



MONTHLY REPORT

September 2018

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **2,791**

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

58% Gaza patients

46% Gaza patient companions

 **82%**

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

 **0**

Gaza patient called for security interview,

IN FOCUS

Cancer patient prevented from accessing health care outside Gaza for more than a year.

Part 1 Referrals

September Referrals by the Ministry of Health

In September, the Palestinian Ministry of Health approved 2,791 referrals for Gaza patients to non-Ministry of Health facilities with an estimated cost of 10,459,218 NIS. The average monthly number of referrals for Gaza patients in 2018 has been significantly higher than the monthly average for 2017, with 2,615 referrals per month in 2018 compared to 1,709 in 2017. 1,905 (68%) required access through Erez crossing to reach hospitals in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, while 232 (8%) required access through Rafah terminal to access health care in Egypt.

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

 **2,791**
referrals

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

Chart 1: Total number of referrals approved for Gaza patients, March 2017 - September 2018



Part 2 ACCESS

The Gaza Strip

Of 1,837 applications to cross Erez for health care in September, 30% were for children under age of 18 and 17% were for patients over the age of 60. 45% of applications were for female patients and 94% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. 18 applications (1% of the total) in September were for permits for those injured during demonstrations needing referral outside Gaza via Erez.

Two-thirds (67%) of applications to cross Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, less than a fifth (18%) were for Israeli hospitals and less than one in six (15%) were for hospitals in the West Bank. Makassed Hospital (29%) and Augusta Victoria Hospital (29%), both in East Jerusalem, received three-fifths of referrals. Permit applications for the top five specialties accounted for more than three-fifths (63%) of referrals: oncology (30%); haematology (9%); paediatrics (9%); orthopaedics (8%); and ophthalmology (7%). The remaining referrals were for 25 other specialties.

Approved permit applications: 1,074 (555 male; 519 female), or 58% of the 1,837 applications to cross Erez in September 2018 were approved. Chart 2 shows a 12-month trend of Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications. Over a third (37%) of permits approved were for children under age of 18 and almost a fifth (22%) were for elderly people over 60 years of age. The approval rate for those injured in demonstrations near the fence was significantly lower than the overall approval rate in September: one of 18 applications was approved; one denied; and 16 delayed.

1,837
patients applications
to Israeli authorities to cross
Erez to access health care

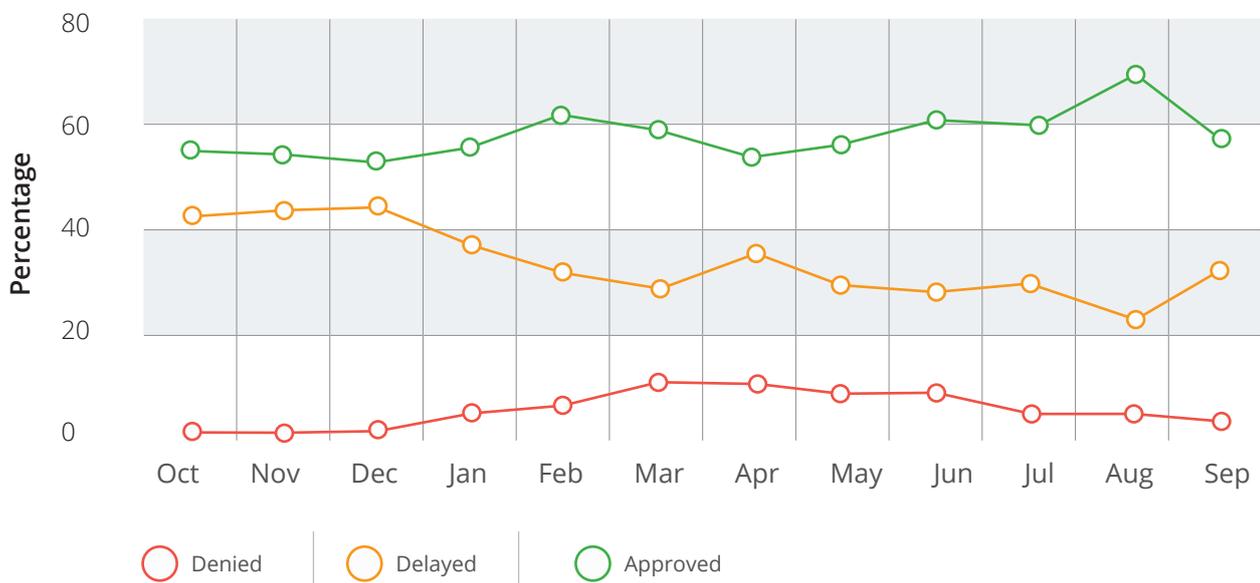
58%
approved

5%
denied

36%
delayed

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, October 2017- September 2018



Denied care: 95 patient applications (66 male; 29 female), or (5%) of the total, were denied permission to cross Erez for health care in September. Those denied included 7 children under the age of 18 years and 14 patients aged 60 years or older. 18% of denied applications were for appointments in neurosurgery, 17% for ophthalmology, 17% for orthopaedics, and 12% for cancer treatment and investigation. More than 90% of denied permit applications were for appointments at hospitals in East Jerusalem or the West Bank.

Delayed care: 668 patient applications (394 male; 274 female), or 36% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. Of these, 161 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 71 applications were for patients aged 60 years or older. Of the 668 delayed applications, 16% were for appointments in oncology, 15% for orthopaedics and 10% for ophthalmology. The remaining 59% were for 26 other specialties.

Security interrogation

In September, no patients or patient companions were called for security interrogation as a prerequisite to travel for health care.

 **0**

patient called for security interrogation

 **0 not approved**

Patient companions:

In September, there were 2,076 permit applications to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients. These applications include parents or other companions applying to accompany children. Only one companion is permitted to accompany each Gaza patient and permits are conditional on security clearance. In September, 954 (46%) patient companion applications were approved, 165 applications (8%) were denied and (46%) remained pending on 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.

 **2,076**
patient companion applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients

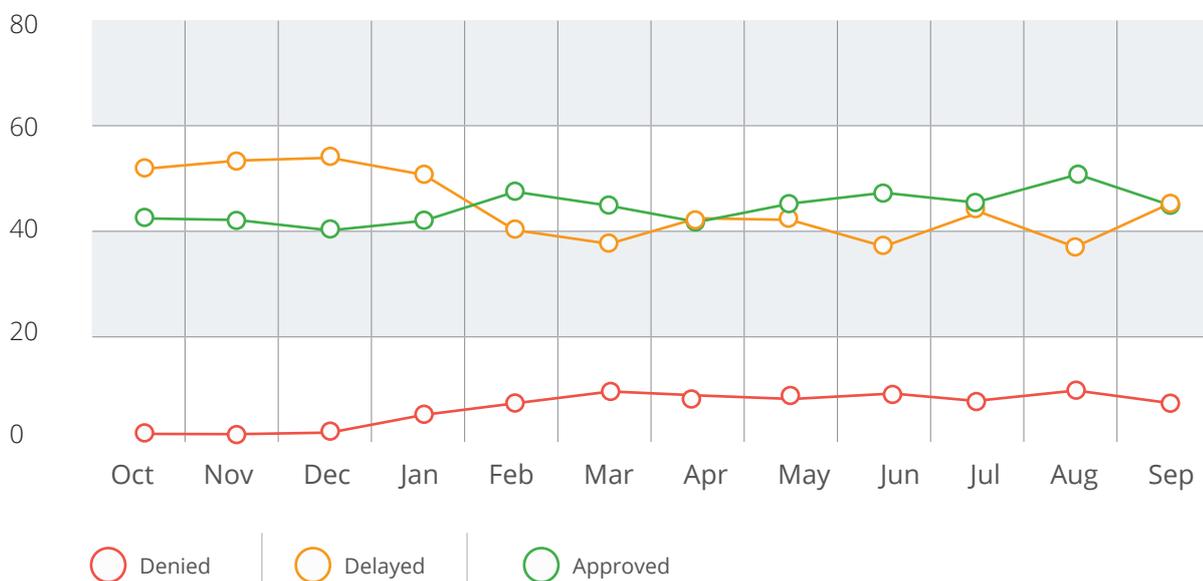
 **46% approved**

 **8% denied**

 **46% delayed**

Chart 3

Israeli responses to Gaza patient companion applications, October 2017- September 2018



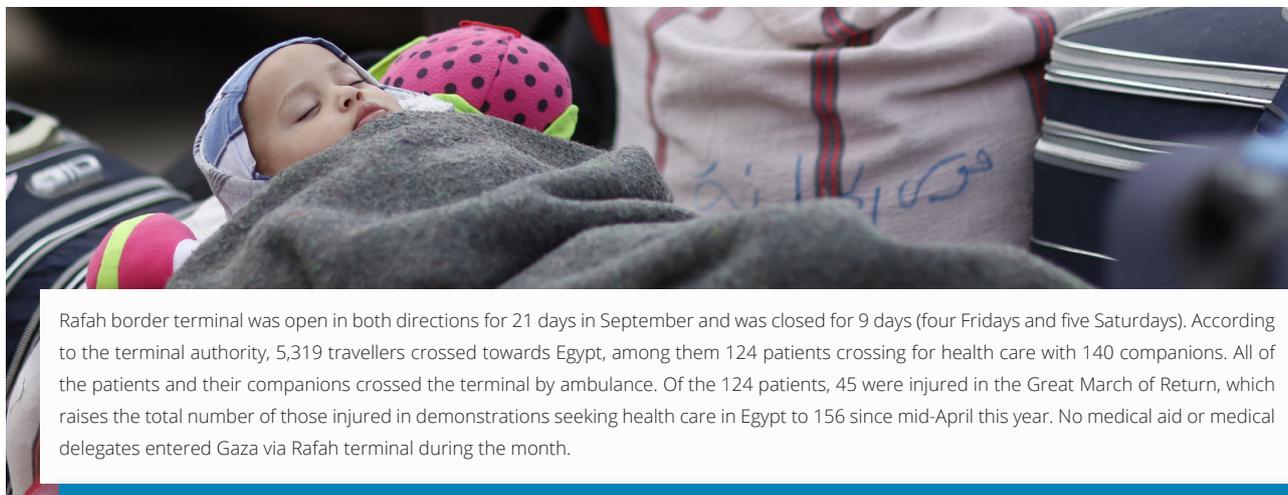
Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,104 Gaza patients and 976 companions crossed Erez in September to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of these patients, 78 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 72 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 21 days for daytime working hours and closed on nine days (five Saturdays and four Jewish holidays).

 **1,104**
patients
crossed Erez for health care

 **976**
patient companions
crossed Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



Rafah border terminal was open in both directions for 21 days in September and was closed for 9 days (four Fridays and five Saturdays). According to the terminal authority, 5,319 travellers crossed towards Egypt, among them 124 patients crossing for health care with 140 companions. All of the patients and their companions crossed the terminal by ambulance. Of the 124 patients, 45 were injured in the Great March of Return, which raises the total number of those injured in demonstrations seeking health care in Egypt to 156 since mid-April this year. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah terminal during the month.

The West Bank

In September, there were 13,440 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 13,440 applications, 10,994 (82%) were approved, 1,785 (13%) were unsuccessful and 661 (5%) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.



13,440

patient and companion applications

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



82% approved



13% denied



5% pending

at the time of monthly reporting

In Focus

Cancer patient prevented from accessing health care outside Gaza for more than a year



When Fatima was diagnosed with colon cancer in September 2016, she underwent surgery to have the tumour removed. She needed to travel out of Gaza for essential care, including for chemotherapy and biological therapy medications that were not available in Gaza at the time. She also needed a nuclear medicine scan that would show any spread of the tumour. After receiving three permits to travel for care up until February 2017, Fatima then made nine unsuccessful applications to exit for health care. In September 2017, she was told that she would have to attend Israeli security interrogation for her application to be valid. However, she was not given any appointment and as of September 2018 her access to care had been delayed by more than a year. She is married with a three-year old son and describes how her illness stops her from being able to care for him:

"It's so painful that I cannot take care of my son. He is growing up and realizing my health problem."

Faced with Gaza's long-term shortages of medicines and medical equipment, Fatima does not receive enough colostomy bags and she describes the humiliation she feels as she is forced to resort to alternative methods:

"I need more than one bag per day and I haven't money to buy it. I am forced to use disposable plastic bags or sanitary towels that make my clothes dirty and mean I have to keep changing my clothes."



In October 2018, WHO released a photo story book, **Right to Health: Palestinian Voices**.

You can hear more Palestinian Voices here:

http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO_Story_Book_final_for_web.pdf