

## Syria – Conflict

### ETC Situation Report #70: January - February

Reporting period: 01/01/2025 – 28/02/2025

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

## Highlights

- Since December, nearly 1.2 million people have returned to their areas of origin in Syria, including over 885,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) - most of whom were displaced after November - and 292,000 Syrians from other countries.
- The public telecommunications infrastructure across Syria has suffered significant damage due to more than a decade of devastating conflict.
- The ETC continues to provide shared security communications services to 939 humanitarian responders from 17 UN agencies, across seven common operational areas, thereby enabling secure communications for humanitarians undertaking life-saving responses.



The ETC installs back up solar power solution at Al Hol camp. Photo: WFP/ETC

## Situation overview

Hostilities continue to affect north-eastern and southern Syria, resulting in civilian casualties and restricted humanitarian access.

Since December, nearly 1.2 million people have returned to their areas of origin in Syria, including over 885,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) - most of whom were displaced after November - and 292,000 Syrians from other countries.

Departures from camps remain limited, with fewer than 100,000 people leaving camps in north-west Syria since December. Damaged homes, inadequate services, and the threat of unexploded ordnance (UXO) are key barriers to return.

Since the start of 2025, a total of 475 trucks carrying aid from six UN agencies have crossed from Türkiye to Syria—more than five times the number during the same period last year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> OCHA: [Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 \(As of 27 February 2025\)](#)

On 13 February, [a conference on Syria](#) was held in Paris to discuss Syria's humanitarian needs. Regional and international stakeholders pledged support to ensure the success of Syria's transition within a framework that must be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned.<sup>2</sup>

## Impact on telecommunications

The public telecommunications infrastructure across Syria has suffered significant damage due to more than a decade of devastating conflict. Efforts have been made to improve telecommunications infrastructure and services, but challenges remain high for availability and reliability in most locations.

## Activities

### Coordination

As of 28 February, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) continues to provide services across all seven<sup>3</sup> common operational areas in Syria, actively monitoring the situation under the new administration.

The ETC is following up on the importation process for a consignment currently transitioning through Lebanon, from Dubai. With the recent establishment of customs clearance on the Syrian side, a letter has been dispatched to the new administration to facilitate the importation of the consignment, which includes Remote Security Operations Centre (RSOC) devices and various telecommunications accessories and installation materials.

The ETC is providing guidance to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and two International NGOs on the procedure for ICT equipment importation into Syria and the licensing of communication equipment.

ETC participated in key coordination meetings, including the Inter-Sectoral Coordination (ISC), Inter-Sectoral Coordination Group (ISG), and ICT Working Groups, to align telecommunications services with humanitarian response priorities.

ETC provided technical advisory on equipment importation and licensing to UN agencies and INGOs planning to operate in Syria.

### Security communications

The ETC continues to provide shared security communications services to 939 humanitarian responders from 17 UN agencies, across seven common operational areas, thereby enabling secure communications for humanitarians undertaking life-saving responses.

On 31 January, the ETC activated a microwave data connectivity link to reconnect the VHF repeater link between Tartous and Homs which had been down, since 17 January. The Security Communications System (SCS) is now operational and providing secure communications for the humanitarian responders.

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<sup>2</sup> [WFP Syria Emergency Response - External Situation Report - 19 February 2025](#)

<sup>3</sup> The following sites: Damascus, Tartous, Homs, Aleppo, Qamishli, Deir Ezzor, Gaziantep

On 08 February, the ETC installed a new VHF repeater in Idlib at the Barakat Mountain side, covering rural Aleppo up to the Turkish border with support from the UNOCHA and the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS).

Following a joint inspection of the VHF repeater site in Hama by WFP security teams and local authorities on 5 February, the ETC re-established the VHF network during a mission from 17 to 20 February by installing a new repeater at the Zain-Abidin Mountain site in Hama. To improve coverage, the Cluster raised the repeater antenna and installed a new VHF base at the Homs Security Operations Center (SOC) to monitor repeater traffic.

On 27 February, to address electricity instability at the Zain-Abidin Mountain repeater in Hama, ETC installed a solar power solution to ensure a stable power supply.

At the request of UNDSS SOC in Damascus, the ETC programmed seven VHF handheld radios and one mobile base radio for UNESCO staff, supporting their establishment and upcoming office opening in Syria.

On 27 February, ETC successfully replaced the VHF antennas in two UNDSS armored vehicles in Homs, enhancing mobile radio signal quality.

The ETC received a request from the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (OSE Syria) to install VHF mobile radio units in seven vehicles. ETC managed to complete the VHF installation in one vehicle on 24 February. Due to the operational requirement of these vehicles, the equipment installation is being carried out in phases.

The ETC is engaging the WFP security team to understand their SCS equipment needs. The ETC is liaising with WFP FITTEST in Dubai to facilitate the return of ICOM two-way radio communication systems / Push-To-Talk (PTT) devices previously re-exported to Dubai. The ETC plans to seek approval from the new administration in Syria to utilize these devices as part of the UN SCS.

On 12 February, ETC submitted a Note Verbale (NV) to revalidate the previous approval for importing ICOM for the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) aircraft communication system, but a response is still pending.

UNDSS is planning to limit the operational hours of UNDSS-managed SOC in Deir Ezzor to daytime hours. ETC received a request to enable RSOC capability in the Deir-Ezzor VHF Repeater to allow SOC in Qamishli to monitor traffic during the night. The technical assessment was completed from 21 to 27 February. ETC will conduct the reconfiguration in March to minimize any potential disruptions.

### **Data connectivity**

The ETC continues to provide internet connectivity services to 300+ humanitarians from 17 UN agencies across four<sup>4</sup> operational sites in Syria.

The ETC collaborated with the WFP TEC Syria team and successfully tested a satellite-based internet connectivity device in Damascus using the roaming package. The device—received from TEC Lebanon—is fully working, and the office is monitoring the

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<sup>4</sup> The following sites: Aleppo, Homs, Qamishli, Deir Ezzor

service availability and reliability since 07 January. The cluster is now seeking authorization from the new administration to use the devices as alternative back-up data connectivity platforms in the common operational areas across the country.

## Dashboard

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

## Funding

As of 28 February, the ETC is facing limited funding with only 19% of its.

On 15 January, the ETC submitted a request for a three-month no-cost extension (with the possibility of a six-month extension) of the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). HRP is a key document outlining priority humanitarian interventions, and aligning efforts among UN agencies, NGOs, and humanitarian partners. This extension aims to ensure the continuity of ETC activities from January to March 2025 while preparing the HRP 2025.

## Challenges

The evolving power dynamics and conflicts in middle east region pose substantial challenges for delivery of cluster services needs to humanitarian responders. ETC is navigating these complex environments to provide critical communication services to humanitarian responders in Syria.

The recent change in the Syrian administration may delay some authorization processes as the new caretaker authority formulates policies, rules, and regulations. The ETC continues to ensure the availability of ICT services for humanitarian responders to support the affected populations in Syria.

The ongoing power crisis across Syria continued to pose significant challenges and impact the ETC's ability to maintain continuous services.

Moreover, the Syrian telecommunications standards have affected the importation and usage of communication equipment which means there is a need for constant adaptation to changes as well as flexible response strategies. Despite the new caretaker authority easing some restrictions, the operation is still facing significant challenges due to lengthy equipment importation processes and the need to obtain necessary authorizations to fully operate the equipment. This affects the timely implementation of ETC activities across Syria.

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

[www.etcluster.org/emergencies/syria-conflict](http://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/syria-conflict)

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