Palestine – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #39
Reporting period: 23/07/2024 to 29/07/2024

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated on 31 October 2023 in response to the conflict crisis in Gaza. Situation Reports are published weekly.

Highlights

- On 27 July, the ETC shared an assessment report of three sites in Gaza City highlighting the security communications system (SCS) gaps and the way forward with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

- On 24 July, four solar-powered solution kits were successfully delivered to Gaza. OCHA facilitated the delivery along with OCHA's Special United Nations Official (SUNO) mission. One of the four solar kits was handed over to UNDSS to provide an uninterrupted power supply to the Gaza Security Operations Centre (SOC), ensuring 24/7 operations.

The ETC coordinator joined the inter-agency security assessment to identify a joint operating base for humanitarian organizations in Gaza City. Photo: UNRWA

- The Area Security Management Team (ASMT) finalized the Gaza Security Risk Management (SRM) process with a mandatory recommendation to use a satellite-based staff tracking device to monitor staff during their missions in Gaza.

Situation overview

Intensified hostilities, access constraints, fuel shortages, and the breakdown of law and order continue to create a highly volatile and risky operating environment for aid workers, further disrupting the delivery of life-saving assistance across the Gaza Strip and forcing humanitarians to limit their activities.

On 22 July, the evacuation orders by the Israeli military forced thousands of Palestinians residing in eastern and central Khan Yunis to move westwards. The initial report indicates that the affected population are moving towards Deir Al Balah and western Khan Yunis areas, which are heavily overcrowded with limited basic services and can barely accommodate an additional influx of displaced people.

Telecommunications Overview

Voice services provided by Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)—Jawwal and Ooredoo—are operational at limited capacity due to limited fuel allocation, lack of safe access and spare parts to refuel and repair their infrastructure. Recently, the cellular coverage of MNO Jawwal has slightly improved from 37% to 42% in Gaza City and north Gaza. Both MNOs do not offer internet connectivity, as was the

condition before the onset of hostilities in October 2023. Iridium and Thuraya satellite phone voice services are operational across the Gaza Strip.

Internet Service Provider (ISP)—Paltel—continues to provide limited internet services in parts of Rafah, Deir Al Balah, Jabalia, and Gaza City amid the destruction of critical telecommunications infrastructure and a lack of fuel, safe access, and spare parts.

ETC Activities

Coordination

On 27 July, the ETC shared an assessment report highlighting the security communications system (SCS) gaps and the way forward with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and OCHA. The inter-agency security assessment was conducted at three sites in Gaza City to identify a joint operating base for humanitarian organizations in Gaza City on 21 July.

On 24 July, four solar-powered solution kits were successfully delivered to Gaza. The OCHA facilitated the delivery along with the OCHA's SUNO mission. These kits, which had received the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) approval, had been awaiting transportation clearance and logistical arrangements in Jerusalem since 14 May.

Internet connectivity

The local ISP—Paltel—faces multiple challenges, including reduced staff, lack of fuel and spare parts, and safe access to repair and maintain the remaining network services. The ISP is unable to meet the high demands of the humanitarian agencies in providing new or strengthening connectivity services at their offices and guesthouses in Deir Al Balah.

On 25 July, the ISP highlighted their concerns about the challenges in accessing the North to transport fuel needed to keep critical telecommunications infrastructure operational. This could lead to a complete shutdown of services in a matter of days. The ETC engaged with the deputy humanitarian coordinator (DHC) to facilitate the fuel supply to sustain the services. On 27 July, it was confirmed that the authorities allowed them to transport the fuel.

Security communications

On 27 July, one of the four solar-powered solution kits was handed over to UNDSS to provide uninterrupted power supply to the Gaza Security Operations Centre (SOC), ensuring 24/7 operations. The four solar kits were imported to Gaza on 24 July.

The ASMT finalized the Gaza SRM process with a mandatory recommendation to use a satellite-based staff tracking device to monitor staff during their missions in Gaza. UNDSS is contacting the UN agency's security focal persons to seek the details of the existing devices and incorporate them into one platform.

Staffing

There are currently three dedicated ETC staff engaged in the response:

- The ETC coordinator has been in Deir Al Balah since 11 July to coordinate ETC activities and provide technical support to partners and agencies operating in Gaza.

- The ETC field coordinator is on a short break and scheduled to return to Gaza on 08 August. The field coordinator has been in Deir Al Balah from 06 June until 23 July to strengthen face-to-face engagements and support partners with technical advice and guidance.

- A dedicated ETC Information Management Officer (IMO) continues to support the mission while based in Cairo.

Dashboard

See the **ETC Dashboard** for an overview of planned and operational services.

Infographic

See the **ETC Infographic** for an overview of activities data, information, and location of planned and operational services.

Factsheet

See the **ETC Factsheet** for further information and funding requirements.

Funding

The ETC requires a total of US$1.8 million requested in the revised occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) Flash Appeal to address urgent and critical lifesaving efforts in Gaza until 31 December 2024.

On 13 May 2024, the ETC received US$415,000 from the Government of Poland to set up common ICT services. A further US$158,228 from the US Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) was received on 21 May 2024 to support the maritime logistics project with communications services.

Currently, the ETC is 31.8% funded out of the US$1.8 million requested in the revised Flash Appeal to undertake cluster activities and address the immediate communications needs in Gaza.

Challenges

Lack of fuel: The lack of fuel continues to severely compromise the operation of critical telecommunications infrastructure, causing MNOs and ISPs to operate at a limited capacity and pushing them to the verge of shutting down their services completely. The Gaza Strip continues to be under an electricity blackout since October 2023. The situation has severely disrupted humanitarian aid operations and communication with humanitarian responders on the ground.

Safety of staff: The safety of humanitarian aid workers in Gaza is a primary concern and priority. Due to insecurity and a lack of safe access, the deployment of shared ETC communications services and face-to-face technical support to other humanitarian responders remains a challenge.

Limited telecommunications services: Due to the prevailing escalated hostilities, the local MNOs and ISPs are experiencing network outages due to damaged infrastructure, a lack of fuel, cash liquidity and spare parts, and insecure conditions for carrying out repairs. The current conditions make it difficult to maintain the remaining functional network.

Lack of telecommunications equipment: The availability of telecommunications equipment on the ground is severely restricted, and much has been damaged or destroyed. Further, the importation of telecommunications equipment into Gaza is restricted and prolonged. Only 20 satellite phones, 33

Track24 devices, 30 digital VHF radios, four VHF repeaters and four solar power solutions have been approved for importation into Gaza by COGAT since 07 October 2023.

Internet connectivity: The lack of internet connectivity in Deir Al Balah is hampering the reactivation of the SCS network. The SCS network is unavailable across the rest of Gaza due to damaged equipment and restrictions on SCS equipment importation.

Funding: Insufficient funding has limited the ETC in addressing the immediate life-saving communications needs of humanitarian responders in Gaza. The ETC continues to appeal for funding from varied potential donors.

Cybersecurity continues to be a pressing issue. Caution should be applied when using technology platforms, including social media and press platforms.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Teleconference with partners on the response in Gaza will be held on **Tuesday 06 August 2024 at 11:00 UTC**.

The previous Global ETC Teleconference was held on 24 July 2024. All minutes are uploaded **here**.

Contacts

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Further information related to the ETC operation can be found on the website:

www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict

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