201 patient applications (118 male; 83 female), or 9% of the total, were denied permission to cross Erez for health care in May, 1% higher than the average for the first quarter of 2018. Those denied included six children under the age of 18 years and nine patients aged 60 years or older. A fifth, 37 (18%) of those denied had appointments for cancer treatment and testing.

Delayed care: 718 patient applications (387 male; 331 female), or 32% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. Of these, 164 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 82 applications were for patients aged 60 years or older. Of the 718 delayed patients, 23% had appointments for oncology treatments, 11% for cardiology, 9% for hematology, 7% each for orthopaedics and ophthalmology. Two-thirds (67%) of delayed patients submitted their applications more than 15 days prior to their hospital appointment. their applications more than 15 days prior to their hospital appointment. more than 30 days prior to their hospital appointment.

Security interrogation

24 adult patients (18 male; 6 female) were called for security interview by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS), including two women over 60 years old. Nine patients had been referred for cancer treatment or investigation and four were referred for blood disorders (haematology). Three of the 24 applications were approved during the month.

 **24**

patients called for security interrogation

 **21 not approved**

Patient companions:

In May, there were 2,534 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 on security clearance. In May, 1,167 (46%) patient companion applications were approved, 300 applications (12%) were denied and 1,067 (42%) 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.

 **2,534**
patient companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients

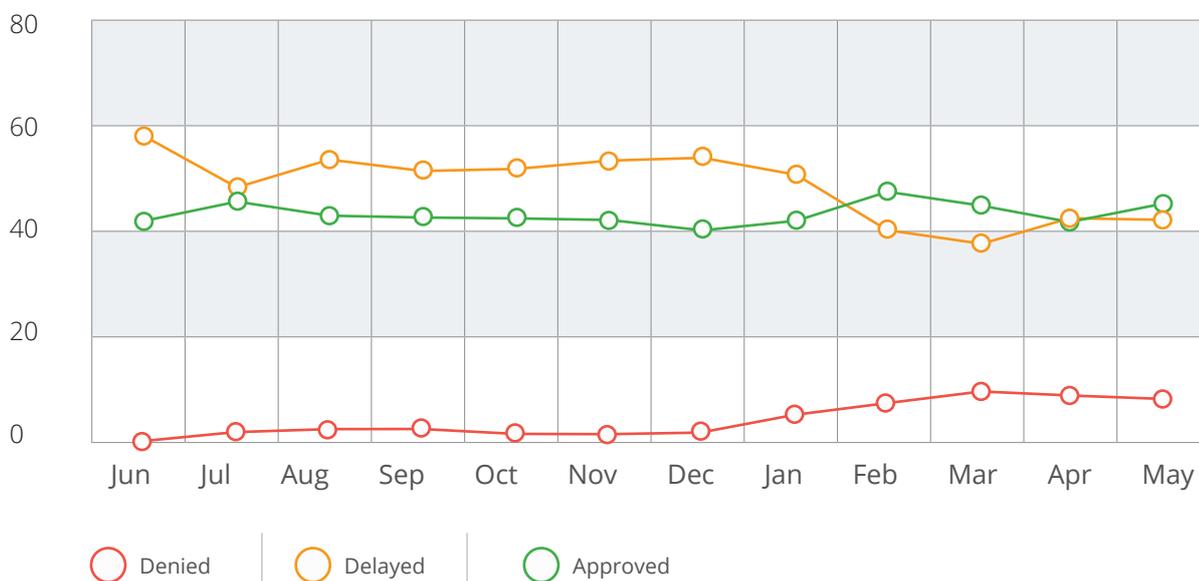
 **46% approved**

 **12% denied**

 **42% delayed**

Chart 3

Israeli responses to Gaza patient companion applications, June 2017- May 2018



Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,261 Gaza patients and 1,102 companions crossed Erez in May to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. 85 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulances, with 80 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 27 days for daytime working hours and closed on four days (four Saturdays).

 **1,261**
patients
crossed Erez for health care

 **1,102**
patient companions
crossed Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



The Rafah border terminal was open in both directions for 20 days in May. According to the terminal authority, 6,572 travelers crossed towards Egypt (a 77% increase from April), among them 189 patients with 189 companions. 30 patients injured during the Great March of Return attempted crossed Rafah since mid-April, of whom 20 were granted entry to Egypt and 10 were returned by Egyptian authorities. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah during the month.

The West Bank

In May, there were 14,488 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 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 exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday or before 8am.

Of the 14,488 applications, 11,963 (83%) were approved, 2,263 (16%) were unsuccessful and 262 (2%) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.



14,488

patient and companion applications

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



83% approved



16% denied



2% pending

at the time of monthly reporting

In Focus

Patient and patient companion arrested by Israeli authorities

Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza reported that Israeli authorities arrested a patient and a patient companion at Erez during May, after being requested to attend for security interrogation as a condition to processing their applications to exit from Gaza.

Bilal Al-Astal, a 28-year-old patient from Khan Yunis, was arrested at Erez on 21st May 2018 after arriving for security interrogation as a prerequisite to process his permit application to travel to Jordan for medical treatment. Bilal had applied through the Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs for a permit to cross Erez in order to access specialist surgical treatment in advanced center. In the evening of the same day, the Palestinian Liaison Office informed Bilal's family of his detention by the Israeli security. As of 25th June 2018, Bilal is still under detention in Israel.

Shadi Al-Ijla, 33 years old, from Gaza city was arrested by Israeli authorities at Erez on 9th May 2018. Shadi submitted an application to travel as a companion to his child Yazan, who has been receiving cancer treatment and follow up at Ichilov Hospital in Israel since October 2016. He intended to travel instead of his wife Samah, who previously accompanied their son to his appointments. Shadi was requested for security interview as a prerequisite to processing his application to exit Gaza, and was arrested after attending Erez for the interview. The child had a hospital appointment on the same day and was allowed to cross with his mother, who had a permit from previous appointments. The family was informed of Shadi's arrest through the International Committee of the Red Cross. As of 27th June 2018, Shadi is still in detention and has a trial in an Israeli court scheduled for July 2018.

Since the start of 2018, one patient and three patient companions have been arrested at Erez. There were three patients and three companions arrested over the course of 2017.

