

World Health Organization
occupied Palestinian territory

MONTHLY REPORT
April 2018

Health Access

Barriers for patients in the occupied Palestinian territory

3,077

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

48%

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

53% Gaza patients

42% Gaza patient companions

82%

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

18

Gaza patients called for security interview, one approved

IN FOCUS

Patients injured in the Great March of Return face increased barriers to access

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Ref: Four
(Published 27 May 2018)

Part 1 Referrals

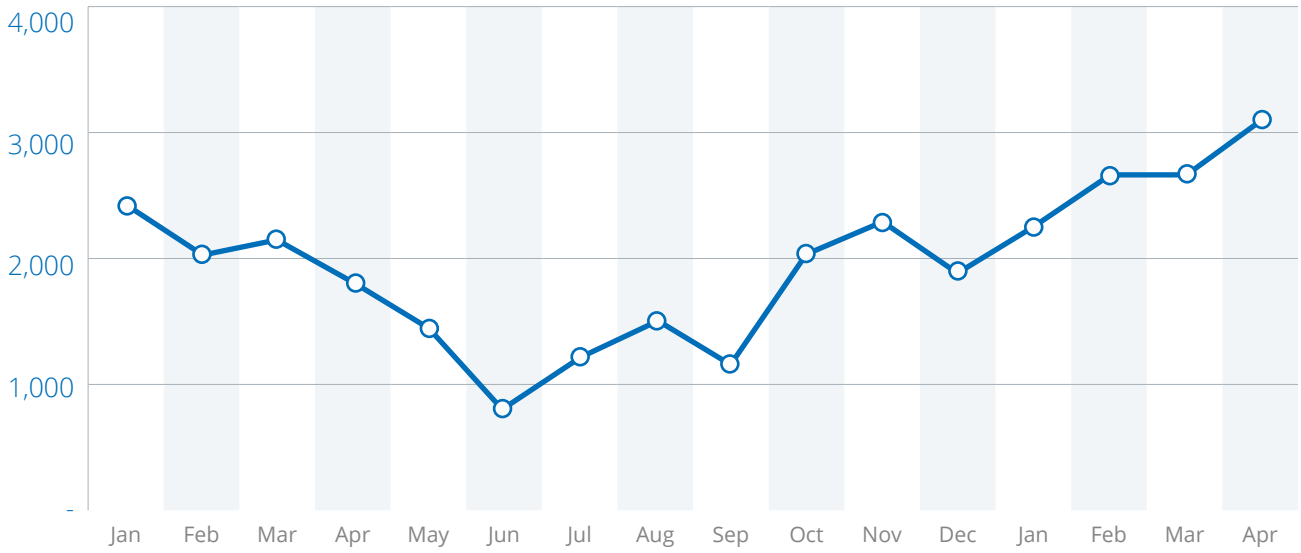
April Referrals by the Ministry of Health

In April, the Palestinian Ministry of Health approved 3,077 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. 2,332 (76%) referrals were for health care outside the Gaza Strip, with 2,178 (71%) requiring access through Erez terminal to Israel and 154 (5%) requiring access through Rafah terminal to Egypt. A quarter (25%) of referrals were for cancer treatment and follow up. Chart 1 shows the number of referral documents issued to patients in Gaza from January 2017 to April 2018.

3,077
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 - April 2018**





Part 2 ACCESS

The Gaza Strip

Of 2,037 applications to cross Erez for health care in April, approximately a third (30%) were for children under age of 18 and almost one in five (18%) were for patients over the age of 60. Just under half (46%) of applications were for female patients and 94% of applications were for medical care funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Approximately three in every five (61%) applications to cross Erez were for appointments in East Jerusalem hospitals, a fifth (21%) were for Israeli hospitals and a fifth (18%) for hospitals in the West Bank. Makassed Hospital (29%) 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 (9%); paediatrics (8.5%); haematology (8%) and orthopaedics (7%). The remaining 39% were for 26 other specialties.

Approved permit applications: 1,087 (576 male; 511 female), or 53% of the 2,037 applications to cross Erez in April 2018 were approved. Chart 2 shows a 12-month trend of Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications. Two in five (40%) of those approved were children under age of 18 and about a quarter (25%) were elderly people over 60 years of age.

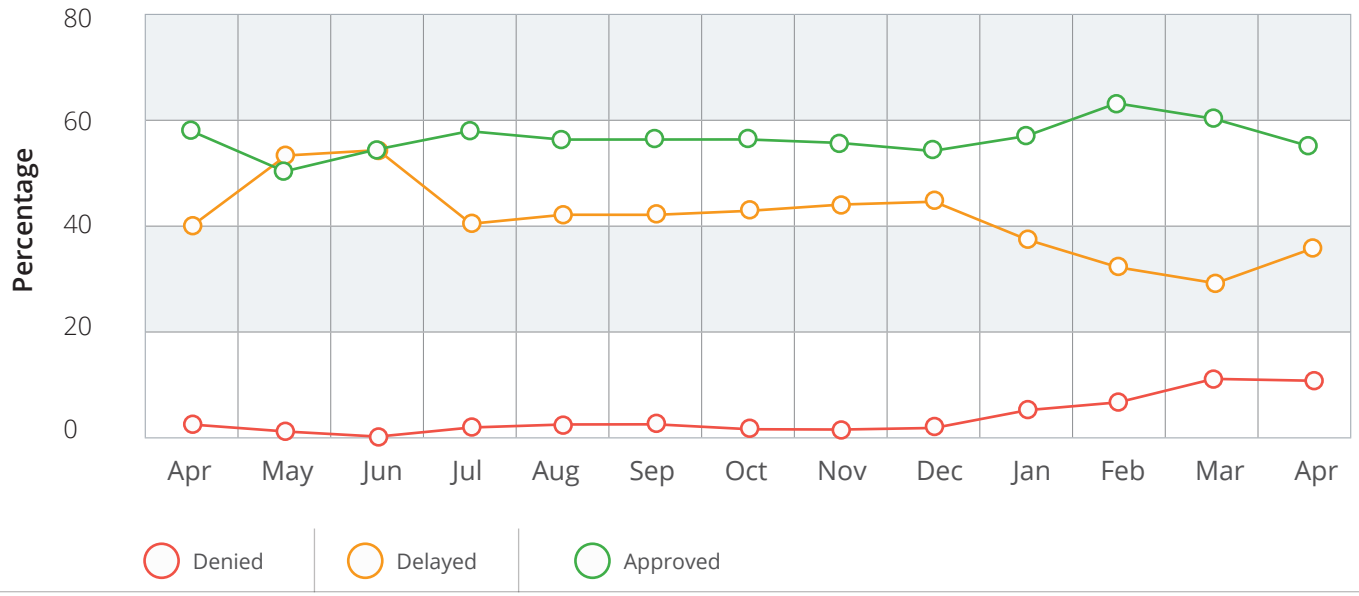
2,037
patients applications
to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to access health care

53%
approved

11%
denied

36%
delayed

Chart 2 Israeli responses to Gaza patient permit applications, April 2017- April 2018



Denied care: 215 patient applications (117 male; 98 female), or 11% of the total, were denied permission to cross Erez for health care in April, consistent with the denial rate for March (11%) and an increase from the denial rate for January and February (7%) and 2017 (3%). Those denied included 14 children under the age of 18 years and 12 patients aged 60 years or older. A fifth (19%) of those denied had appointments for orthopaedics, significantly higher than the overall rate of orthopaedic applications (7%).

Delayed care: 735 patient applications (400 male; 335 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, 147 applications were for children under the age of 18 and 85 applications were for patients aged 60 years or older. Of the 735 delayed patients, 24% had appointments for oncology treatments, 10% for cardiology, 7% for hematology, 7% for neurosurgery, and 6% for orthopaedics. About 70% of the 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

18 adult patients (14 male; 4 female) were called for security interview by the Israeli General Security Services (GSS), including a man over 60 years old. Six patients had been referred for cancer treatment or investigation. One of the 18 applications was approved during the month.

18

patients called for security interrogation

17 not approved

Patient companions:

In April, there were 2,350 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 April, 984 (42%) patient companion applications were approved, 318 applications (14%) were denied and 1,048 (45%) 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.

2,350

patient companion applications

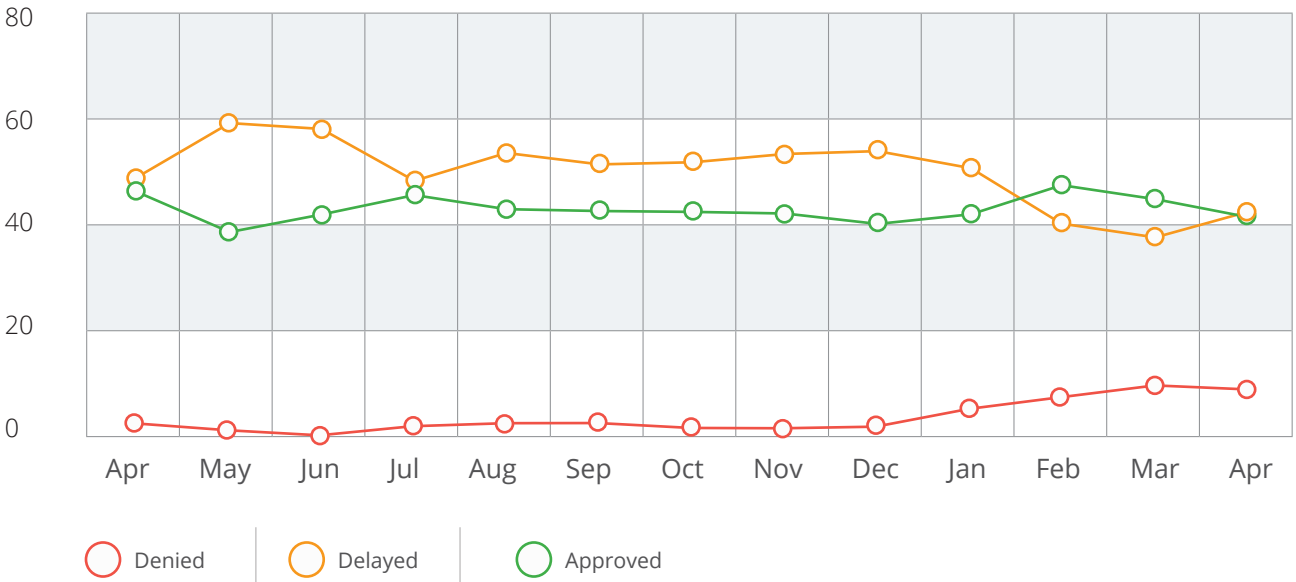
to Israeli authorities to cross Erez to accompany patients

42% approved

14 % denied

45% delayed

Chart 3 **Israeli responses to Gaza patient companion applications, Apr 2017- Apr 2018**



Patients and companions crossing Erez:

The Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that 967 Gaza patients and 884 companions crossed Erez in April to access hospitals outside the Gaza Strip. 79 patients were transferred by back-to-back ambulances, with 76 companions. During the month, Erez crossing was open for 26 days for daytime working hours and closed on four days (four Saturdays).

967

patients

crossed Erez for health

884

patient companions

crossed Erez

Rafah crossing – Egypt



The Rafah border terminal was open in both directions for 6 days in April. According to the terminal authority, 3,722 travelers crossed towards Egypt, among them 120 patients with 125 companions. Two patients were injured during the Great March of Return; and additional numbers of those injured have crossed Rafah during May. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah during the month.

The West Bank

In April, there were 16,020 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 16,020 applications, 13,118 (82%) were approved, 2,350 (15%) were unsuccessful and 552 (3%) were pending any reply at the time of monthly reporting.

16,020
patient and companion applications
to Israeli authorities to access health care in East Jerusalem and Israel

82% approved

15% denied

3% pending
at the time of monthly reporting

In Focus

Patients injured in the Great March of Return face increased barriers to access

Erez crossing: Since the beginning of the Great March of Return in 30th March until 20th April 2018, 40 patients injured during demonstrations submitted applications to exit Gaza to Israeli authorities. Of the 40 patients, 13 (32.5%) were approved, 21 (52.5%) were denied and 6 (15%) were pending. The approval rate for patients injured in demonstrations (32.5%) is significantly lower than the overall approval rate for the first quarter of 2018 (60%). Similarly, the rate of denial for those injured in demonstrations (52.5%) is significantly higher than the overall rate of denial for the first quarter (8%).

7 applications were for children under the age of 18 years. 39 applications were for male patients and one application was for a female patient. The largest single reason for the referral of injured patients was vascular surgery for those who suffered severe vascular injuries (19). Other patients required general surgery intensive care treatment, orthopaedic surgery and neurosurgery, see Table 1.

Table 1: Reasons for referral out of Gaza of those injured during demonstrations for the Great March of Return

Reason for referral	Number of patients
Vascular surgery for severe vascular injury	19
General surgery	8
Intensive care treatment (including those referred for intensive care treatment and surgery)	6
Orthopaedic surgery	5
Neurosurgery	2

Out of the 40, 30 (75%) had initial appointments at hospitals in the West Bank and 10 (25%) had initial appointments in East Jerusalem. Two of the referred patients died: one after referral out of Gaza and one in Gaza after being denied a permit to exit. 11 of the referred patients had amputations, 8 of whom denied access and 3 of whom were approved.

Prior to 15th April 2018, none of those injured in the Great March of Return had been granted permits to cross Erez for health care. Al Mezan Center for Human Rights and Adalah launched a successful appeal for these patients to the Israeli Supreme Court. The first injured patient to exit Gaza was journalist Ahmed Abu Hassin, a 24-year-old journalist shot in the abdomen on 13th April while taking footage of the demonstrations in North Gaza. He sustained multiple internal injuries and was in a critical condition when he was transferred by ambulance to Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah, crossing Erez at 11:40pm. He was subsequently transferred to Tel-Hashomer Hospital in Israel, where he died on 24th April.

Rafah crossing: As of 26th May, 19 injured patients tried to cross Rafah terminal for treatment in Egypt: 9 were permitted to cross and 10 were returned to Gaza.

Evacuation to Jordan: As of 23rd May, Jordan has coordinated the evacuation of 30 injured patients: 7 evacuated on 20th May and 23 evacuated on 23rd May.