

## Palestine, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #12

Date: 17/01/2024 Time: 13:00 UTC

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

[www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict](http://www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict)

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

[Palestine.ETC@wfp.org](mailto:Palestine.ETC@wfp.org)

## Attendance

### Chair (ETC)

Access Now

Action Against Hunger (ACF)  
Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)  
Cadus  
Cisco  
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)  
Ericsson Response  
ETC Global

ETC Palestine

FAO  
GSMA  
Government of Luxembourg

ICRC

International Rescue Committee

IOM  
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Medical Aid for Palestinians  
Mercy Corps  
NetHope

### Brent Carbno

Ben Grazda  
Marwa Fatafta  
Peter Miek  
Maya Papotti  
Rakesh Bharania  
Corinna Schaefer  
Eric Knudson  
Abed Rabbo Sameh  
Lars Ruediger  
Caroline Teyssier  
Maria Saleh  
Marie Elena Bock  
Komi Amedjonekou  
Hossam Metwally  
Ayman Barakat  
Bryce David Hartley  
Gilles Hoffmann  
Roland Nurenberg  
Alfredo Bermudez  
Claudiu Mateescu  
Alan Mooney  
Amro AlMoghraby  
Moayyad Fares  
Newton Muli  
Adel Darwin  
Mustafa Ahmed Ali Ai Mahdi  
Sam Wahlstrom  
Nadeen Abu-Rub  
Anja Delaquis

Office of the Quartet (Palestine)  
Save the Children

Search for Common Ground  
Terre des Hommes  
UNDSS  
UNICEF

UNESCO  
UNRWA

UNWomen  
USAID

US Department of State  
WFP

WHO

Enas Abu Laban  
Lour Kuttab  
Mark Hawkins  
Rami Assali  
Pantelis Kouvaris  
Mohammad Alawi  
Kamal Kamaledine  
Marta Dabbas  
Marc Dieng  
Nasri Sidawi  
Tamimi Bilal  
Lukasz Cyra  
Omar Baig  
Rita Okechukwu  
Nabeel Al-Ghara  
Jeffrey Woodham  
Peter Schechter  
Joe Burton  
Amirullah Syarif  
Burak Sezgin  
David Pickering  
Emma Gilson  
Lionel Marre  
Michael Dirksen  
Moussa Sana  
Sami Alio  
Siriporn Charaoenkijgasat  
Akil Hassan  
Mohammed Elsheikh

## Agenda

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

## Minutes

### 1. Situation update

- As of 17 January, telecommunications services in Gaza have remained shut down for the fifth consecutive day, since 12 January. This is the seventh time that communications have stopped working since the onset of conflict on 07 October and it has been the longest communication blackout so far. The blackout of telecommunications prevents people in Gaza from accessing lifesaving information or calling for first responders and impedes other forms of humanitarian response.

- The security situation remains unchanged. Intense Israeli bombardments from air, land, and sea continued across much of the Gaza Strip on 17 January, resulting in further civilian casualties and infrastructure destruction. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 1.9 million people—approximately 90% of the Gaza population—are internally displaced and 60% of the infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged.

## 2. Global ETC update

### Coordination/equipment

- Over the past reporting week, the ETC has engaged in several coordination meetings. The primary focus of these discussions has been addressing the challenges that the ETC is currently navigating, particularly advocating for importation of equipment and essential fuel supplies for Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) in Gaza.
- A meeting was held between the ETC ICT Specialist—Burak Sezgin—and the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) on the ground in Gaza to discuss the obstacles faced by the ETC. The HC demonstrated strong support to engage authorities and advocate to overcome impediments that have blocked progress in the setting up of independent, reliable, and stable telecommunications services for humanitarian responders.
- The ETC participated in the national Interagency Coordination Cell Group (ICCG) in Cairo, with discussions focused on common challenges encountered by clusters in the Gaza response and the need to strengthen a collective approach to advocacy for improved access and streamlined equipment importation processes into Gaza.
- On 09 January, the interagency group met with the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) for an update meeting regarding the revised list of the consolidated ICT equipment submitted on 07 January. COGAT requested the ETC to resubmit the consolidated ICT equipment list in an official letter format, which the cluster fulfilled on 13 January.
- The Palestinian Office of the Quartet<sup>1</sup> highlighted the need for cables and material to repair the damaged network infrastructure in Gaza and emphasized the increased need for security for Paltel Internet Service Provider (ISP) maintenance personnel. This follows an incident in which two Paltel maintenance crew were hit and killed on their way to repair network infrastructure. This is the second time Paltel crew have been hit. The incidences are increasing the reluctance of MNOs and ISPs to send maintenance teams.
- The ETC met with First Response Radio and UNRWA on 10 January to discuss the setting up of an FM radio station broadcasting solution for access of vital information for the Gaza population. The ETC is currently seeking information about licenses and authorization to operate FM radio broadcasting services in Gaza.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.quartetoffice.org/>

### Communications services

- As of 17 January, telecommunications services in Gaza have remained shut down for the fifth consecutive day, since 12 January. Services of the two MNOs—Jawwal and Ooredoo—as well as the Paltel ISP are all down.
- The data network used by the UN agencies in Gaza is not reliable and staff are experiencing intermittent and unstable connectivity. There are reports of Etisalat operating near the Egyptian border for up to a 1-kilometre radius, which remains untested by the ETC. Reports of a 3G Vodafone Egypt signal also remains untested. Cellcom, the Israeli provider, is said to operate for up to approximately 4 kilometres inside Gaza from the Rafah border crossing. MNO Pelephone, tested by ETC, operates in 4G near the Rafah border crossing.
- The ETC is supporting global partner—International Telecommunication Union (ITU)—to allocate 100 fully activated Thuraya satellite phones to UN agencies operating in the Gaza emergency response for enhanced communication services. The satellite phones were donated by the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to ITU for the inter-agency use and are fully paid for. The ETC conducted an online survey for UN heads of agencies to express their interest in being allocated part of the 100 Thuraya satellite phones. The survey was conducted from 26 December to 04 January and eight UN agencies (translating to a total of 32 phones) expressed their interest to be allocated the satellite phone devices.
- The ETC is exploring ways to equip the armored vehicle convoys going from Rafah to northern Gaza with a reliable and stable means of communication, such as satellite phones and possibly also a mobile data unit such as a Broadband Global Area Network (BGAN) device, or any other available solution. The communications equipment is needed for the ETC ICT Specialist who is carrying out ICT needs assessments in Rafah and intends to carry out similar assessments in Khan Yunis.
- On 15 January, the ETC conducted a technical assessment of the Rafah Very High Frequency (VHF) digital radio repeater installed at Al Shaboura Clinic. The repeater is currently powered by a generator at Al Shaboura Clinic that operates from 0730 until 1600. The ETC assisted UNDSS with the programming of two VHF handheld radios for use on the security communications system (SCS). Although the repeater is functional, the SCS remains non-operational due to the incompatibility between the VHF handheld radio antennae and the digital repeater system. The ETC is assisting UNDSS to import compatible antennae from Jerusalem, with approval from COGAT.

### Staffing

- The ETC Coordinator—Komi Amedjonekou—and Deputy ETC Coordinator—Hossam Metwally—are based in Cairo, Egypt, to remotely support all Gaza response activities. Both members of staff await the issuance of entry documents to deploy and be based in Jerusalem. The Deputy ETC Coordinator is currently on an ICT needs assessment in El-Arish from 15 to 19 January.
- The ETC Senior ICT Specialist—Burak Sezgin—is in Rafah, Gaza, since 08 January, conducting technical engagements with local actors, ICT needs assessment, and offer technical ICT support to other humanitarian responders.

- Mufaro Masuka—ETC Information Management Officer—continues to remotely support the response, while in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), until entry visa, travel documents, and contract are finalized for the identified replacement candidate. The WFP Standby Partnership (SBP) unit has identified the replacement candidate from WFP SBP—RedR Australia—who is currently being onboarded to fully take over the role, starting 01 February, based in Cairo, Egypt.

### 3. Partner Updates

- N/a

### 4. AOB

- N/a

**The next teleconference will be held on Wednesday 24 January 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
BGAN	Broadband Global Area Network
CD	Country Director
COGAT	Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DED	Deputy Executive Director
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HF	High Frequency
ICCG	Interagency Coordination Cell Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ISP	Internet Service Provider
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
SBP	Standby Partnership
SCS	Security Communication System
UAE	United Arab Emirates
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:** Marie Elena Bock, Global ETC Partnerships Officer.