

Palestine, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #09

Date: 27/12/2023 Time: 13:00 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)

ACTED
Ericsson Response
ETC Palestine

FAO
ICRC
IOM
Medicos del Mundo (Mdm) Spain
Mercy Corps
NetHope
Office of the Quartet (Palestine)
Save the Children
UNCDF
UNDSS
UNICEF

UNESCO
UNRWA
UNFPA
UNOCHA
Global ETC

WFP

Brent Carbo

Manon Peron
Lars Ruediger
Komi Amedjonekou
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Ayman Barakat
Claudiu Mateescu
Newton Muli
Stéphane Chartier
Nadeen Abu-Rub
Anja Delaquis
Enas Abu Laban
Akil Hassan
Amil Aneja
Mohammad Alawi
Marta Dabbas
Nasri Sidawi
Marc Dieng
Tamimi Bilal
Lukasz Cyra
Omar Baig
Dobromir Marinov
Mahmoud Bahaaeldein Effat Darwish
Caroline Teyssier
Maria Saleh
Marie Elena Bock
Mufaro Masuka
Amirullah Syarif

Aramais Alojants
Burak Sezgin
Dalia Mansour
Dane Novarlic
Lionel Mare
Sami Alio
David Pickering
Halim Yousufzai
Mohammed Elsheikh

WHO

Agenda

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

Minutes

1. Situation update

- The conflict, airstrikes and bombardments have intensified. Reports estimate that around 60% of Gaza's infrastructure has been destroyed.
- There was another communications blackout—the seventh one since the conflict started—for two days, with a partial recovery on 28 December. Reports state that this was mainly caused by damage to the telecommunications infrastructure and fuel shortages. The Palestinian Office of the Quartet mentioned that fuel quantities have been slightly increased, but that the distribution between the different sectors has not been clearly addressed.

2. Global ETC update

Coordination/equipment

- The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) continues to engage with the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) to facilitate the importation of equipment and discussions are underway to obtain authorization to import equipment to provide telecommunications services.
- ETC is collaborating with International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on the distribution of the 100 Thuraya satellite phones, donated by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). A survey is being conducted to determine the needs of humanitarian workers on the ground, to allow quick distribution once importation is authorized. So far, these phones are only intended for UN agencies, but a survey collecting possible needs of all UN

agencies was circulated on 26 December and will be closed on 04 January. The ETC will follow up with ITU and explore a possibility of providing them to other humanitarian agencies as well.

- The ETC has met with a USA-based human rights organization—Assess Now—to raise the challenges with telecommunications issues and to do advocacy and recommendations to the U.S. government. Access Now defends and extends the digital rights of people and communities at risk.
- The ETC is exploring the availability of Very High Frequency (VHF) and High Frequency (HF) equipment with vendors in Cairo, Egypt, to quantify what is locally available and procurement process to aid rapid purchase once authorization for importation into Gaza is issued.

Communications services

- Based on a recommendation from COGAT, the ETC is exploring interest from various agencies to use Cellcom SIM cards to communicate in Gaza. So far, eight heads of humanitarian agencies have expressed interest in exploring the use of this option. Discussions are ongoing and the possibility of fast-tracking the procurement of the SIM cards is being explored.
- Regarding analog and digital VHF systems as back-up systems for Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), the digital system was considered as first back-up system, as it had been moved forward (even though not fully completed) before the outbreak of the war. Additionally, the digital system has been widely approved, so hard work is being done to make it available. The server room is ready and able to receive radios to be programmed and launched and 2 repeaters have been installed, but only the one in Rafah is working. However, it is not fully operational due to power and connectivity issues. It was recommended to keep the analog system as a second backup, as it could also be expanded for national staff, while the digital one was more for the international staff.
- The Palestinian Quartet Office mentioned that the Palestinian MNOs Jaweel and Ooredoo are identifying the equipment needed for repairs with the Ministry of Telecommunication and, once ready, they will share the list of equipment needed for repairs with the ETC. The Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications and the Ministry of Interior have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to advance the 911 core infrastructure with support from the World Bank in both the West Bank and Gaza.

Staffing

- Hossam Metwally—based in Cairo, continues coordinating ETC activities as Deputy ETC Coordinator.
- ETC Operations Specialist—Komi Amedjonekou—took over as ETC coordinator, supporting the coordination of ETC activities in the emergency response remotely, while waiting for entry visa issuance to deploy to Jerusalem early next week.
- The Global ETC Deputy Coordinator—Caroline Teyssier—returned to Dubai on the 19 December and continues to support the operation remotely.

- Mufaro Masuka—ETC Information Management Officer—is back in Dubai since the 19 December, supporting remotely with reporting, while a replacement from the stand-by partnership network is tentatively scheduled to take over the role in Cairo on 05 January, while awaiting the visa to eventually deploy to be based in Jerusalem.
- FITTEST ICT Specialist—Burak Sezgin—deployed to Jerusalem on 13 December. He managed to receive his visa extension prior to enter Gaza. On Friday he will be traveling to Cairo, before being deployed to Gaza on the 1 January to support the humanitarian on the ground. Burak is planning on doing a 1-week assessment, including assessment of the state of the VHF network, and identifying what can be locally made available.

3. Partner Updates

REACH

- On 18 December, ETC partner—[REACH](#)—completed a communications and information needs assessment for the population in Gaza using the secondary data review methodology of all available data from sources on the ground. The [assessment report](#) was shared with all ETC global partners on 22 December, including those collaborating in the current emergency response. The report findings can be used to inform and guide humanitarian responders on their current and planned activities in Gaza. Discussions continue with the World Bank and Ministry of Information to obtain additional information on the status of connectivity, mobile network operator needs (particularly fuel), and general accessibility of information and preferences among the affected population in Gaza. UNOCHA is jointly involved in the exercise as the chair of the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) group. The ETC will engage with the CDAC Network, UNRWA, and the Office of the Quartet to source any other available data to enhance the assessment and update the report in January 2024.

UNDSS

- The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) has two different sites for the analog and digital systems, with different repeaters. The analog system was established more than 18 years ago and is currently non-functional. COGAT did not approve the installation of new repeaters in analog, and requested a system over which there would be more control, so approval was granted in the specific digital system, called Capacity Max, which is currently 90% complete.
- In terms of equipment, UNDSS confirmed that there are three analog sites in Gaza, two located at the Gaza Field Office in the north and one at the Khan Yunis site in the south, where the repeater is currently missing. As for the digital system, there are four sites (Gaza North, Gaza City, Khan Yunis, Rafah), of which UNDSS managed to switch on the Khan Yunis and Rafah sites. The current challenge is to reprogram the radios for Gaza on digital frequencies, which must be done in the server room in Jerusalem, at the request of COGAT.
- Currently there are 110 licenses for radios in Gaza on the digital system, but current functional repeaters are still power problems. UNDSS confirmed the need for a secure

solar energy solution to run batteries and keep the VHF repeaters functional during national grid power outages.

4. AOB

- N/a

The next teleconference will be held on Wednesday 03 January 2024 at 13:00 UTC.

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

Acronyms

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ACF	Action Against Hunger / Action contre la Faim
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
COGAT	Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
GSMA	Global System for Mobile Communications
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MTIT	Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology
TRA	Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
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: Marie Elena Bock, Global ETC Partnerships Officer.