

# HEALTHCARE DENIED: THE IMPACT OF CHECKPOINTS ON AMBULANCE ACCESS

**MAP**  
MEDICAL AID FOR PALESTINIANS



PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
דוכאים אטבים  
לדכיות אדם לחقوق الإنسان  
ISRAELI HUMAN RIGHTS

ACCORDING TO THE PALESTINE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY (PRCS), SINCE THE 3RD OCTOBER 2015 ISRAELI SECURITY FORCES AND SETTLERS HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR:

**386**



ATTACKS AGAINST PRCS TEAMS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY.

**158**



INJURIES TO MEDICS AND VOLUNTEERS.

**105**



AMBULANCES DAMAGED.

**123**



INCIDENTS OF MEDICAL ACCESS DENIED.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) records the timings of ambulance transfers and any incidents which may occur on a central database in order to track the work of their staff and identify issues to be raised with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The statistics and cases outlined below demonstrate the issues faced by PRCS teams on a daily basis. They highlight the negative impact of checkpoints and, in particular, back-to-back ambulance transfers on journeys and, most importantly, on patient health.

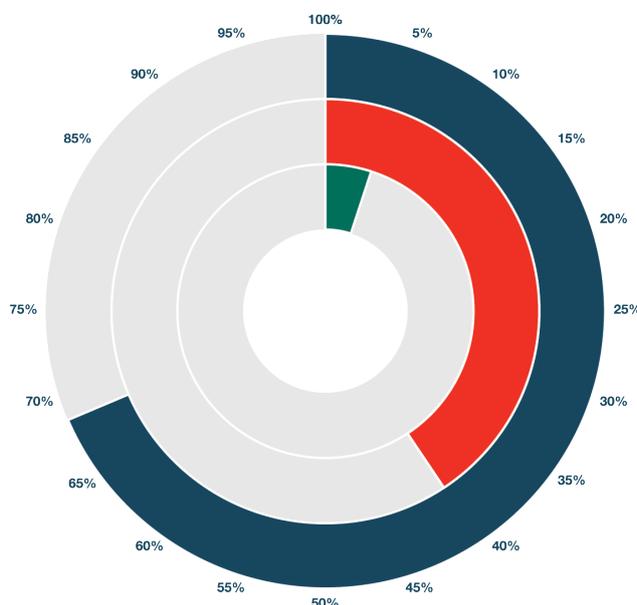
## BACK-TO-BACK TRANSFERS

In order to have access to appropriate medical care it is sometimes necessary for emergency and non-emergency patients to be transferred from the West Bank to hospitals in Jerusalem. In the process of this transfer, any patient passing through a checkpoint into East Jerusalem in a Palestinian ambulance must be transferred from the Palestinian registered ambulance to an Israeli registered ambulance. This process causes delays, which can lead to transfers through a checkpoint taking sometimes five times longer, causing significant discomfort and medical risk for the patient as they are walked or wheeled between ambulances in sometimes critical condition. It is essential for the well-being and right to health of Palestinians that ambulances are given free access to hospitals.

## IMPACT OF BACK-TO-BACK TRANSFERS AT CHECKPOINTS: PERCENTAGE OF CASES DELAYED FOR OVER 15 MINUTES



THE AVERAGE DELAY IN BACK-TO-BACK EMERGENCY TRANSFERS IS 27 MINUTES



**68%**

BACK-TO-BACK NON-EMERGENCIES

**41%**

BACK-TO-BACK TRANSFER EMERGENCIES

**5%**

DIRECT TRANSFER EMERGENCIES



## PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON AMBULANCE PERSONNEL

Ramallah, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015

"We received a dispatch at 17.30 that someone had been shot in the leg with live ammunition in Jabal Taweel, in Ramallah. After we picked up the patient and were about to leave to the hospital, six soldiers approached us and started shooting live ammunition right in front of the ambulance, shouting in Hebrew which I don't understand. I stopped the ambulance because they aimed right at me. One soldier took the key out of the engine and kept it, while the rest went to the back of the ambulance. When I tried to see what they were doing they hit me and trapped my leg in the door. The soldiers forced the patient out of the ambulance, refused to let my colleagues provide first aid and assaulted the patient. They then put him in a military car and took him to Pesgot settlement."

"In 13 years as a medic I have never seen this. I went back to work the next day and was on stand-by near Qalandia checkpoint. The situation was calm. Out of nowhere a soldier started shooting directly at our vehicle. What scares me most is that first they shot next to the ambulance, the next day directly at the ambulance. We feel we are only one step away from being shot ourselves."



## ACCESS DELAYS AND HARASSMENT OF PERSONNEL

Jerusalem, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2015

"We received an urgent call from Abu Dis town, which is just on the other side of the separation wall from Jerusalem. A woman was in labour and was suffering from vaginal bleeding. Having picked her up we made our way to Jerusalem, when Israeli soldiers at Zayyim checkpoint stopped us for questioning and to check our permits. I was asked to step out of the ambulance and four soldiers took me to a separate room. They asked me to undress and at first I refused, but then one soldier pulled out a gun and said 'I could shoot you right now and nobody would care'. Afterwards I was led back to the ambulance and the soldiers opened the back where the patient was in distress, accompanied by her sister. The soldiers emptied the sister's purse on the floor. We pleaded that they should let us go as by then we were already delayed 40 minutes. As we left another soldier said, 'I will remember your name. If you go to the ICRC, I will kill you next time I see you.'

"I moved from Tel Aviv to work for PRCS Jerusalem and suddenly I am considered a terrorist. There is no international protection for us."



## DENIAL OF ACCESS TO PATIENTS

Hebron, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2015

A PRCS team received a call that a man in the Tel Rumeidah area, Hashem Azze, was suffering from acute chest pain. On approaching the area the team was refused entry and was asked to go to another entrance in order to pick up the patient. In the meantime the family, unable to wait any longer for the ambulance, took him to the hospital in their car, after walking him to a nearby checkpoint where clashes were ongoing. Hashem passed away in the hospital later. An investigation by a coroner later ruled that Hashem had died from excessive tear gas inhalation during clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in Hebron.



**AMBULANCE SERVICES AND PATIENTS MUST BE PERMITTED TO MOVE FREELY AND TO ACCESS APPROPRIATE MEDICAL CARE WITHOUT OBSTRUCTION. THE PROCESS OF BACK-TO-BACK TRANSFERS, AND ALL HARASSMENT AND ATTACKS ON MEDICAL PERSONAL MUST END.**



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