

Crimes against Humanity in Gaza: Israeli Policies at Erez Crossing

Bureaucratic Cat and Mouse

By [Physicians for Human Rights](#)

Global Research, December 22, 2007

22 December 2007

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Over the past few weeks, Israeli authorities have changed their tactics regarding medical exit permits for Gaza patients: Instead of issuing a permit or a rejection on “security grounds,” responses are delayed for weeks and defined as “pending.” Since appeals can only be filed after a formal rejection has been issued, the significance of this tactic is denial of the possibility of appeal.

1. Eighteen urgent new medical cases are currently handled at our offices. The majority of these have waited for weeks without receiving any response – negative or positive – from the Israeli authorities. Since appeals can only be filed after a formal rejection has been issued, the significance of this tactic is denial of the possibility of appeal (see list of patients below).
2. Large, unknown numbers of patients are not accessing care, due to delays in processing permits, lack of transparency in the process, rejections on security grounds, and last-minute interrogations. Palestinian MoH estimates over 800 patients whose cases are still pending.
3. Access-related deaths are increasing. On the 9th of December alone, according to Palestinian MoH data, three patients died in connection with denial of access to care.
4. Coercion/blackmail of patients by GSS (Israeli secret service, ‘shabac’) continues: Interrogations are increasingly employed against patients on a routine basis, and patients are required to inform on others before being permitted to access care.
5. Passage to Egypt has been initiated but is inadequate.

Bureaucratic obstacles

Over the past few weeks, Israeli authorities have changed their tactics regarding medical exit permits for Gaza patients: Instead of issuing a permit or a rejection on “security grounds,” responses are delayed for weeks and defined as “pending.” Since appeals can only be filed after a formal rejection has been issued, the significance of this tactic is denial of the possibility of appeal.

According to Palestinian Ministry of Health data, by the end of October over 200 cases were “pending” and by the end of November over 300 cases were “pending.” Palestinian MoH

estimates over 800 patients whose cases are still pending.

PHR-Israel is of the opinion that this tactic, as well as recent attempts by the Israeli authorities to block the access of human rights organizations to the names of rejected patients, are a response to recent media exposure and legal scrutiny of serious life-threatening cases whose access to care was denied. Rather than changing its policy, the military is now attempting to veil it by blocking access to information.

GSS policies

Since late November, permits “pending interrogation” have become more frequent. This means patients must undergo interrogation before receiving a response to their request. Interrogations are often held close to or even after the date of the scheduled medical appointment, leading to disruption of care and repeated re-scheduling of appointments.

Before interrogation, patients often wait for many hours at the Crossing, and are sometimes turned back without interrogation and are obliged to reschedule with the GSS.

During interrogation they are requested to provide information, not only about themselves but also about members of their families, neighbors and acquaintances. Some are asked to act as informers on a regular basis. Since PHR-Israel’s intervention in court, threats that non-compliance will lead to denial of care are more veiled. However, non-compliance invariably leads to a negative response and rejection of permission to exit Gaza.

After interrogation, patients are requested to return home and to wait for an answer. Since December, patients are requested to file new requests after interrogation, and to start the process from the beginning, often leading to multiple interrogations.

Intimidation by GSS: One of the patients represented by PHR-Israel was interrogated after High Court petitions had secured his permission to exit. At the interrogation he was threatened by GSS officers and warned not to apply to external bodies and to the courts, with the implication that such actions would lead to denial of a permit.

Passage to Egypt

In December, following several High Court petitions, an arrangement was reached with the Egyptians to let out specific patients via Erez and Nitsana Crossings. However, patients were informed on the day of exit itself, 3.12.07, so that they had no time to reschedule appointments in Egyptian hospitals, to file for a passport, or to collect money for the journey. The crossing was closed on the afternoon of the next day. It was re-opened on 11-12.12.07, with no prior notification, and this time dozens of patients who arrived were turned back at the last minute: The Israelis claimed that the Egyptians denied their entry, but the patients claimed Israeli soldiers told them they were denied passage by the Israeli GSS. Currently the Israeli authorities say the passage will be opened again, but cannot say when or for how long.

PHR-Israel is re-opening legal action:

- Demanding exit permits for the 18 new cases.
- Demanding that Israeli authorities stop the new tactic of non-response
- Demanding the right of appeal and transparency in the bureaucratic process: patients

must receive answers in writing within a reasonable period of time, and information on number of patients denied access should be available.

- Demanding that the GSS stop its routine use of patients and their intimidation for the collection of intelligence.
- Repeating its demand for a policy ensuring access of patients to medical care outside Gaza.

Additionally, PHR-Israel has not closed its previous court petition, in which it challenges the practice of deliberate withholding of medical care by GSS as a form of coercion against patients, to compel them to act as informers. A third hearing on this petition is pending.

PHR-Israel repeats its minimum demands

- That the State of Israel ensure access of all patients who need care unavailable in Gaza to external medical centers in Israel, West Bank, Jordan or any other country, as a matter of policy
- That the GSS immediately stop coercing patients at the crossing. According to the British Medical Association and others this may constitute cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment as defined under the UN Convention Against Torture and related instruments.

Patients waiting for exit from Gaza:

	Gender	Age	Condition	Referred to	appointments missed
1	m	18	Brain tumor	Nablus, WB	29.11
2	m	36	Pancreas cancer	Tel Aviv	since 3.12
3	m	64	Lung cancer	East Jerusalem	2.12
4	m	50	Eye cancer	Jerusalem	2.12
5	m	28	Liver tumor	Jerusalem	26.11
6	f	37	Lymphoma	Nablus, WB	since 21.11
7	m	52	Bone cancer	East Jerusalem	5.12
8	m	26	Eye tumor	East Jerusalem	30.10, 14.11, 17.12
9	f	28	Thyroid cancer	Egypt	6.12
10	m	54	Heart: bypass surgery	Nablus, WB	since 1.10
11	m	2	Congenital heart disease	Holon, Israel	since 11.9
12	f	25	Infection in both kidneys	Ramallah, WB	since 5.12
13	f	2	Congenital adrenal hyperplasia w.history of meningitis	Tel Aviv	21.11, 5.12, 12.12
14	m	20	Rapid weight loss and in digestive system	suspicion of cancer Tel Aviv	since 24.10
15	m	47	Infection of tissues in spinal cord	East Jerusalem	since 25.11
16	m	28	Eye bleed	Jordan	6.12
17	m	48	Vascular complications	Jordan	9.12
18	m	31	Giant hernia	Jordan	since 11.11

The original source of this article is Global Research

Copyright © [Physicians for Human Rights](#), Global Research, 2007

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Physicians for Human Rights](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca