Palestine, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #07
Date: 13/12/2023 **Time:** 13:02 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)	**Brent Carbno**
ACTED	Amelia Savell - Boss
	Manon Peron
ACF Spain	Arkaitz Mora Mendoza
	Aslam Badran
ETC Palestine	Burak Sezgin
	Hossam Metwally
Government of Luxembourg	Gilles Hoffmann
	Mike Duffin
ICRC	Alfredo Bermudez Salazar
Impact Initiatives - REACH	Raphael Bacot
IOM	Moayyed Fares
IRC	Alan Mooney
ITU	Adel Darwish
	Doris Maritza Delgado
Map-UK	Sam Wahlstrom
Medicos del Mundo (MdM) Spain	Stéphane Chartier
Medical Aid for Palestinians	Sam Wahlstrom
Meedan	Aaron Huslage
NetHope	Anja Delaquis
Office of the Quartet (Palestine)	Lour Kuttab
OXFAM	Saed Muna
Premiere Urgence	Clément Buisson
UNESCO	Aslam Badran
	Jackson Krainer
UNHCR	Massoumeh Farman Farmaian
UNICEF	Christian Larsson
	Kamal Kamaleddine

	Marc Dieng
	Marta Dabbas
UNOCHA	Mahmoud Bahaaeldein Effat Darwish
	Safaa Sabbah
UNOPS	Kristoffer Noerkjaer Randloev
	Lilian
UNRWA	Lukasz Cyra
USAID	Rakesh Bharania
Global ETC	Caroline Teyssier
	Maria Saleh
	Marie Elena Bock
	Mufaro Masuka
WFP	Amirullah Syarif
	Angel Buitrago
	Ansoumane Camara
	Aramais Alojants
	Areen Roman
	David Pickering
	Elizabeth Bourke
	Halim Yousufzai
	Ozdzan Hadziemin
	Sami Alio
WHO	Hani Dodin

Agenda

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

Minutes

1. Situation update

- On 13 December, fighting across Gaza continued, especially in the city of Rafah and Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip.

- On 13 December, 120,000 litres of fuel entered Gaza from Egypt—up from a daily average of 67,000 litres in the previous days. The increased amounts are the bare minimum needed to run critical services that include health services, water provision, sanitation infrastructure, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) shelters and telecommunications.

- Recurring telecommunications shutdown events continue to be experienced in Gaza city and northern Gaza since 03 December due to escalated hostilities and fuel shortages to

power the 217 priority Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) telecommunications towers. Humanitarian agencies and first responders have warned that telecommunications blackouts jeopardize the already constrained provision of life-saving assistance.

- Some humanitarian agencies are relying on their independent connectivity platforms for access to telecommunications services.

- Residents' access to information is impaired by recurrent interruptions in telecommunications and the lack of electricity to charge electronic devices. Electricity to charge devices is limited in certain areas that have generators and solar power solutions. Other locations are completely without power since the shutdown of Gaza's sole power plant by Israeli authorities on 11 October.

2. Global ETC update

Coordination/equipment

- The ETC is currently coordinating and engaging with 31 organizations—11 United Nations (UN) agencies, 16 NGOs, two government partners, and two private sector partners—in the Gaza conflict response.

- 11 agencies submitted equipment importation lists for Gaza. The ETC is yet to submit the partners' lists to the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) once feedback on the previously submitted list is issued.

- The ETC is ready to share the equipment importation authorization and clearance process that involves, COGAT, the Egyptian National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA) and the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC)—the sole consignee of goods into Gaza. ERC has a list of priority goods for importation into Gaza and currently, telecommunications is not on the list.

- The ETC participated at the Palestine ICT Local Working Group meeting on 11 December, with nine agencies in attendance. Discussions focused on informing the partners about the latest activities including the 20 satellite phones purchased by the ETC and deployed by UNDSS for use by UN staff in Gaza. UNDSS also shared updates on the successfully reactivated Security Communications Systems (SCS) digital repeaters in Rafah and Khan Yunis. To access the services, all UN agencies will need to provide their VHF radios to UNDSS for programming in Jerusalem as agreed and approved by COGAT.

- On 06 December—at the request of COGAT—the interagency group including the ETC submitted a revised proposal containing the consolidated description of all telecommunications equipment for importation and installation in Gaza as well how the equipment will be set up, managed, and used. On 10 December, COGAT contacted the agencies to enquire whether all telecommunications systems intended for use in Gaza can be hand carried, used on local service provider platforms, and disabled remotely. The ETC and partners submitted all the requested information to COGAT on 11 December and are now awaiting feedback.

- The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and the ETC highlighted the risk of compromising operational independence if their telecommunications platforms are remotely disabled by the authorities. The interagency group is willing to disable

platforms if they fall into the wrong hands and will seek further clarification that they will be authorized by COGAT to operate independently.

- The ETC encourages all agencies to ensure that all telecommunications equipment—especially satellite phones—are authorized before hand-carrying them into Egypt.

- The ETC is exploring information received that all international staff who enter Egypt from Gaza have a maximum of 72 hours (three days) to depart Egypt. The ETC is seeking full information on this matter from the appropriate Egyptian authorities.

- The ETC will coordinate with global partner—International Telecommunication Union (ITU)—to distribute 100 fully activated Thuraya satellite phones to UN agencies operating in the Gaza emergency response. The satellite phones were donated by the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and are fully paid for. The phones are yet to be temporarily imported into Egypt and eventually into Gaza, once approved and authorized by both the Egyptian and Israeli authorities. UN agencies will be invited to submit expressions of interest, stating quantity of phones needed and justification. Phones will also be allocated on a 'first come-first served' basis. Agencies should also be prepared to assist in the importation process of the satellite phones. The ETC and ITU cannot guarantee that every agency will receive the requested number of satellite phones. The ETC and ITU intend to follow the required procedures and authorization from both the Egyptian and Israeli authorities and seeks similar collaboration from interested agencies.

Communications services

- Following COGAT approval on 03 December, the ETC procured 20 fully activated satellite phones from Gilat Telecom—the sole authorized satellite technology service provider for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)—in Tel Aviv on 08 December. The satellite phones were hand-carried to Gaza by the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) arrived on 12 December. The phones are a donation to the UNDSS, who will work with the Area Security Management Team (ASMT) to distribute them for communication needs among UN staff in Gaza. The satellite phones serial numbers, SIM cards information, and assignee for each phone should be shared with COGAT and Shabak—the Israeli national security agency—once UNDSS finalizes the distribution.

- As of 13 December, the 20 fully activated satellite phones purchased from Gilat Telecom in Israel for use by international UN staff in Gaza are the only equipment which the ETC has been authorized to import. No other telecommunication has been approved or authorized for import into Gaza.

- COGAT has authorized and proposed to the cluster to procure Cellcom SIM cards for use by humanitarian staff in Gaza. Cellcom is an Israeli MNO which offers voice and possibly data connectivity services that can be used in Gaza. The use of Cellcom SIM cards is cleared by Shabak and the service authorized for use by all humanitarian staff. The mobile phones serial numbers, SIM cards information, and assignee for each phone would have to be shared with COGAT and Shabak if the agencies are keen to use this option. The offer was circulated on 10 December by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) office to all heads of agencies highlighting the risk of compromising UN operational independence. The ETC, UNDSS, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs (UNOCHA) are collecting feedback from organizations and will then propose a way forward. To date, three UN agencies confirmed their interest in procuring the SIM cards. The ETC will follow up to send a reminder to UN agencies to engage with their heads of country operations if interested in the service. The service is only authorized and available to UN agencies for now.

- UNDSS is engaging with UN agencies to use the digital security communications network following the successful reactivation of two VHF digital repeaters—one in Rafah and the other in Khan Yunis—on 06 December. To access the services, once the system is operational, all UN agencies will need to provide their VHF radios to UNDSS for programming in Jerusalem as agreed and approved by COGAT before the onset of the conflict. To date, UNDSS has been supported by UNRWA for basic connectivity to link up the repeaters and solar energy solution to power the devices.

- The UNDSS confirmed that the VHF radio analogue system in Gaza is non-functional and can only be reactivated by installing an analogue repeater once importation of equipment into Gaza becomes authorized.

Access to information

- ETC partner—REACH—has agreed to develop a communications and information needs assessment report by 21 December using available collected secondary data from sources on the ground. UNOCHA is jointly involved in the exercise as the chair of the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) group. The ETC will engage with CDAC Network, UNRWA and the Office of the Quartet to source any other available data to inform the assessment.

ETC staffing

- The Global ETC Deputy Coordinator—Caroline Teyssier—who deployed to Cairo on 03 December, continues to support the coordination of ETC activities in the emergency response until 19 December. The dedicated ETC Coordinator—Hossam Metwally—returned from compassionate leave on 10 December and is still waiting for issuance of entry documents to deploy and be based in Jerusalem.

- Mufaro Masuka—ETC Information Management Officer (IMO)—deployed to Cairo on 21 November to support the IM and reporting activities in the Gaza emergency response until 19 December. On 10 December, the ETC initiated a standby partner replacement for Mufaro. Partners with potential candidates were informed on 11 December and are currently responding to the WFP Standby Partner unit to express their interest.

- FITTEST ICT Specialist—Burak Sezgin—deployed to Cairo on 04 December for onward deployment to Gaza, now tentatively scheduled for 22 December for an initial technical engagement with local actors, to plan an initial needs assessment, and to set up technical coordination processes for the response. He deployed to Jerusalem on 13 December to fill ETC gaps while requesting extension of his visa prior to going into Gaza.

- The ETC is planning for the next phase of staff scale-up. ETC Operations Specialist—Komi Amedjonekou—is tentatively set to deploy to Jerusalem to coordinate ETC activities, once visa entry documents applied for on 06 December are issued.

Funding

- On 10 December, the Government of Luxembourg confirmed the allocation of EUR250,000 to the ETC response in Gaza. On 05 December, the Government of France fully committed EUR250,000 to the ETC Palestine response. The combined funding to the ETC translates to 64% of the requested US$800,000 in the Flash Appeal to undertake its activities and address the immediate needs in Gaza.

3. Partner Updates

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- ITU continues to engage with the Israeli Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology, the Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology (MTIT), and the NTRA to import 100 fully activated Thuraya satellite phones into Gaza.

- The ITU is also engaging with the Embassy of Israel in Geneva and the UAE Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) for possible routes to import the 100 fully activated Thuraya satellite phones into Gaza.

- The ITU recognizes the processes stated by all authorities in importing the satellite phones and suggested the need for a collaborative approach by partners in complying.

4. AOB

- N/a

The next teleconference will be held on Monday 18 December 2023 at 13:00 UTC.

13:00   UTC
14:00   Rome
15:00   Cairo/Jerusalem
17:00   Dubai

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ACF	Action Against Hunger / Action contre la Faim
ASMT	Area Security Management Team
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ERC	Egyptian Red Crescent
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
COGAT	Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
GSMA	Global System for Mobile Communications
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross

ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IMO	Information Management Officer
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MTIT	Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
SCS	Security Communication Systems
TDRA	Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority
TRA	Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
UAE	United Arab Emirates
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
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VHF	Very High Frequency
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Minutes: Mufaro Masuka, Global ETC Information Management Officer.