Palestine, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #14
Date: 07/02/2024 **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:

Palestine.ETC@wfp.org

Attendance

Chair (ETC)	**Brent Carbno**
Access Now	Ben Grazda
	Giulio Coppi
Action Against Hunger (ACF)	Maya Papotti
Anera - Egypt	Mohammed E. Abbas
Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)	Rakesh Bharania
Cadus	Corinna Schaefer
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger
ETC Global	Caroline Teyssier
	Komi Amedjonekou
	Lena Bock
	Mufaro Masuka
ETC Palestine	Bipin Jha
	Burak Sezgin
	David Pickering
	Hossam Metwally
Government of Luxembourg	Alain Lang
	Roland Nurenberg
Humanity and Inclusion (HI)	Chloe Perron
International Rescue Committee	Alan Mooney
	Amro AlMoghraby
	Moayyad Fares
Internews Network	Stijn Aelbers
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	Adel Darwish
	Doris Maritza Delgado
	Inga Rimkeviciene
	Mustafa Ahmed Ali Al Mahdi
Medical Aid for Palestinians	Sam Wahlstrom
NetHope	Anja Delaquis
Save the Children	Mark Hawkins

Search for Common Ground	Rami Assali
Terre des Hommes (TDH)	Pantelis Kouvaris
UNDP	Hisham Hussein
UNDSS	Bogdan Ristivojevic
UNICEF	Kamal Kamaleddine
	Marta Dabbas
	Marc Dieng
	Bilal Tamimi
	Jalal Tamimi
UNESCO	Aslam Badran
	Jackson Krainer
	Lukasz Cyra
UNMAS	Nufleh Talouzi
UNRWA	Rita Okechukwu
US Department of State	Joseph Burton
WFP	Alawi Ahmed
	Angel Buitrago
	Aramais Alojants
	Lionel Marre
WHO	Akil Hassan
	Mohamed Elsheikh

Agenda

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

Minutes

1. Situation update

- The intense Israeli air, land, and sea bombardments as well as ground operations and fighting with Hamas armed groups continued across much of the Gaza Strip. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reports that 1.7 million people (approximately 90% of the Gaza population) are internally displaced and 60% of the infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged.

- Voice telecommunications services from Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) Jawwal and Ooredoo are operational, although the network is congested due to increased users and few operational telecommunications towers. In one instance on 06 February, it took four hours for an SMS message to reach a phone on the same network in the same location. This is similar for satellite phone connections.

- By 06 February, Paltel Internet Service Provider (ISP) had restored internet services in parts of Rafah, though characterized by intermittent connectivity. Internet services from both MNOs Jawwal and Ooredoo remains down across the whole of Gaza.

- 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 shared a one-month telecommunications planning and implementation document with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and UNRWA representatives on 06 February. The planning and implementation document will be presented to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and Deputy HC at the Joint Humanitarian Coordination Centre (JHOC) on 08 February. The main purpose of the document is to inform participants, humanitarian responders, other clusters, and agencies about achievable goals with or without the anticipated ceasefire. The plan depends on the successful importation of the required telecommunications equipment.

- Since 03 November 2023, the ETC efforts have been underway to obtain the authorization from the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) to import telecommunications equipment to set-up and provide an independent platform for communications in Gaza. On 06 February, progress had been made by the HC in advocacy with COGAT for the importation of communication equipment, prioritizing the importation of solar power solutions and VHF radios for the security communications systems (SCS). As of 06 February, no VHF equipment has yet been approved by authorities for importation into Gaza. Any future VHF equipment that will be authorities for importation into Gaza has to be first programmed at the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) Jerusalem server.

- The ETC continues to coordinate telecommunications equipment importation requests from humanitarian agencies and is transparent to all parties about the lengthy and challenging process.

- Adhering to past documentation practices and management processes, all the telecommunications equipment on the list submitted to the COGAT will have the name and contact details of the user and who manages it with a system in place to update the authorities on loss, damage, or change of the equipment. The ETC is collaborating with UNOCHA and UNDSS to provide all the details required by the COGAT.

Communications services

- As of 06 February, the JHOC in Rafah—which is accommodating approximately 300 humanitarians and has over 500 internet connections on the fibre optic and microwave link data connectivity provided by local service provider, Ajyal. The network is also heavily congested resulting in slow download and upload speeds.

- While Partner Communications Company physical SIMs function within Gaza, they are disabled for airtime top-up and become non-operational when staff leave Gaza and try to use the SIM in other global locations.

Staffing

- The ETC Coordinator—David Pickering—is in Rafah, Gaza, since 31 January, where he is supporting the response with coordination activities, conducting technical engagements with local actors, and assisting other humanitarian responders with information and guidance on the use and repair of ICT equipment. The Deputy ETC Coordinator—Hossam Metwally—continues to remotely support all Gaza response activities, while based in Cairo.

The WFP Standby Partner (SBP) Information Management Officer (IMO) for the ETC Palestine–Gaza response officially started his 3-months deployment on 01 February. RedR's Bipin Jha started remotely from Kathmandu, Nepal, until he can obtain a visa to either Jerusalem or Cairo. The Global ETC IM unit is providing the handover guidance and technical onboarding process. Bipin replaces the Global ETC's Mufaro Masuka, who has been dedicated to the response since 16 November 2023.

3. Partner Updates

UNESCO

- UNESCO offered to donate portable solar energy solution power generators to the ETC once importation of the equipment is authorized for Gaza.

4. AOB

- N/a

The next teleconference will be held on Wednesday 21 February 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
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CD	Country Director
COGAT	Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DCD	Deputy Country Director
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
ICCG	Interagency Coordination Cell Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies

IMPACCT	Importation and Customs Clearance Together
ISP	Internet Service Provider
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MoH	Ministry of Health
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
OPT	Occupied Palestine Territory
RDNA	Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment
SBP	Standby Partnership
SCS	Security Communication System
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
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: Bipin Jha, ETC Palestine Information Management Officer.