

## Palestine – Conflict

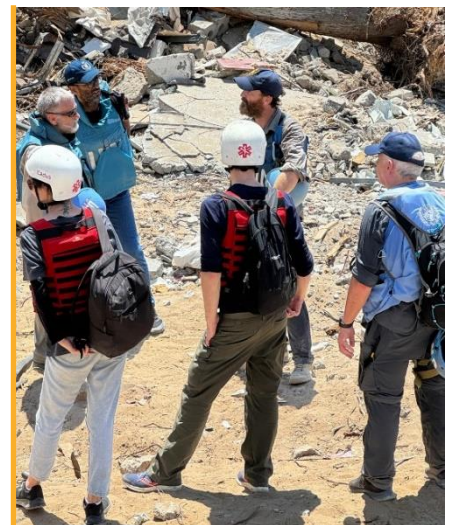
### ETC Situation Report #40

Reporting period: 30/07/2024 to 05/08/2024

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 04 August, the ETC coordinator met with the security and IT focal points of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), and World Food Programme (WFP) in Deir Al Balah to discuss the status of the Security Communications Systems (SCS), rollout and use of satellite-based Track24 devices, including challenges in procuring telecommunications and Information Technology (IT) devices in Gaza.
- On 01 August, the ETC coordinator met with the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) representatives to follow up on the approval of pending telecommunications and IT equipment for use by humanitarian operations in Gaza.
- On 31 July, the ETC participated in an online meeting with the representatives from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the Quartet, the Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology (MTIT), and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) (Jawwal and Ooredoo), and Internet Service Provider (ISP) (Paltel) to discuss the template for inputs from the partners and telecommunications and internet service providers on the connectivity status, challenges, and bi-weekly plan to strengthen services in Gaza.



The ETC coordinator joined the inter-agency security assessment in Gaza City. Photo: UNRWA

## 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 compelling humanitarians to limit their activities. The existing volatile situation in Gaza has severely limited humanitarian operations and forced food distribution points to close and evacuate.

## Telecommunications Overview

Voice services provided by 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. 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.

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. Internet service coverage is the highest in Deir Al Balah and the lowest in Rafah and North Gaza.

## ETC Activities

### Coordination

On 04 August, the ETC coordinator met with the security and IT focal points of UNRWA, UNDSS, and WFP in Deir Al Balah to discuss the status of the SCS, the rollout and use of satellite-based Track24 devices, including challenges in procuring telecommunications and IT devices in Gaza. The meeting also discussed collaborative efforts to provide common services, including ICT support for humanitarian at key operational areas in Gaza. The team deliberated on setting up internet connectivity at the critical locations in Gaza and the resources required amid persisting challenges.

On 01 August, the ETC coordinator met with COGAT representatives to follow up on the approval of pending telecommunications and IT equipment for inter-agency operations in Gaza. During the meeting, COGAT mentioned that the denied requests can be re-submitted with additional details for review.

On 31 July, the ETC team joined an online meeting with the representatives from OCHA, Office of the Quartet, MTIT, MNOs (Jawwal and Ooredoo), and ISP (Paltel) to discuss the template for inputs from the partners as well as telecommunications and internet service providers on the connectivity status, challenges, and bi-weekly plan to strengthen services in Gaza. The one-pager will be led and shared by MTIT with humanitarian organizations and relevant stakeholders to inform them about the connectivity status across Gaza.

### 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.

To address the urgent need for internet connectivity for humanitarian responders and the affected communities to access services, the ETC is engaging with the local ISP to prioritize strengthening internet connectivity services in Deir Al Balah. The ETC is liaising with agencies and partners for technical advice and assessments and is coordinating with the ISP to establish connectivity services at their new offices and guesthouses in Deir Al Balah.

### Security communications

The ETC is procuring telecommunications and IT equipment, including Very High Frequency (VHF) radios and solar-powered solutions, from a local vendor in Ramallah. The vendor has initiated the equipment delivery to the WFP and UNDSS offices in Jerusalem. Upon securing approval from COGAT, the equipment will be transported into Gaza to support the capacity strengthening of the Gaza Security Operations Centre (SOC) and setting up three repeater sites in Gaza.

The ETC has initiated the procurement of a satellite-based tracking device—Track24—for 12 UN agencies to track missions in Gaza. The COGAT approval has been received for 67 devices, and the

team is following up on approval for the remaining 31 devices. The Gaza SOC will primarily monitor the staff and mission movements in Gaza. The enhanced tracking measures will increase the coordination of scheduled authorised movements with the Israeli authorities to enhance staff safety and security.

### 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 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. The Gaza Strip has been under an electricity blackout since October 2023, which has severely disrupted humanitarian aid operations and communication with humanitarian responders in Gaza.

**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, deploying shared ETC communications services and face-to-face technical support to other humanitarian responders remains challenging.

**Limited telecommunications services:** Due to escalated hostilities, the local MNOs and ISPs are experiencing network outages due to damaged infrastructure and lack of fuel, spare parts, and safe access for repairs. The current conditions make it challenging to maintain the remaining functional network.

**Lack of telecommunications equipment:** The importation of telecommunications equipment into Gaza is restricted and prolonged. Since 07 October 2023, approval has been received for importing 20 satellite phones, 67 Track24 devices, 30 digital VHF radios, four VHF repeaters, and four solar power solutions.

**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 to address humanitarian responders' immediate life-saving telecommunications needs 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](http://www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict)

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