Palestine, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #06
Date: 06/12/2023 **Time:** 13:02 UTC

Further information related to the ETC Palestine 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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Attendance

Chair (ETC)	**Brent Carbno**
ACTED	Manon Peron
ACF Spain	Olivier Herrmann
CDAC Network	Liz Hendry
CRS	Ahmed Shoukry
	Kylie Garner
	Sameh Abedrabbo
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger
FAO	Ayman Barakat
Government of Luxembourg	Bram Krieps
	Mike Duffin
	Roland Nurenberg
ICRC	Alfredo Bermudez Salazar
	Claudiu Mateescu
Impact Initiatives - REACH	Raphael Bacot
IOM	Moayyed Fares
INTERNEWS	Stijn Aelbers
IRC	Alan Mooney
ITU	Adel Darwish
	Doris Maritza Delgado
Map-UK	Sam Wahlstrom
MedGlobal	Jackson al Khoury de Concini
Medicos del Mundo (MdM) Spain	Stéphane Chartier
Medical Aid for Palestinians	Sam Wahlstrom
Meedan	Aaron Huslage
NetHope	Anja Delaquis
	Dagbjartur Brynjarsson
Office of the Quartet (Palestine)	Enas Abu Laban

OXFAM	Lour Kuttab
	Saed Muna
Save the Children	Akil Hassan
	Lee Jason
UNHCR	Massoumeh Farman Farmaian
UNICEF	Kamal Kamaleddine
	Mart Dabbas
UNFPA	Dobromir Marinov
UNOCHA	Mahmoud Bahaaeldein Effat Darwish
	Antoine Abisamra
UNOPS	Dia Qaimari
	Kristoffer Noerkjaer Randloev
	Joern Bratland
	John Dunne
	Lillian Figg Franzoi
UNRWA	Emmanuel Mugarura
	Kaan Cetinturk
USAID	Rakesh Bharania
	Levent Cefld
Global ETC	Caroline Teyssier
	Maria Saleh
	Mufaro Masuka
	Phyza Jameel
WFP	Amirullah Syarif
	Angel Buitrago
	Aramais Alojants
	Areen Roman
	Burak Sezgin
	Dalia Mansour
	Dane Novarlic
	Jay Mahanand

Agenda

1. Situation update
2. Global ETC update
3. Partner updates
4. AOB

Minutes

1. Situation update

- On 01 December—at about 0700—hostilities resumed following the truce observed from 24 to 30 November. On 05 December, the intensified air, land, and sea bombardments

across Gaza as well as ground fighting between the conflicting parties continued. By 03 December, the fighting spread further south to include locations such as Khan Younis.

- Although a limited aid distribution took place in Rafah governorate on 03 December, no distribution happened in the adjacent Khan Younis governorate from 03 to 04 December due to the intensity of hostilities and aid distribution only resumed on 05 December.

- On 04 December—at about 2030—the main Mobile Network Operator (MNO) and telecommunications service provider in Gaza—Jawwal—announced that all services had shut down due to damages on the main optic fibre routes. Partial telecommunications shut down occurred in Gaza city and northern Gaza a few hours earlier due to escalated hostilities. Humanitarian agencies and first responders have warned that telecommunications blackouts jeopardize the already constrained provision of life-saving assistance. Services from Jawwal were partially restored by the evening of 05 December.

- Fuel shortages continue with only 69,000 litres of pre-allocated fuel being delivered daily against a need of 110,000 litres a day to provide services for all lifesaving needs.

- On 05 December, the United Nations (UN) Security Management team made the decision to reduce the staff footprint in Gaza by limiting the presence to a maximum of 22 international staff at any given time, due to the severe security situation.

2. Global ETC update

Coordination/equipment

- The ETC continues to coordinate a collective approach among partners for the importation of equipment into Gaza.

- The ETC team, United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) met with COGAT on 03 December to discuss further the need for independent connectivity and security communications services solutions in Gaza to effectively deliver their mandate, as well as the urgent need to import telecommunications equipment into Gaza to set up the shared common services.

- At the request of COGAT and as a follow up to the equipment list submitted on 24 November, the interagency group developed a revised proposal containing the consolidated description of all equipment for importation and installation in Gaza as well how the equipment will be set up and used. The document was submitted to COGAT on 06 December.

- The ETC confirms that COGAT has so far not issued any approval for importation of any telecommunications equipment nor use of e-SIM cards in Gaza.

- On the evening of 03 December, COGAT authorized the ETC to purchase and programme 20 Iridium satellite phones from Gilat Telecom—the sole authorized satellite technology service provider for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) at this stage —for use by UN staff in Gaza.

- The ETC has further consulted the Egyptian Telecommunications Regulatory Authorities (TRA) regarding the temporary importation of equipment destined for Gaza. The Egyptian authorities reiterated that all equipment destined for Gaza will only be allowed to come through Egypt if there is COGAT authorization for eventual importation of the equipment into Gaza.

Communications services

- The ETC will purchase the 20 Iridium satellite phones and airtime as authorized by COGAT while UNDSS will be responsible for managing and allocating the devices to the humanitarian responders operating in Gaza.

- UNDSS staff in Gaza informed the local ICT Working Group (WG) that the Very High frequency (VHF) digital repeaters in Rafah and Khan Yunis were recently activated. The ETC is checking the next feasible steps with UNDSS to use the security communications network digitally as initially planned, or in analogue mode if the digital platform is non-functional. To access the services, all UN agencies will need to provide their radios to UNDSS to program them in Jerusalem as agreed and approved by COGAT.

- An ETC ICT Specialist—Burak Sezgin—deployed to Cairo on 04 December and is tentatively scheduled to proceed to Gaza on 13 December as part of the ETC response for technical engagement with local actors in Gaza. He is currently liaising with the local ICT WG in Gaza to gather information on the current state of the installed telecommunications equipment.

- To date, the ETC has identified two sites in Rafah and one site on the Rafah/Khan Yunis governorate border to be supported with shared common services, once set up is authorized. The sites are: 1) UN Joint Operations Centre, 2) UNDSS-OCHA Guesthouse and 3) United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Guesthouse, where most humanitarian personnel are operating from and reside.

- The ETC is following up with the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) for possible support with the provision of radio communications equipment in Egypt. The support would augment the ERC's current capacity in effectively supporting the humanitarian community in their sole consignee role. ERC are licensed to operate VHF radio communications equipment in Egypt and are the sole consignee for goods and equipment importation into Gaza.

Funding

- The ETC has reached out to several donors in view of the critical funding challenges.

- On 04 December, the Government of Luxembourg showed a strong indication of allocating US$250,000 to the ETC response in Gaza. Further, on 05 December, the Government of France committed EUR250,000 to the ETC Palestine response. The combined funding to the ETC translates to 64% of the US$800,000 requested in the Flash Appeal to undertake its activities and address the immediate needs in Gaza.

- UK and USAID donors were also provided with ETC requirements on 30 November for possible funding.

- The ETC awaits feedback from the potential donors and thanks all donors for their interest and commitment in supporting its activities.

3. Partner Updates

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- ITU is engaging with the Israeli Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology to import 100 fully activated Thuraya satellite phones into Gaza. The Ministry has indicated that it needs to be provided with a list of the humanitarian agencies who will be using the phones and the responsible lead in managing and handling the phones, once in Gaza.

- In parallel, the ETC explored the possibility to use local provider support in importing the equipment to Egypt at a cost. The current information received show a high cost to do so.

- ITU already has requests for the satellite phones from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Health Organization (WHO), and UNRWA. As the phones have not all been allocated, ITU agreed to engage with the ETC to coordinate the distribution of these phones on a priority needs basis per the various UN agencies and humanitarian partners.

World Food Programme (WFP) – Regional Bureau for Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe (RBC)

- The WFP regional office in Cairo reached an agreement with the MNO, Airalo, on a 15% discount code for the purchase of e-SIMs for humanitarian organizations worldwide.

- The ETC cannot endorse use of any e-SIMs in Gaza until official authorization is issued by the authorities.

4. AOB

- The Director of Systems and Security—Aaron Huslage—at Meedan technology company indicated that they can provide e-SIMs that are operational on three Israeli networks in Gaza. Interested organizations can get in touch directly with the company.

The next teleconference will be held on Wednesday 13 December 2023 at 13:00 UTC.

13:00   UTC
14:00   Rome
15:00   Cairo/Jerusalem
17:00   Dubai

Acronyms

ACTED   Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ACF   Action Against Hunger / Action contre la Faim
CRS   Catholic Relief Services
ETC   Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO   Food and Agriculture Organization

COGAT	Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
GSMA	Global System for Mobile Communications
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MTIT	Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology
TRA	Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VHF	Very High Frequency
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Minutes: Mufaro Masuka, Global ETC Information Management Officer.