



MONTHLY REPORT

June 2022

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

 **9,888**

referrals issued to access health facilities outside the Palestinian MoH

2,305 Gaza

7,452 West Bank

 **62%**

of Gaza patient permit applications approved

35%

of Gaza companion permit applications approved

 **78%**

of West Bank patient permit applications approved

70%

of West Bank companion permit applications approved

 **23**

Gaza patient called for security interrogation

IN FOCUS

Health Attacks during the first half of 2022

Part 1 Referrals

June referrals by the Ministry of Health

In June, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) issued 9,888 referrals to health care services delivered by non-MoH providers, 19% higher than the monthly average (8,308) for 2021. Referrals from the West Bank comprised 75% (7,452) of the total, including 1,179 referrals for patients from East Jerusalem, while referrals for the Gaza Strip accounted for 23% (2,305) of the total. Two referrals were issued for Palestinian patients present in Jordan, while the origin of 129 referrals (1%) was not reported.

Palestinian MoH referrals to hospitals in the West Bank, outside East Jerusalem, comprised 48% of referrals in June; to East Jerusalem hospitals 37%; within the Gaza Strip 6%; to Israeli hospitals 6%; to Egypt 3%; to Jordan 0.2% (15 referrals); and to Turkey 0.07% (7 referrals).

The top needed specialties were oncology (25%); cardiac catheterization (7%); cardiology (6%); urology & nephrology (5%); ophthalmology (5%); medical imaging (5%); haematology (4%); radiation therapy (4%); and endoscopy (4%); and laboratory examination (3%). The remaining 33% were for 27 other medical specialties. Referrals for patients under 18 years of age comprised 22% (2,188) of the total, while 28% (2,815) were for those aged 60 years or older. Referrals for female patients comprised 47% of the total.

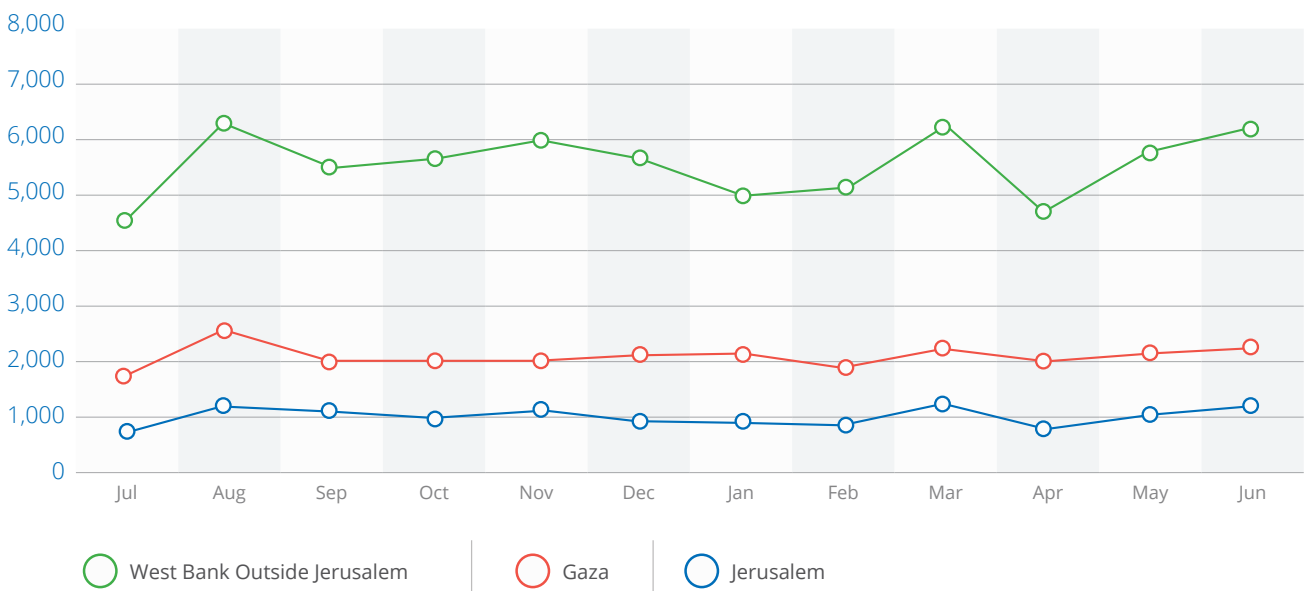
 **2,305**
Gaza Strip

 **7,452**
West Bank

referrals approved financial coverage for health care outside the Palestinian Ministry of Health

Chart 1

Number of referrals issued by the Palestinian MoH by place of origin, July 2021 to June 2022




Part 2 Access

The Gaza Strip

There were 1,824 (M: 958; F: 866) patient permit applications for patients from the Gaza Strip to Israeli authorities in June. Just under a third (29%) of applications were for children under 18 and close to a fifth (19%) were for patients over 60 years old. 47% were for female patients, while 86% were for referrals funded by the Palestinian MoH. Half (51%) of applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals; 33% for West Bank hospitals outside East Jerusalem; and 16% for Israeli hospitals. 45% of applications were for appointments at either Makassed Hospital (23%) or Augusta Victoria Hospital (22%), both in East Jerusalem. The top five specialties accounted for 70% of permit applications: oncology (33%); haematology (11%); cardiology (10%); paediatrics (9%); and orthopaedics (7%). The remaining 30% of applications were for 22 other specialties.

A further 81 permit applications for patients and companions were submitted through the Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs during June for travel by shuttle to Jordan, which requires approval of Israeli and Jordanian authorities for direct transfer from Beit Hanoun/Erez to the King Hussein Bridge crossing to Jordan, without formal entry to Israel or the West Bank. Jordanian hospitals issue an open appointment rather than specifying a date for these permit applications. Of the 81 applications, 59 (73%) were approved, 21 (26%) were denied and 1 (1%) remained pending at the time of monthly reporting.

Approved permit applications: 1,139 (M: 573; F: 566) or 62% of the 1,824 patient applications to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez in June 2022 were approved, 4% lower than the average approval (66%) for the first quarter of the year. The approval rate of patient permit applications varies by sex and age of patients. Men aged 18 to 40 had an approval rate of 43%, while women over 60 had an approval rate of 76% - see Table 1.

 **1,824**
patient applications

to Israeli authorities to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez to access health care

 **62%**
approved

 **0.5%**
denied

 **37%**
delayed

Table 1

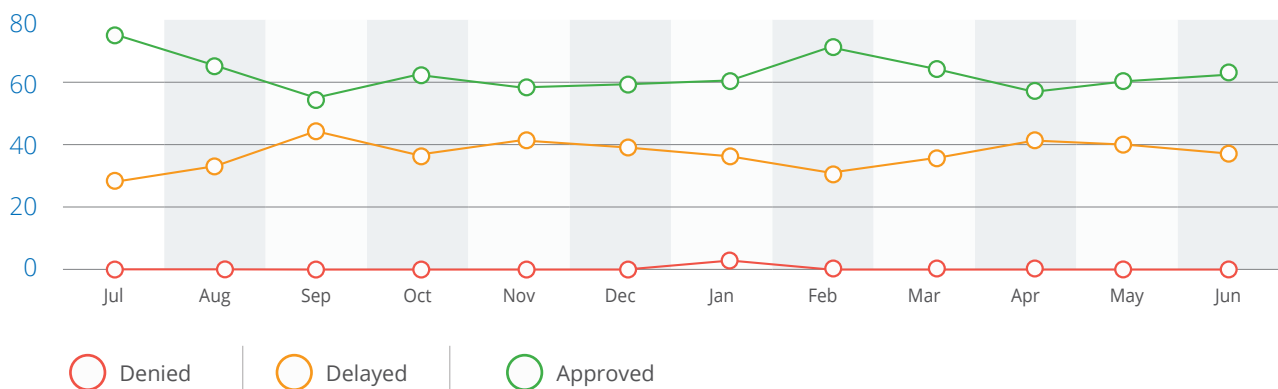
Approval rate for patient permit applications in June 2022, by age and sex

June 2022	Number of applications		Approved	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-3	77	59	66%	75%
4-17	213	178	62%	59%
18-40	241	227	43%	59%
41-60	231	260	61%	67%
over 60	196	142	73%	76%
sub-total	958	866	60%	65%
Total	1824			
Overall approval rate for patient applications			62%	

Approval rates also vary by referred specialty. In June, specialties with an approval rate equal to or higher than the average of 62% with more than one application included paediatric surgery at 100% (3 applications in total), haematology at 78% (192 applications), intensive care at 75% (12 applications), cancer care (oncology) at 69% (596 applications), heart surgery at 67% (12 applications), and neurosurgery at 66% (44 applications). Specialties with an approval rate lower than 50% included general surgery (41%), respiratory medicine (33%), neurology (28%), and endocrinology (25%).

Chart 2

Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, July 2021 to June 2022 (%)



Denied care: 9 (M: 6; F: 3) patient permit applications, comprising 0.5% of the total for Gaza, were denied in June. These included one adult aged 18 to 40 years, four adults aged 41 to 60 years and four adult over 60 years. They were referred for oncology (4), orthopaedics (2), urology (1), ophthalmology (1), and neurosurgery (1). Seven patients were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem and two were referred to the West Bank outside East Jerusalem.

Delayed care: 676 (M: 379; F: 297) patient permit applications, or 37% of the total, were delayed access to care, receiving no definitive response to their application by the date of their hospital appointment. 29% (194 applications) were for children under the age of 18, while 12% (83) were for patients over 60 years. Of delayed applications, 50% were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, 34% for the West Bank, and 16% for Israeli hospitals. Of the delayed applications, 26% had appointments for cancer treatment (oncology), 11% for cardiology, 10% for paediatrics, 8% for orthopaedics, 6% haematology, 6% for ophthalmology, and (5%) each for general surgery, internal medicine, and neurology. The remaining 18% were for 15 other specialties.

Most delayed applications (602 or 89%) were 'under study' at the time of appointment. 24 applications were delayed based on the assertion by Israeli COGAT that suitable care is available within Gaza. No evidence was provided as a basis for this claim, with patient medical need unrelated to the security justifications for enforcement of permit requirements for patients.

Security interrogation and arrests

23 (M: 18; F: 5) patients were requested for security interrogation in June, the largest number of patients requested for interrogation since January 2020. One was a child aged 15 years, nine were 18-40 years, eight were 41-60 years, and five were over 60 years of age. Ten had appointments for cancer care (oncology), five for orthopedics, four for ophthalmology, two for neurosurgery, one for general surgery and one nephrology. Twelve of these patients had applied to reach hospitals in East Jerusalem and eleven to hospitals in the West Bank. Two patients of the 23 (9%) were approved permit after interrogation, 20 (87%) remained pending under study, and one (4%) remained waiting appointments for security interrogation.



23

Gaza patients

called for security interrogation



0

Gaza patients or companions


arrested

Patient companions


The Health Liaison Office submitted 2,377 companion permit applications to Israeli authorities to accompany patients in June. These applications include parents or other companions applying to travel with children. Patients are eligible to apply to Israeli authorities for one companion to accompany them for health care outside the Gaza Strip. In June, 833 companion permit applications (35% of the total) were approved, 10 applications (0.4%) were denied and the remaining 1,534 (64%) were delayed, receiving no definitive response by the time of the patient's hospital appointment.

Patients and companions crossing Beit Hanoun/Erez

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 1,293 Gaza patients and 930 companions exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint in June to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. Of the 1,293 patients, 97 were transferred by back-to-back ambulance with 97 companions. These numbers show that **363 (28%) of patients** crossed Beit Hanoun/Erez checkpoint without a companion. The bodies of 14 deceased patients were returned to Gaza across Beit Hanoun/Erez in June. During the month, the checkpoint was open for 26 days for daytime working hours and closed on 4 days (4 Saturdays).

 **2,377**
companion applications


to Israeli authorities to cross Beit Hanoun/Erez to accompany patients

 **35% approved**

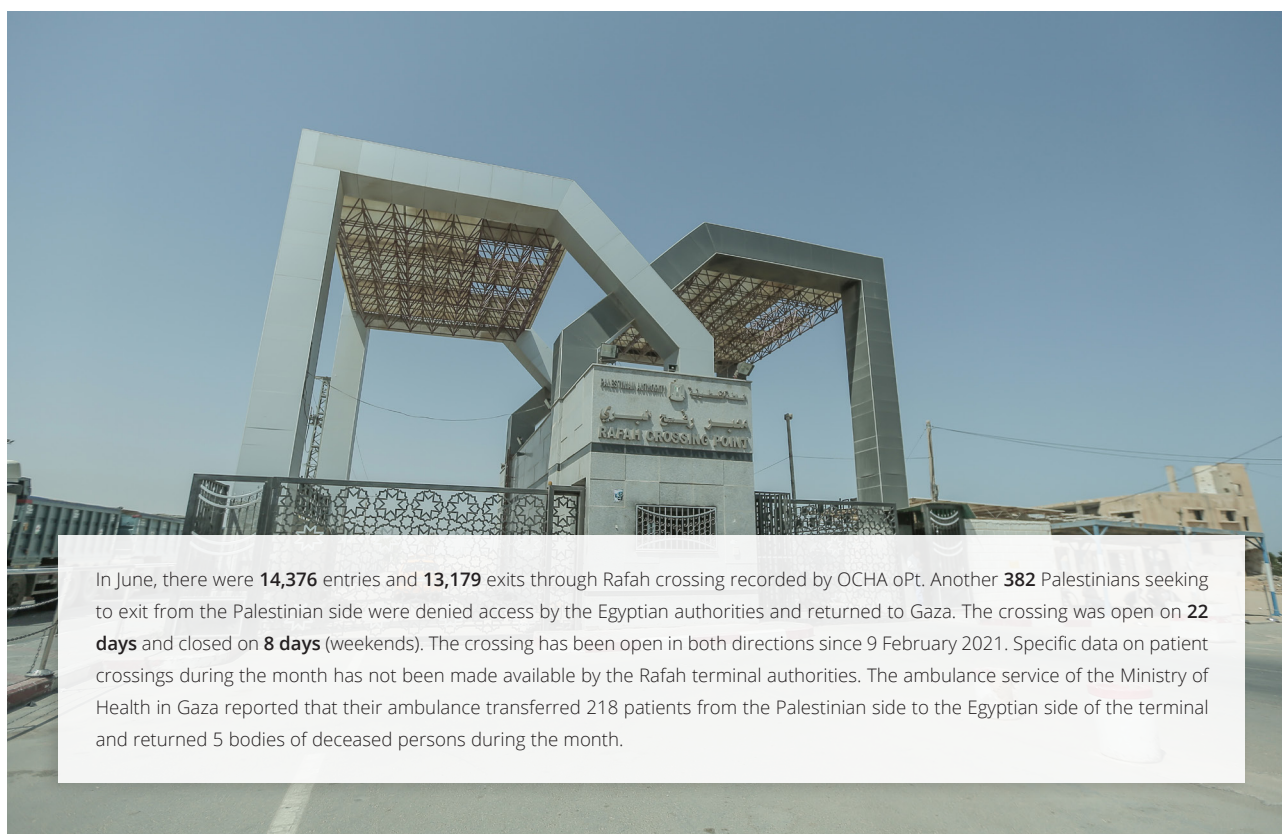
 **0.4% denied**

 **64% delayed**

 **1,293**
patients
exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez

 **930**
companions
exited through Beit Hanoun/Erez

Rafah crossing - Egypt



In June, there were **14,376** entries and **13,179** exits through Rafah crossing recorded by OCHA oPt. Another **382** Palestinians seeking to exit from the Palestinian side were denied access by the Egyptian authorities and returned to Gaza. The crossing was open on **22 days** and closed on **8 days** (weekends). The crossing has been open in both directions since 9 February 2021. Specific data on patient crossings during the month has not been made available by the Rafah terminal authorities. The ambulance service of the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that their ambulance transferred 218 patients from the Palestinian side to the Egyptian side of the terminal and returned 5 bodies of deceased persons during the month.

The West Bank

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, as well as children under 13 years traveling with an approved adult, are exempted from the requirement to obtain a permit to travel – provided they are not traveling on a Saturday, before 8am or after 7pm.


Patients: In June 2022, there were 8,022 permit applications by patients from the West Bank outside Jerusalem to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and in Israel. 4,240 (53%) were for female patients; 1,492 (19%) were for children under the age of 18 years; and 795 (10%) were for patients over 60 years.


68% of patient applications were for appointments in East Jerusalem Hospitals and 32% in Israeli hospitals or clinics. Of the 8,022 West Bank patient applications in June, 6,243 (78%) were approved, 1,504 (19%) were unsuccessful (denied) and 275 (3%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.


Companions: In June 2022, there were 9,635 patient companion permit applications to Israeli authorities from the West Bank outside East Jerusalem, to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel. 5,171 (54%) were for female companions, while 90% of companion permit applications were for companions aged from 18-59 years. Of the 9,635 West Bank companion applications, 6,784 (70%) were approved, 2,471 (26%) were unsuccessful and 380 (4%) were pending reply at the time of monthly reporting.

 **8,022**
patient permit
applications

for Israeli permits to access
healthcare in East Jerusalem
and Israel


 **78% approved**


 **19% unsuccessful**


 **3% pending**
at the time of monthly
reporting

 **9,635**
patient companion
applications

to access healthcare in East
Jerusalem and Israel

 **70% approved**

 **26% unsuccessful**

 **4% pending**
at the time of monthly
reporting

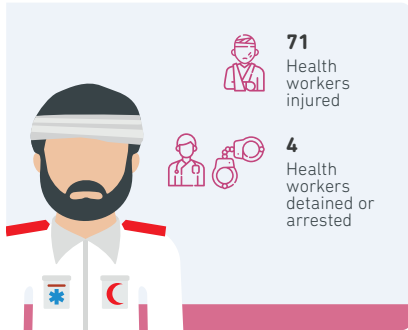
In Focus

Health Attacks during the first half of 2022

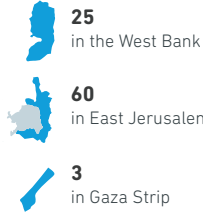
In the first half of 2022, WHO documented 88 attacks against health care in the occupied Palestinian territory. Of these, 85 were in the West Bank, including 60 in East Jerusalem, while three health attacks were documented in the Gaza Strip. Most attacks (83%) involved physical violence against health care, causing injury to 71 health care workers and one patient, and damage to 10 ambulances and three health care facilities. Meanwhile, 21 incidents involved obstruction to access or delivery including obstruction to 21 ambulances and two military incursions of health care facilities. The highest monthly number of health attacks occurred in April. Attacks figures do not include the obstruction to accessing health care arising from permits delay or denial, or other structural barriers in the occupied Palestinian territory, such as the blockade of the Gaza Strip or the settlement infrastructure and discriminatory development policies in the West Bank.



Health Attacks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory 1 January – 30 June 2022



88 Attacks on health care



21 Incidents of health vehicles obstructed access



10 Health vehicles damaged



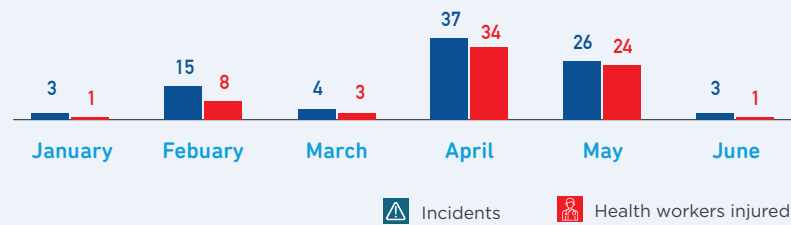
5 Health facilities affected



2 Patients detained or arrested



Health Attacks in Numbers



Source: WHO Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care <https://extranet.who.int/ssa/Index.aspx>



Police inside the grounds of St Joseph Hospital, Jerusalem.
Credit: Ammar Awad/Reuters

In May, Israeli forces attacked St Joseph Hospital in East Jerusalem during the funeral of renowned Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. The pallbearers were beaten, with police firing tear gas grenades, sound bombs and rubber bullets in the grounds of the hospital. Armed police entered the hospital building causing intimidation of patients and staff. The hospital recorded 13 injuries requiring medical attention resulting from violence carried out inside the hospital grounds.

WHO continues to document incidents of health attacks within the Surveillance System on Attacks on Health Care (<https://extranet.who.int/ssa/Index.aspx>), as well as to document and analyse structural barriers to the right to health and health care access in the occupied Palestinian territory. This documentation forms the basis of human rights-based advocacy efforts. More information on WHO's global Attacks on Health Care initiative can be found [here](#).

WHO calls for respect and protection of health care at all times. Health care is not a target.