

# MONTHLY REPORT

## Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

### August 2010



World Health Organization

occupied Palestinian territory

#### Summary for August 2010

- Israeli authorities denied or delayed 16.2% of the 919 applications made by patients to cross Erez in the month of August.
- While the percentage of denied patient applications to cross Erez decreased slightly when compared with July 2010, it remained high at 9.5%. Moreover, this rate is significantly higher than the 2.3% denied applications registered in the first quarter of 2010.
- The percentage of patients referred to Egypt was for the third month in a row almost double the rate for the first five months of 2010, due largely to the fact that the Rafah border crossing has been open since 31 May 2010.
- Cardiovascular diseases, oncology, ophthalmology, orthopedics and neurosurgery remain the leading causes for referral, accounting for almost half of all cases.

#### Permit applications for patient referrals through Erez

During the month of August 2010, the Israeli District Liaison Office processed 919 patient applications for permits to cross Erez (see Table 1), compared to 947 in July and 1,090 in June.

Age Group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed				Did not cross despite approval	
							Out of which called in for GSS interview					
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0 – 3	76	69	74	66	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0
4 - 18	138	90	133	87	3	1	2	2	0	0	0	0
19 – 40	115	91	51	72	37	10	27	9	11	4	0	0
41 – 60	112	100	84	87	15	11	13	2	5	0	0	0
Over 60	71	57	65	51	5	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>919</b>		<b>770</b>		<b>87</b>		<b>62</b>		<b>20</b>		<b>0</b>	

**83.8% (770) of all applications were approved – the highest rate since the beginning of 2008.** For the second month in a row, more than four out of five patients had their permit requests approved in time to make their hospital appointment, a rate which is significantly higher than the average for 2009 (68.3%).

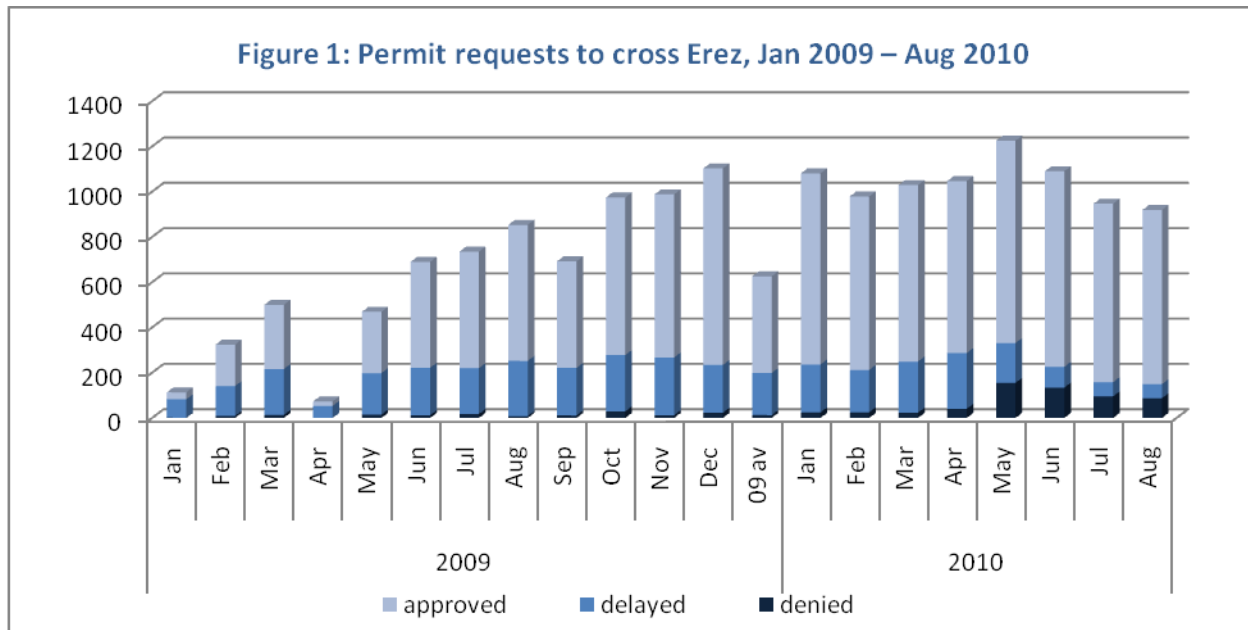
At the same time, **87 permit requests were denied i.e. a total of 9.5%.** This is slightly lower than the rate for July (10.0%) but still represents a major increase in comparison to the first quarter of 2010 (2.3%) or the year

2009 (2.0%) (see Figure 1). Four children aged four to eighteen were amongst those who had their permit applications denied.

**62 patients (6.7%), including 9 children, were delayed** i.e. they did not receive an answer to their permit request from the Israeli authorities in time to attend their hospital appointment. Nevertheless, for the third month in a row, this delayed patient rate is less than 10%, which is substantially lower than the 29.7% registered for the year 2009 as a whole.

Out of the 62 patients whose application was delayed, 20 were called for an interview with the Israeli Intelligence Services, known as the General Security Services (GSS). This equals 2.2% of all applications, compared to 3.3% in July and 5.6% in June. 11 patients could not or chose not to attend the interview with GSS, 4 were asked to submit new applications and 5 were given permission to cross after the interview.

**58% of these delayed patients had to wait more than a week** past their original hospital appointment for their application to cross Erez to be approved. They were subsequently obliged to seek new appointments and to resubmit their permit applications. Delays can be critical for patients in need of urgent medical treatment. Since the beginning of 2009, 32 patients have died before being able to access the hospital they had been referred to.



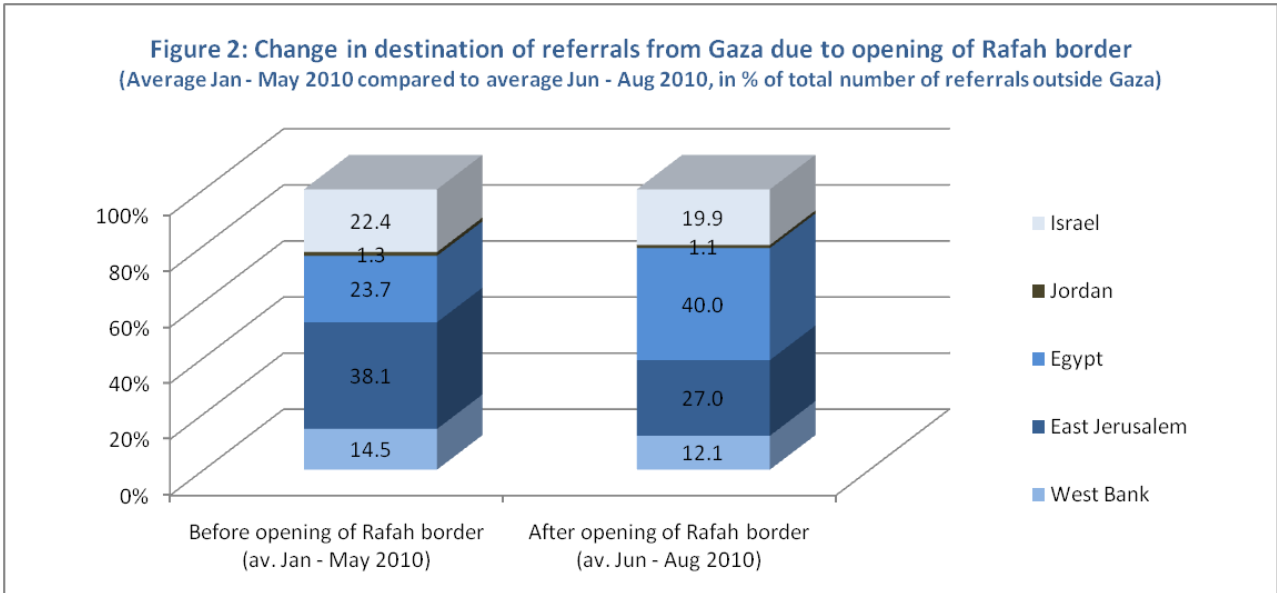
### Destinations and reasons for referral

The Referral Abroad Department (RAD) of the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) decides on patient referrals based on a person’s medical needs and the availability of care. By issuing a referral document to a patient the MoH gives its assurance that it will cover the cost of the treatment. In the month of August 2010, RAD approved and issued 1,393 referral documents, a figure similar to the preceding two months.

In 285 cases, patients were able to obtain the necessary treatment in the Gaza Strip, at either a NGO-run or private hospital. **For the remaining 1,108 patients the needed medical care was only available outside Gaza.** These patients were referred to Egypt (35.0%), East Jerusalem (29.2%), Israel (23.2%), the West Bank (11.6%) and Jordan (1.0%).

Since Egypt opened the Rafah border crossing on 31 May 2010, **the number of patients referred to Egypt has risen almost twofold.** Whereas in the first five months of the year 23.7% of patients were referred to Egypt, this

average has reached 40% in the months June-August (see Figure 2). Many patients express the wish to be referred to Egypt in order to avoid the denials and delays that are frequent when requests are made to the Israeli authorities for permits to cross Erez to reach hospitals in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Israel.



In August 2010, **the main reasons for referrals** were cardiovascular diseases (11.9%), oncology (10.2%), ophthalmology (10.9%), orthopedics (9.4%) and neurosurgery (5.8%)<sup>1</sup>. These health conditions account for approximately half of all referral cases over the last four months.

**Erez and Rafah crossing data for August 2010<sup>2</sup>**

According to the Palestinian Liaison Officer at Erez, 729 patients crossed Erez during August 2010, including 43 patients using back-to-back ambulances. This compares to 737 patients, including 45 with back-to-back ambulances in July.

The Rafah crossing at the border with Egypt was open throughout this month. An estimated 500 patients crossed - some of them at their own expense - to access Egyptian hospitals.

**Further information**

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<sup>1</sup> These figures include referrals to NGO and private hospitals inside Gaza because for technical reasons it is not currently possible to provide a separate breakdown for patients who have to leave the Gaza Strip.  
<sup>2</sup> The discrepancy between the number of permits approved (770 for August 2010) and the number of patients who crossed in this same month (729), is due to the fact that patients who have their permit approved at the end of one month might only cross the following month.

## Annex 1: Historic data

District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez (total number and % per decision for given period)					
Period	Total	Approved	Denied	Delayed	
					Out of which called in for GSS interview <sup>3</sup>
Jan 2010	1081	845 78.2%	24 2.2%	212 19.6%	85 7.9%
Feb 2010	979	767 78.3%	25 2.6%	187 19.1%	38 3.9%
Mar 2010	1029	780 75.8%	23 2.2%	226 22.0%	30 2.9%
Apr 2010	1047	760 72.6%	40 3.8%	247 23.6%	42 4.0%
May 2010	1225	894 73.0%	155 12.7%	176 14.4%	52 4.2%
Jun 2010	1090	864 79.3%	134 12.3%	92 8.4%	61 5.6%
Jul 2010	947	789 83.3%	95 10.0%	63 6.7%	31 3.3%
Aug 2010	919	770 83.8%	87 9.5%	62 6.7%	20 2.2%
Jan-Aug 2010	<b>8317</b>	<b>6469</b> <b>77.8%</b>	<b>583</b> <b>7.0%</b>	<b>1265</b> <b>15.2%</b>	<b>359</b> <b>22.2%</b>
2009	<b>7514</b>	<b>5130</b> <b>68.3%</b>	<b>149</b> <b>2.0%</b>	<b>2235</b> <b>29.7%</b>	<b>636</b> <b>8.5%</b>

<sup>3</sup> The percentage rates for patients called for an interview with GSS are calculated from the total number of permit applications submitted.

Referrals out of Gaza by geographic location (total numbers and % per destination for given period)					
Period	West Bank	East Jerusalem	Egypt	Jordan	Israel
Jan 2010	125	327	172	11	189
	15.2%	39.7%	20.9%	1.3%	22.9%
Feb 2010	148	327	167	21	168
	17.8%	39.4%	20.1%	2.5%	20.2%
Mar 2010	87	364	204	10	205
	10.0%	41.8%	23.4%	1.1%	23.6%
Apr 2010	97	299	280	7	183
	11.2%	34.5%	32.3%	0.8%	21.1%
May 2010	176	342	209	9	230
	18.2%	35.4%	21.6%	0.9%	23.8%
Jun 2010	125	301	443	10	186
	11.7%	28.3%	41.6%	0.9%	17.5%
Jul 2010	140	253	470	14	203
	13.0%	23.4%	43.5%	1.3%	18.8%
Aug 2010	129	323	388	11	257
	11.6%	29.2%	35.0%	1.0%	23.2%
Jan - Aug 2010	<b>1027</b>	<b>2536</b>	<b>2333</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>1621</b>
	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>30.7%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>
2009	<b>1327</b>	<b>2453</b>	<b>3203</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>1158</b>
	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>28.8%</b>	<b>37.7%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>