

Syria & the Surrounding Countries

ETC Situation Report #45

Reporting period 01/12/2020 to 31/01/2021

The ETC operates under the 'Whole of Syria (WoS)' approach which comprises activities in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan for an effective humanitarian response inside Syria. The next report will be issued on or around 31/03/2021.

Highlights

- The worsening security situation in north-east Syria is impacting on ETC missions and activities.
- The ETC deployed to Qamishli and Tartous to complete the final stage of the multi-site project to migrate and upgrade security telecommunications infrastructure to support the safety and security of humanitarians in Syria.
- To continue to improve services for humanitarians in Syria, the ETC has initiated the process to purchase a large amount of communications equipment, including maintenance kits for security telecommunications equipment and back-up power solutions to support connectivity equipment in Syria's inter-agency hubs.



An ETC telecommunications specialist enhances security communications systems for humanitarians in Tartous.

Photo: WFP/ETC

ETC Activities

Coordination

- The recruitment of a dedicated ETC Coordinator in Syria is ongoing. A candidate has been selected for the position and is expected to take up the post in mid-late 2021.
- The ETC is preparing to provide its inputs to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2021.

Internet connectivity

- A joint ETC/WFP mission to Deir Ez-Zor was scheduled to take place on 24 January to review security communications infrastructure and to assess the Internet connectivity issues in the inter-agency UNICEF-managed hub. However, due to the escalating security situation in that region, the mission team had to turn back to Damascus before reaching Deir Ez-Zor.

Security telecommunications

- The ETC deployed to Qamishli from 6-16 December and to Tartous from 16-23 January to complete the final stage of the multi-site project to migrate and upgrade security telecommunications infrastructure to support the safety and security of humanitarians in Syria. In both sites, the ETC installed equipment to improve VHF radio coverage at the UNDSS-managed Security Operation Centres (SOCs), installed or upgraded radio equipment in UN vehicles and conducted assessments to identify faulty security telecommunications equipment. The ETC has already carried out upgrades in Damascus, Homs, Aleppo and Qamishli.

Procurement

- To continue to improve services for humanitarians in Syria, the ETC has initiated the process to purchase a large amount of communications equipment to import into the country – once approval from the authorities is received – including six handheld satellite radios to equip the UNDSS-managed SOCs, kits to install and maintain telecommunications equipment and back-up power solutions to support connectivity equipment in Syria's inter-agency hubs in Aleppo, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs and Qamishli. The process to import communications equipment into Syria is lengthy and the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact on shipping movements. The ETC is therefore exploring solutions to obtain the required equipment.

Capacity building

- A planned training session has been put on hold due to the ongoing restrictions on staff movement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the situation permits, planning for the training session will resume. The training aims to build the emergency management capabilities of national staff in Syria to strengthen preparedness and ready-to-deploy skills.

Challenges

- Frequent power cuts across Syria are impacting on the delivery of ETC services.
- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact on the importation of equipment and movement of staff.
- Lack of access to operational areas and lengthy deployment authorisations from relevant authorities is a major issue which frequently affects the timely implementation of ETC activities across Syria.
- Syria is currently under an embargo which is causing additional challenges in importing equipment.



Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **17 February 2021**.

Information

- Humanitarian ICT responders supporting the Syria operation across the region are encouraged to share their contact details with Syria.ETC@wfp.org to facilitate coordination efforts.
- A dedicated information-sharing space on Syria – including an ETC dashboard, infographic and factsheet – can be found on the [ETC website](#).

Contacts

Syria.ETC@wfp.org

Hikmat Akad, Interim ETC Coordinator for Syria

hikmat.akad@wfp.org

Elizabeth Millership, ETC Information Management Officer for Syria

elizabeth.millership@wfp.org