

MONTHLY REPORT

June 2018



Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **2,202**

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

 **56%**

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

63% Gaza patients

49% Gaza patient companions

 **81%**

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

 **25**

Gaza patients called for security interview, 2 approved and 2 denied

IN FOCUS

Humanitarian health staff access for the first half of 2018

Part 1 Referrals

June Referrals by the Ministry of Health

In June, the Palestinian Ministry of Health approved 2,202 referral requests for Palestinian patients from Gaza to non-Ministry of Health facilities with an estimated cost of 9,249,584 NIS. 43% of referrals were for female patients; 25% were for children under the age of 18 years and 23% were for patients aged 60 years or older. More than a quarter (26%) of referrals were for cancer treatment and follow up. 1,820 (83%) referrals were for health care outside the Gaza Strip, with 1,545 (70%) requiring access through Erez crossing to Israel and 275 (12%) requiring access through Rafah terminal to Egypt. The remaining 382 (17%) were referred to non-Ministry of Health facilities in Gaza.

 **2,202**
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 - June 2018



Part 2 ACCESS

The Gaza Strip

Of 1,921 applications to cross Erez for health care in June, approximately a third (29%) were for children under age of 18 and almost one in six (17%) were for patients over the age of 60. Under half (44%) of applications were for female patients and 89% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. 67 (3%) applications in June were for permits for injured needed referrals to East Jerusalem and West Bank hospitals.

Almost 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. Augusta Victoria Hospital (26%), and Makassed Hospital (24%) both in East Jerusalem, were the receiving hospitals for half of referrals. Permit applications for the top five needed specialties accounted for two-thirds of referrals (67%): oncology (31%); orthopaedics (10%); haematology (9%); paediatrics (8%); cardiology (8%); and the remaining 33% were for 22 other specialties.

Approved permit applications: 1,208 (641 male; 567 female), or 63% of the 1,921 applications to cross Erez in June 2018 were approved. Chart 2 shows a 12-month trend of Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications. A third (35%) of those approved were children under age of 18 and more than a fifth (21%) were elderly people over 60 years of age. Some specialties are more likely to be approved for Israeli permits. In June, 76% of applications for oncology and haematology were approved, compared to 32% of orthopaedics applications and 42% of ophthalmology applications.

 **1,921**
patients applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to access health care

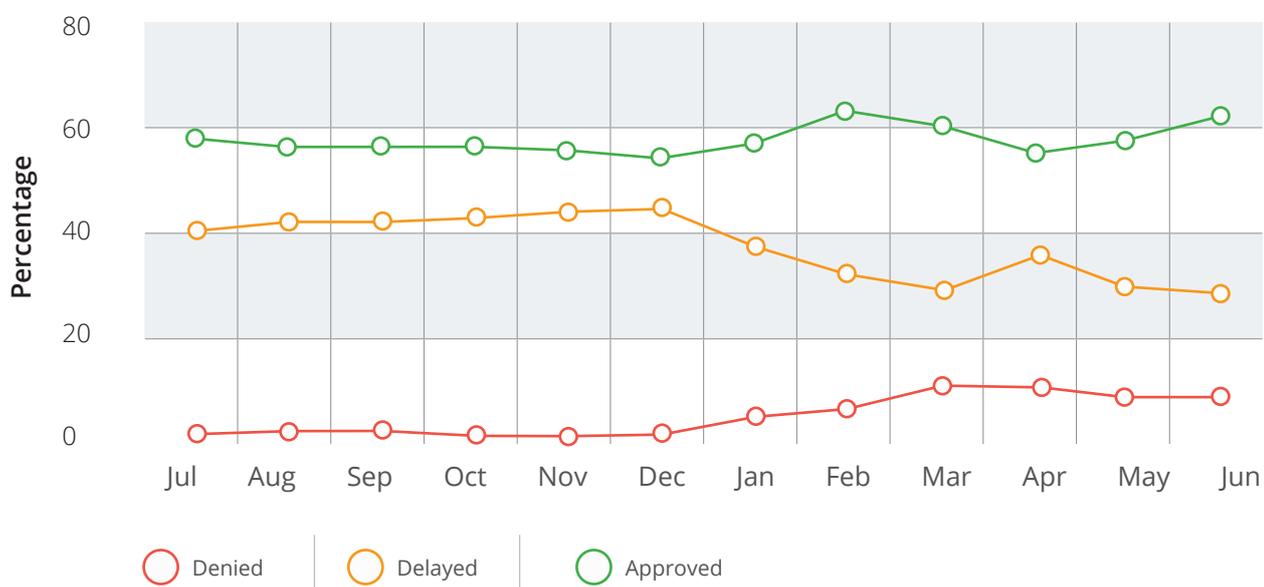
 **63%**
approved

 **10%**
denied

 **27%**
delayed

Chart 2

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



Denied care: 186 patient applications (119 male; 67 female), or 10% of the total, were denied permission to cross Erez for health care in June. Those denied included 14 children under the age of 18 years and 15 patients aged 60 years or older. A third (29%) of those denied had appointments for orthopaedics, 11% for ophthalmology, and 10% for cancer treatment and investigation. 33 out of 186 denied applications were for patients injured during the Great March of Return.

Delayed care: 527 patient applications (307 male; 220 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, 123 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 62 applications were for patients aged 60 years or older. Of the 527 delayed patients, 24% had appointments for oncology treatments, 15% for orthopaedics, 10% for cardiology, 7% for paediatrics, and 6% for haematology. Three-fifths (58%) of delayed patients submitted their applications more than 15 days prior to their hospital appointment. more than 30 days prior to their hospital appointment.

Security interrogation

25 adult patients (16 male; 9 female) were called for security interview by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS). Seven patients had been referred for cancer treatment or investigation, four for orthopaedics and three for blood disorders (haematology). Two of the 25 applications were approved, two were denied and 21 remained pending during the month.

 **25**

patients called for security interrogation

 **23 not approved**

 **2,212**
patient companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients

 **49% approved**

 **13% denied**

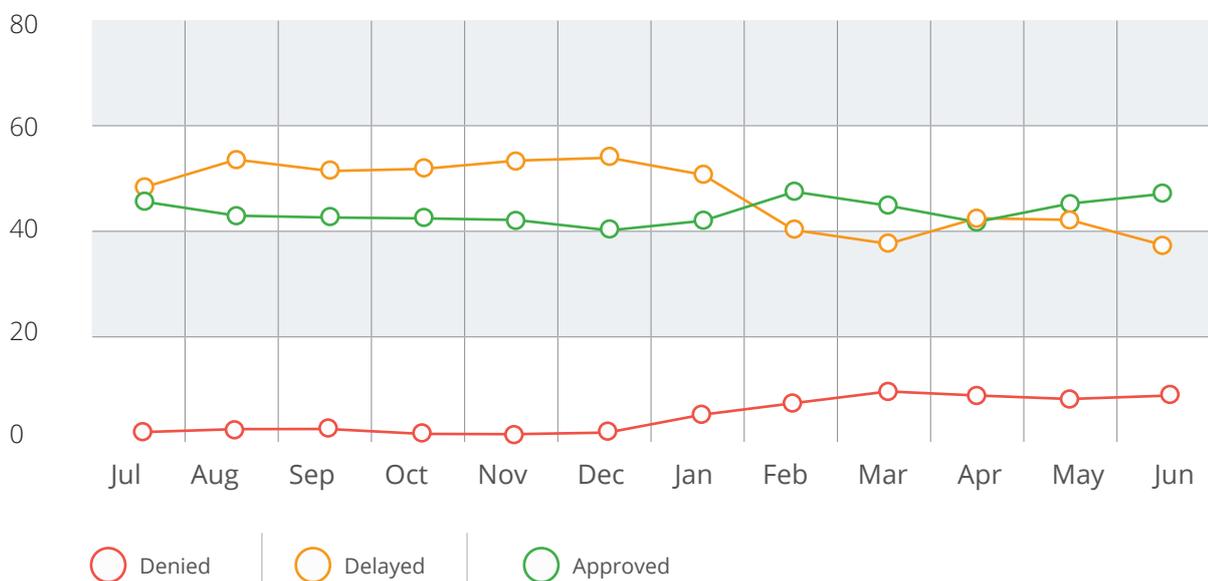
 **38% delayed**

Patient companions:

In June, there were 2,212 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 June, 1,084 (49%) patient companion applications were approved, 291 applications (13%) were denied and 837 (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.

Chart 3

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



Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,156 Gaza patients and 1,017 companions crossed Erez in June to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. 76 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulances, with 75 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 25 days for daytime working hours and closed on five days (five Saturdays).

 **1,156**
patients
crossed Erez for health care

 **1,017**
patient companions
crossed Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



The Rafah border terminal was open in both directions for 28 days in June. According to the terminal authority, 7,722 travelers crossed towards Egypt, the highest number of travelers in one month since September 2014, among them 198 patients with 200 companions. 177 of those patients were transferred by ambulance to the Egyptian side of the terminal. Since mid-April this year, 72 patients injured during the Great March of Return attempted to cross Rafah terminal towards Egypt, of whom 58 were granted entry and 14 were returned by Egyptian authorities. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah terminal during the month.

The West Bank

In June, there were 13,144 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 13,144 applications, 10,648 (81%) were approved, 2,036 (15%) were unsuccessful and 460 (3%) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.



13,144

patient and companion applications

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



81% approved



15% denied



3% pending

at the time of monthly reporting

In Focus

Humanitarian Health Access through Erez in the first half of 2018

Inability to exit the Gaza Strip limits the continuing professional development of health staff in Gaza, while barriers to entry and exit are a major obstacle to the cohesiveness of the health system across the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Table 1 shows data collected by WHO on access for humanitarian health staff from January to June 2018. Those applying to exit Gaza were substantially less likely to secure permits than those applying to enter (23% versus 79% respectively). Ministry of Health and health partners applying to exit Gaza were the least likely to secure permits to travel out of Gaza, with less than a fifth (18%) of the 45 applicants approved. Just over a third (35%) of WHO staff applying to exit Gaza were approved. Meanwhile, the 10 applications for WHO staff holding Jerusalem IDs traveling to Gaza were the most likely to be successful, with 9 of the 10 approved.

Table 1

Rates of approval, denial and pending for humanitarian health staff to enter and exit Gaza

Jan -Jun 2018	Approved	Denied	Pending	Total
Out of Gaza:	14 [22%]	11 [18%]	37 [60%]	62
WHO staff - 6 MONTHS AVERAGE OF CURRENTLY	6	8	3	17
MoH, health cluster partners	8	3	34	45
Into Gaza:	15 [79%]	1 [5%]	3 [16%]	19
WHO staff (Jerusalem ID-holder)	9	1	0	10
International medical delegates	6	0	3	9
Total	29 [36%]	12 [15%]	40 [49%]	81

