

Palestine – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #32

Reporting period: 04/06/2024 to 10/06/2024

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated for the conflict crisis in Gaza on 31 October 2023. Situation Reports are published weekly.

Highlights

- On 08 June, the ETC submitted a list of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment to support the Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS) operations in Deir Al Balah to the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) for approval. The equipment is being procured.
- On 07 June, the ETC met with the Office of the Quartet to identify viable solutions to enhance connectivity and improve communications infrastructure to facilitate humanitarian response efforts in Gaza.
- On 05 June, the ETC received confirmation on the availability of an additional 13 Very High Frequency (VHF) radios with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) for the use of UN agencies in Gaza. These radios will be handed over to Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), who is coordinating to secure transportation clearance from COGAT and facilitating the transportation of the radios into Gaza. With these additional radios, a total of 43 VHF radios will be transported into Gaza upon receipt of clearance from COGAT.



ETC and UNDSS teams inspect the VHF radio repeater site after relocation to Deir Al Balah. Photo: WFP/ETC

Situation overview

The security situation in Gaza remains volatile due to the continuing hostilities. Humanitarian operations continue within the limited parameters and responders continue to observe all security measures and protocols, including seeking approved movement authorization.

As of 10 June, intensified hostilities following the issuance of evacuation orders and the ground incursion by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in Rafah has displaced about one million people amid a decline in the entry of humanitarian aid, further crippling the humanitarian operations. On 02 June, the head of the Emergency Committee for North Gaza municipalities declared Jabalia town, Jabalia Refugee Camp, Beit Lahya, and Beit Hanoun as “disaster zones” following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area on 31 May and appealed to the international community and UN aid agencies to provide immediate relief and shelter assistance.

Humanitarian operations in Gaza continue to face severe access and movement restrictions, including the ongoing closure of key crossings. Joint multiple inter-agency assessments are being conducted to

identify suitable sites in northern Gaza to accommodate humanitarian responders. Since 06 May, the intensification of hostilities and evacuation orders in Rafah have compelled most of the humanitarian actors to relocate to Deir Al Balah, resulting in most of the humanitarian offices in Rafah being non-operational.

Telecommunications Overview

Voice services provided by Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)—Jawwal and Ooredoo—are operational at limited capacity due to limited fuel and a congested network due to very few operational telecommunications towers. Both MNOs do not offer internet connectivity, as was the condition before the onset of hostilities in October 2023.

Internet connectivity remains a primary communications challenge across the Gaza Strip and is worsening as displaced people relocate from Rafah to other locations in the North. Paltel and Ajyal Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are providing internet services in parts of Rafah, Deir Al Balah, Jabalia, and Gaza City, though with intermittent connectivity.

Due to the prevailing escalated hostilities, the local MNOs and ISPs are experiencing network outages from damaged infrastructure, limited access to fuel, and insecure conditions to carry out repairs. These conditions make it difficult to maintain the remaining functional network. The sporadic access to connectivity has severely disrupted humanitarian aid operations and communication with the humanitarian responders on the ground.

Iridium and Thuraya satellite phone voice services are operational across the Gaza Strip.

ETC Activities

Coordination

An ETC coordinator is based in Deir Al Balah to boost coordination activities on the ground and support humanitarian actors operating in Gaza with their technical needs, guidance, and advice, given the limited availability of telecommunications services in Gaza.

The ETC is engaging with key humanitarian leads to strengthen advocacy efforts concerning the challenges which humanitarian agencies and partners face in importing ICT and telecommunications equipment into Gaza to establish common communications services.

On 08 June, the ETC submitted a list of ICT equipment for JLOTS operations in Deir Al Balah to COGAT for approval and has initiated the equipment procurement. The ETC has also initiated the procurement of ICT equipment in Jerusalem for data connectivity services in Gaza and to strengthen the capacity of the Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Jerusalem which will support the safety and security of the operation in Gaza.

On 07 June, the ETC met with the Office of the Quartet to identify viable solutions to enhance connectivity and improve communications infrastructure to facilitate humanitarian response efforts in Gaza. The ETC supports the Office of the Quartet in mapping UN agencies and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp locations to advocate with MNOs and ISPs to strengthen telecommunications and internet services.

On 06 June, the ETC coordinator engaged with UNDSS on the Security Communications Systems (SCS) functionality and set up of SCS repeaters at four locations in Gaza—Rafah, Deir Al Balah, Gaza City, and Jabalia—for coverage across the Gaza Strip.

Internet connectivity

Internet services across Gaza has vastly reduced capacity with recurrent service disruptions, especially in Deir Al Balah where most humanitarian responders are now based. The local ISP faces multiple challenges, including reduced staff and a lack of spare parts and safe access to repair and maintain the remaining network services.

To address the urgent need for connectivity services, the ETC is engaging with the local ISP to prioritize the strengthening of internet connectivity services in Deir Al Balah as a priority location. The ETC is also liaising with agencies and partners for technical advice and assessments and coordinating with the ISP to establish connectivity services at their offices and guesthouses in Deir Al Balah following the relocation.

Security communications

On 30 May, the 30 VHF digital radios, which arrived in Jerusalem on 14 May, were assigned call signs, programmed at the UNDSS server in Jerusalem, and handed over to OCHA to facilitate transportation into Gaza. However, additional transportation clearance was required by COGAT to transport the VHF radios into Gaza—OCHA has submitted the request to COGAT and is currently awaiting a response.

On 05 June, the ETC received confirmation on the availability of an additional 13 VHF radios with UNDSS for the use of UN agencies in Gaza. These radios will be handed over to OCHA, who is coordinating to secure the transportation clearance from COGAT and facilitating the transportation of the VHF radios into Gaza. With these additional radios, 43 VHF radios will be transported into Gaza upon receipt of clearance from COGAT.

The ETC is anticipating endorsement from UNDSS to set up the proposed staffed interim Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Jerusalem to monitor staff movement and locations during field missions in Gaza to enhance their safety. The SOC will be equipped with essential communications devices, including satellite and mobile phones, so staff can have access to a reliable communications platform while on mission in Gaza. The ETC has identified the need to scale-up the resources required at the Gaza SOC and is currently engaging with local vendors in Jerusalem to procure the equipment needed to set up the Jerusalem SOC to support Gaza operations.

The ETC held meetings with multiple service providers, including UNDSS, on the use of an automated satellite-based staff movement tracking system to ensure staff safety and security while on mission in Gaza and is engaging with UNDSS for their endorsement on the adaptation of an appropriate platform.

Staffing

There are currently four ETC staff engaged in the response:

- The ETC coordinator arrived in Rafah on 24 May and relocated to Deir Al Balah on 27 May to boost ETC presence on the ground and coordinate and support humanitarian actors operating in Gaza.
- The ETC field coordinator arrived in Deir Al Balah on 06 June, following a week break, to strengthen face-to-face engagements and support partners with technical advice and guidance.
- The ETC ICT specialist has been in Jerusalem since 06 May to coordinate with UNDSS in assessing the capacity and establishing a SOC in Jerusalem.
- A dedicated national Information Management Officer (IMO) commenced the role on 02 June 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

Safety of staff: The safety of humanitarian aid workers in Gaza is a primary concern and priority. The deployment of shared ETC communications services and face-to-face technical support to other humanitarian responders remains a challenge due to insecurity.

Movement of staff: Since 07 May, staff movement in and out of Gaza has been restricted across all border crossing points, delaying staff rotation, and affecting humanitarian activities.

Limited telecommunications services: Due to the prevailing escalated hostilities, the local MNOs and ISPs are experiencing network outages due to damaged infrastructure, limited access to fuel, and insecure conditions to carry out repairs. The current conditions make it difficult to maintain the remaining functional network.

Lack of telecommunications equipment: The availability of telecommunications equipment on the ground is severely restricted, and much has been damaged or destroyed. Further, the importation of telecommunications equipment into Gaza is restricted and prolonged. Only 20 satellite phones, four VHF repeaters and four solar power solutions have been approved for importation into Gaza by the Israeli authorities since 07 October 2023. The 30 pre-approved VHF handheld radios and an additional 13 radios available with UNDSS are pending transportation clearance from Jerusalem into Gaza by COGAT.

Internet connectivity: 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 in addressing the immediate life-saving communications needs for humanitarian responders in Gaza. The ETC continues to appeal for funding from varied potential donors.

Cybersecurity continues to be a pressing issue. Caution in using technology platforms applies, including the use of social media and press platforms.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Teleconference with partners on the response in Gaza will be held on **Tuesday 11 June 2024 at 11:00 UTC**.

The previous Global ETC Teleconference was held on 28 May 2024. All minutes are uploaded [here](#).

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

www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict

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