

Syria – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #59

Reporting period: 01/03/2023 to 30/04/2023

The ETC was activated in Syria in January 2013 in response to the conflict crisis. Situation Reports are distributed every two months.

Highlights

- The ETC installed a dedicated solar power system for the VHF radio repeater at the UN hub in Damascus to ensure uninterrupted coverage after a fault with the existing power supply system caused a temporary outage.
- The cluster also replaced a faulty antenna on one of the VHF radio base stations in the Damascus Security Operations Centre (SOC) and completed all routine annual maintenance of communications equipment in the SOC.
- Approval was received from the authorities to conduct a mission to Hama from 7-15 May to install a VHF radio repeater. The installation will expand radio coverage in rural Hama to support the scale-up of humanitarian activities following the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes.



The ETC installs a dedicated solar power system for the VHF repeater at the UN hub in Damascus. Photo: WFP/ETC

Activities

Coordination

The ETC took part in three meetings of the Inter-Sector Coordination group in March and participated in the annual Humanitarian Coordination Survey conducted by OCHA.

Requests have been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for approval to conduct a series of missions to conduct maintenance on the communications equipment in all the Security Operations Centres (SOCs) across the country during the month of June.

The ETC received a request from the Qamishli hub coordinator to support the expansion of telephony services to all UN agencies hosted in the hub. The ETC is reviewing the request to identify the best technical solution.

Data connectivity

The ETC provides internet connectivity services to humanitarian agencies from 18 UN agencies in six sites in Syria (Aleppo, Deir Ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Qamishli) and is continuing to support existing connectivity services in Gaziantep for cross-border operations, in line with the Whole of Syria (WoS) approach.

Following the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes that devastated northwest Syria on 6 February, the ETC conducted a preliminary assessment of interagency ICT needs for the response. The assessment identified a potential need for inter-agency data connectivity services for organisations establishing an increased presence in Latakia. However, through discussions in the ICT Working Group it was decided that ETC services were not required due to the existence of reliable connectivity services for agencies operating in the area.

In 2023, the ETC plans to upgrade connectivity services in the UN hubs in Aleppo, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, and Qamishli and in the interagency WFP and UNDSS office in Hama.

Security communications

The ETC provides security communications services to 15 UN agencies across six sites in Syria (Aleppo, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, Tartous, and Qamishli). ETC Syria is continuing to support security communications services in Gaziantep for cross-border operations in coordination with ETS Türkiye.

To support the scale-up of field operations in northwestern Syria following the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, the ETC is planning to expand radio network coverage in Hama. While central Hama is already partially covered by the radio repeater in nearby Homs, the ETC will extend coverage to further areas in rural Hama with the installation of a new repeater. Approval has been received from the authorities to carry out a mission from 7-15 May to install the repeater.

After an electricity supply fault with the WHO solar power system at the UN hub in Damascus caused a temporary radio network outage, the ETC installed a dedicated solar power system for the VHF repeater. The repeater is now fully operational. The cluster also replaced a faulty antenna on one of the VHF radio base stations and completed all routine annual maintenance of communications equipment in the Damascus SOC.

In response to a request from the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSES), the ETC provided technical support to investigate an issue with their VHF radio repeater in Damascus.

The ETC also programmed one VHF vehicle radio and two handheld radios for the UN office for Project Services (UNOPS).

In 2023, the ETC plans to replenish its stocks of pre-positioned essential equipment, including radio repeaters. The ETC obtained the approval from MoFA to import four VHF radio repeaters to Syria.

The ETC and UNDSS provided updates to the interagency Telecommunications Security Standards body {TESS+} on the implementation of recommended standards in all SOCs. The ETC has made significant progress in bringing the SOCs' security communications systems in line with {TESS+} standards.

Dashboard

See the [ETC Dashboard](#) for an overview of service locations.

Funding

The ETC has identified a funding requirement of US\$500,000 to cover its operations in Syria in 2023.

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) contributed US\$181,000 to the ETC operation in Syria in 2023.

With this grant, as well as funding carried over from contributions from BHA and the Government of Ireland in 2022, the ETC has met 58% of its funding requirement for 2023.

Challenges

Syria is facing a country-wide power crisis which impacts on ETC connectivity services.

The importation of equipment, lack of access to operational areas, and lengthy deployment authorisations from relevant authorities frequently affects the timely implementation of ETC activities across Syria.

Access to the earthquake-affected areas in northwest Syria is a significant challenge for the overall humanitarian response.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **25 May 2023**.

Contacts

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www.etcluster.org/emergencies/syria-conflict

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