

## Palestine – Conflict

### ETC Situation Report #36

Reporting period: 02/07/2024 to 08/07/2024

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

## Highlights

- On 03 July, the ETC field coordinator participated in the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) meeting, which focused on additional information about the UN2720 Mechanism, a database established to channel and register all humanitarian relief consignments destined for entry into Gaza for pre-clearance.
- On 02 July, the ETC received telecommunications equipment, including Very High Frequency (VHF) radios and a solar-powered solutions kit, which has been delivered to the WFP office in Jerusalem. The equipment delivered by the local vendor in Jerusalem is intended to support the set-up of a new VHF repeater site in Gaza City and Security Operations Centres (SOCs) in Gaza and Jerusalem. The ETC is awaiting approval from the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) to import this equipment into Gaza.
- During the reporting period, the ETC submitted requests to COGAT for approval to import 41 VHF radios into Gaza. These radios, belonging to nine UN agencies, were programmed at the UNDSS server in Jerusalem and are currently awaiting approval.
- The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [Humanitarian Situation Update](#) reports that the number of people internally displaced within Gaza has risen from 1.7 to 1.9 million people (approximately nine out of 10 people), many multiple times, following the recent evacuation orders on 01 July.



Damage at UNRWA school in Rimal neighbourhood of Gaza City.  
Photo: UNICEF/ Wondayferam

## Situation overview

The security situation in Gaza remains volatile due to the continuing hostilities. Israeli bombardment from the air, land, and sea, as well as ground incursions and heavy fighting, continue to be reported across much of the Gaza Strip, resulting in further civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure.

On 01 July, in the second largest evacuation order since October 2023, the Israeli military ordered residents of 71 residential blocks in eastern Khan Yunis and Rafah to immediately evacuate westwards to a "humanitarian zone" in Al Mawasi. The recent OCHA [Humanitarian Situation Update](#) reports that the number of people internally displaced within Gaza has risen from 1.7 to 1.9 million people (approximately nine out of 10 people) following evacuation orders. The UN and its partners estimate that about 250,000 people may have resided in the evacuation area when the order was issued. Most

of the humanitarian responders were relocated to Deir Al Balah following the incursion in Rafah on 06 May, resulting in most of the humanitarian offices in Rafah being temporarily closed and non-operational.

The Kerem Shalom border crossing, which was operational at a limited capacity for transporting humanitarian aid supplies into Gaza, is now suspended due to security incidents. Erez West is the only crossing for importing humanitarian aid supplies into Gaza.

## 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. Internet Service Provider (ISP)—Paltel—continues to provide limited internet services in parts of Rafah, Deir Al Balah, Jabalia, and Gaza City amid the destruction of critical telecommunications infrastructure and a lack of fuel and spare parts.

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

The lack of fuel continues to severely compromise the operation of critical telecommunications infrastructure, causing MNOs and ISPs to operate at a limited capacity and pushing them to the verge of shutting down their services completely. On 30 June, the telecommunications and internet services were completely down in the Al Mawasi area near Khan Yunis, as generators did not have fuel to operate. The situation has severely disrupted humanitarian aid operations and communication with humanitarian responders on the ground.

## ETC Activities

### Coordination

The ETC field 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.

On 05 July, the ETC field coordinator attended the online Access Support Unit (ASU) meeting with the WFP and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The meeting focused on importing items, including ICT equipment, into Gaza during the Special United Nations Official (SUNO) mission. In addition to submitting the approval request to COGAT, the list of items must be shared along with the names of the staff bringing them when coordinating staff entry into Gaza.

On 03 July, the ETC field coordinator participated in the ICCG meeting, which focused on additional information about the UN2720 Mechanism, a database established to channel and register all humanitarian relief consignments destined for entry into Gaza for pre-clearance. An earlier ICCG meeting on June 28 introduced the basic information and SOP about the mechanism.

On 01 July, the ETC team reached out to OCHA to seek support on logistical arrangements for transporting four solar-powered solution kits into Gaza, which are currently in Jerusalem. OCHA is planning to facilitate transportation of the kits from Jerusalem to Gaza, at a date to be confirmed.

The ETC field coordinator engaged in the Inter-Cluster assessment, focusing on identifying the telecommunications, internet connectivity, and power solutions needs, mainly at distribution sites, warehouses, and registration shelters in Gaza on 29 June. The need for additional ICT equipment to strengthen the existing fibre connectivity was identified. It was also found that the network reliability of MNOs Jawwal and Ooredoo fluctuated, with Ooredoo providing a stronger signal.

### Internet connectivity

The reduced capacity of internet services and the recurrent connectivity disruptions across Gaza continue to severely affect life-saving humanitarian aid access, especially in Deir Al Balah, where most of the humanitarian responders are now based. The local ISP—Paltel— faces multiple challenges, including reduced staff, lack of fuel and spare parts, and safe access to repair and maintain the remaining network services. The ISP is unable to meet the high demands of the humanitarian agencies in providing new or strengthening connectivity services at their offices and guesthouses in Deir Al Balah.

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

### Security communications

On 02 July, the ETC received telecommunications equipment, including VHF radios and a solar-powered solutions kit, which has been delivered to the WFP office in Jerusalem. The equipment delivered by the local vendor in Jerusalem is intended to support the set-up of a new VHF repeater site in Gaza City and SOCs in Gaza and Jerusalem. The ETC is awaiting approval from COGAT to import this equipment into Gaza.

The ETC is in the process of importing 47 VHF radios located in Jerusalem, which belong to different UN agencies. The ETC is coordinating with OCHA to secure approval to transport these 47 radios into Gaza, in addition to the 30 VHF digital radios that were transported into Gaza on 16 June.

During the reporting period, the ETC submitted requests to COGAT for approval to import 41 VHF radios into Gaza. These radios, belonging to nine UN agencies, were programmed at the UNDSS server in Jerusalem and are currently awaiting approval. The ETC is expecting additional information from partners to submit the request for the approval of the remaining six radios.

### Staffing

There are currently three dedicated ETC staff engaged in the response:

- The ETC coordinator is scheduled to return to Gaza on 11 July following a short break. The coordinator was in Gaza from 24 May until 27 June to boost ETC's presence on the ground and coordinate and support partners and agencies operating in Gaza.
- The ETC field coordinator has been in Deir Al Balah since 06 June to strengthen face-to-face engagements and support partners with technical advice and guidance.
- A dedicated ETC Information Management Officer (IMO) has been based in Cairo since 02 June to support the response.

## 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

**Lack of fuel:** The lack of fuel continues to severely compromise the operation of critical telecommunications infrastructure, causing MNOs and ISPs to operate at a limited capacity and pushing them to the verge of shutting down their services completely. The situation has severely disrupted humanitarian aid operations and communication with humanitarian responders on the ground.

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

**Limited telecommunications services:** Due to the prevailing escalated hostilities, the local MNOs and ISPs are experiencing network outages due to damaged infrastructure, a lack of fuel and spare parts, and insecure conditions for carrying 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, 25 Track24 devices, 30 digital VHF radios, four VHF repeaters and four solar power solutions have been approved for importation into Gaza by COGAT since 07 October 2023.

**Internet connectivity:** The 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 of humanitarian responders in Gaza. The ETC continues to appeal for funding from varied potential donors.

**Cybersecurity** continues to be a pressing issue. Caution should be applied when using technology platforms, including social media and press platforms.

## Meetings

The next Global ETC Teleconference with partners on the response in Gaza will be held on **Tuesday 09 July 2024 at 11:00 UTC**.

The previous Global ETC Teleconference was held on 25 June 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](http://www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict)

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