

Palestine, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #01

Date: 29/10/2023 Time: 12:00 UTC

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

www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact:

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Attendance

Chair (ETC)

Cisco
Ericsson Response
Government of Luxembourg

GSMA
FAO

ICRC
IOM

Innovation Mapping
ITU

Logistic Cluster
SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND
UNDP

UNESCO

UNDSS
UNFPA

UNHCR

UNICEF

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Marta Dabbas

UNOCHA
UNOPS

UNRWA
UNWOMEN

US Department of State
Global ETC

WFP

WHO

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Agenda

1. Situation update
2. Global ETC update
3. Partner updates
4. AOB

Minutes

1. Situation update

- The conflict in Gaza have resulted in widespread damage to critical infrastructure, significantly disrupting communication networks and thereby impeding life-saving operations. The situation is exacerbated by severe fuel shortages.
- Only 2G is enabled in Gaza. The mobile and internet services of the main providers—Jawwal, Ooredoo, and Paltel—were cut off in Gaza on 27 October resulting in complete communications blackout. Services returned on 29 October.
- According to the Paltel Group, 83 percent of fixed line users, 54 percent of fixed line sites, and 50 percent of primary fiber-optic internet lines are currently non-operational due to infrastructure damage and fuel shortages.
- The conflict has resulted in cuts in two out of three international fibre cables going out of Gaza, one of which was repaired after the Israeli authorities granted the company a two-hour window for staff to fix one fibre cable.

2. Global ETC update

- Since the beginning of the conflict, WFP (as the Global ETC lead) has been engaged in coordinating ICT efforts with local and international partners, including telecommunications companies and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs).
- A WFP TEC Concept of Operations (ConOps) has been developed to propose multiple scenarios to provide inter-agency ICT services to support the response in Gaza over a period of three months. These scenarios include a base level scenario in which ICT infrastructure is rebuilt; support to humanitarian bases located outside Gaza in neighbouring Egypt and; an armoured vehicle mobile solution.
- The ETC is seeking formal activation to coordinate with all actors and mobilize key resources in the response for Gaza. The appeal to activate the cluster has been made to the UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and is being advocated for rapid action by the WFP Palestine Country Director.
- OCHA, UNRWA, UNDSS, WFP, and Global ETC engaged with the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) on 28 October to advocate for the importation and usage of satellite communications and radio communications equipment for the use of humanitarians in Gaza, including for Starlink.
- **Multiple partner update:** Satellite solutions, such as Starlink devices, can be provided by counterparts for the response in Gaza through the normal commercial agreements. Starlink connectivity would be available in Gaza for recognized humanitarian agencies as per the agreed Terms of Reference (TORs). However, humanitarian organizations require clearance and authorization to import and use the devices in Gaza from both the Egyptian and Israeli authorities. Mutiple partners including UNICEF, WHO, and WFP have bases available to support Starlink efforts, depending on the logistical possibilities of the response. The ETC will provide oversight on the coordination of Starlink and other

satellite connectivity solutions for the response, including consolidating demand and coordination with the authorities under one approach.

- It was agreed that partners shall not consider only one provider and explore the different satellite communications solutions that can be offered. The ETC will work closely with partners on this to ensure there are no gaps or duplication of efforts.
- Security communications services are not functioning in Gaza. UNDSS implementation of a new VHF digital radio Security Communications System (SCS) in Gaza had reached 90 percent completion before the conflict broke out. The system is not operable and there is no power. One of the SCS was located on the roof of a hospital, which has now been destroyed.
- An analogue radio system with two radio repeaters is also present in Gaza but likely non-operational. UNDSS efforts to access the repeaters for assessment has so far not been possible.
- The solution to use e-SIMs via an international provider for communications on a wide scale in Gaza is not feasible; e-SIMs are only compatible with modern mobile devices which are not available to buy or register in Gaza. Also, e-SIMs only work on certain networks.

3. Partner Updates

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- ITU has received a request from WHO for satellite phones. ITU is in contact with the satellite phone provider for this, although satellite connectivity in Gaza is not guaranteed. ITU has an agreement with several satellite phone providers. The ETC and ITU will work together on agency requests for satellite phones.
- ITU is ready to activate the Disaster Connectivity Map (DCM) to track connectivity outages in Gaza.

Logistics Cluster

- The Rafah Border crossing between Egypt and Gaza is the only point open to deliver humanitarian relief items. Although 450 trucks per day are required to meet basic needs in Gaza, only 15-20 trucks of humanitarian cargo is able to cross per day.
- Items are currently limited to four life-saving categories: food, water, shelter, and medicine. Telecommunications equipment is not considered as humanitarian cargo at this point.
- All items going into Gaza need to be approved by the Egyptian Red Crescent who are the sole consignee of goods for the border crossing, as well as the Israeli authorities.
- The Kerem Shalom border crossing—the only point of entry for goods between Gaza and Israel—is currently closed and would be an extremely challenging option to import telecommunications equipment for this emergency. Even before the conflict, ICT equipment important via this route took 4-5 months.

UNRWA

- UNRWA is the largest humanitarian provider in Gaza with 13,000 staff.
- Eight out of 22 UNRWA health centres in Gaza are still active with approximately 4,000 patients as of 26 October. All the health centres require connectivity to maintain contact with the central e-health system.
- There are 640,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) sheltering in 150 UNRWA-designated emergency shelters (DES). 42 of these shelters have been damaged in the conflict.

4. AOB

- N/a

The next teleconference will be held on 02 November 2023 at 12:00 UTC

12:00 UTC
13:00 Rome
14:00 Cairo
15:00 Palestine
16:00 Dubai

Acronyms

ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GSMA	Global System for Mobile Communications
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOHCA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
VHF	Very High Frequency
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Minutes: Elizabeth Millership, Global ETC Information Management Officer.