

Palestine – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #37

Reporting period: 09/07/2024 to 15/07/2024

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 10 July, the ETC field coordinator joined the inter-agency assessment focusing on identifying the telecommunications, internet connectivity, and power solution needs in the Al Bureij and Al Maghazi camps for displaced people in Deir Al Balah. Community members expressed that they are unable to register at the self-registration sites and access educational materials due to poor connectivity.
- On 09 July, the ETC coordinator met with the Office of the Quartet and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)—Jawwal and Ooredoo—to discuss the challenges and way forward for telecommunications operators. The meeting highlighted the need for fuel, spare parts, and safe access to repairs and restoration of services. The ETC is engaging with key stakeholders to ensure the availability of fuel and equipment to keep telecommunications services operational.
- The Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) approved an additional 29 Track24¹ devices for the use of seven UN agencies in Gaza. The ETC facilitated the submission of approval requests and coordination of the consolidated procurement of 73 devices intended for the use of 11 UN agencies on 30 June. The ETC is following up on the approval of the remaining devices.



ETC staff engage with members of the displaced community in Al Bureij camp in Deir Al Balah. Photo: OCHA/Sara Janicot

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 10 July, the Israeli military airdropped leaflets informing residents of Gaza City that two designated “humanitarian routes” were available for them to evacuate southwards to Deir Al Balah City and the Az Zawayda area. This announcement followed two evacuation orders by the Israeli military on 07 and 08

¹ Track24 is a satellite-based staff tracking device pre-approved by COGAT for use in Gaza.

July, which instructed tens of thousands of civilians to immediately evacuate 19 blocs in central and western Gaza City.

The recent Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [Humanitarian Situation Update](#) reports that over 1.9 million people (approximately nine out of 10 people) displaced throughout Gaza continue to face harrowing conditions, including in Deir al Balah. 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 MNOs—Jawwal and Ooredoo—are operational at limited capacity due to limited fuel and a congested network as a result of very few operational telecommunications towers. Both MNOs do not offer internet connectivity, as was the condition before the onset of hostilities in October 2023. Iridium and Thuraya satellite phone voice services are operational across the Gaza Strip.

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.

ETC Activities

Coordination

On 13 July, the ETC participated in the JHOC meeting in Deir Al Balah and highlighted the need for an approved fuel allocation for telecommunications and internet service providers. They currently receive substantially reduced fuel, making it difficult for them to keep critical telecommunications infrastructure operational. The ETC also stressed the need for advocacy for the COGAT approval of the telecommunications equipment for shared communications services.

On 10 July, the ETC field coordinator joined the inter-agency assessment focusing on identifying the telecommunications, internet connectivity, and power solution needs in the Al Bureij and Al Maghazi camps for displaced people in Deir Al Balah. Community members expressed that they are unable to register at the self-registration sites and access educational materials due to poor connectivity despite the availability of paid but unreliable Wi-Fi services. They also reported unreliability on the mobile networks; however, the voice call connected with a strong signal during the test conducted with Ooredoo.

On 09 July, the ETC field coordinator presented at the Logistics Cluster meeting about the ETC services delivered and planned in Gaza. The presentation also focused on the challenges and approval process by COGAT for importing ICT equipment into Gaza.

On 09 July, the ETC coordinator met with the Office of the Quartet and MNOs—Jawwal and Ooredoo—to discuss the challenges and way forward for telecommunications operators. The meeting highlighted the need for fuel, spare parts, and safe access to repairs and restoration of services. The ETC is

engaging with key stakeholders to ensure the availability of fuel and equipment to keep telecommunications services operational.

On 09 July, the ETC received an invitation to a meeting from the Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology (MTIT) in Ramallah—the team is exploring areas for engagement to facilitate MNOs and ISPs to strengthen their services in Gaza.

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 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.

Security communications

On 13 July, the ETC met with UNDSS to follow up on the ICT equipment needs and gaps to ensure the Gaza SOC is fully operational. The meeting focused on identifying the VHF radio repeater site in Gaza City, which must be centrally located and owned by a UN agency to ensure equipment safety. It also discussed organising an inter-agency mission to Gaza City to identify a common operational base for humanitarians. During the discussion, a rapid review was done of the key practices the Gaza SOC is undertaking, including tracking staff and missions in Gaza. UNDSS anticipates implementing regular radio check procedures for the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS).

On 13 July, the ETC shared the cost estimate with UNDSS to restore the security communications network, including the cost of equipment, technical experts, and a power backup solution that existed before the emergency onset.

On 01 July, COGAT approved an additional 29 Track24 devices for the use of seven UN agencies in Gaza. The ETC facilitated the submission of approval requests and coordination of the consolidated procurement of 73 devices intended for the use of 11 UN agencies on 30 June. The ETC is following up on the approval of the remaining devices. Earlier, 25 Track24 devices were approved for the WFP and Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS) operations in Gaza.

Staffing

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

- The ETC coordinator returned to Deir Al Balah on 11 July following a short break. The coordinator is based in Deir Al Balah and supports the coordination of 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) continues to support the mission 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

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 Gaza Strip continues to be under an electricity blackout since October 2023. 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, cash liquidity 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, 54 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 23 July 2024 at 11:00 UTC**.

The previous Global ETC Teleconference was held on 09 July 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

For more information or to be added or deleted from the mailing list please contact:

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