

Palestine, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #13

Date: 24/01/2024 Time: 13:00 UTC

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

www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict

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

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

ILO International Labour Organization
International Rescue Committee

IOM
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Medical Aid for Palestinians

Caroline Teyssier

Ben Grazda
Marwa Fatafta
Peter Miek
Maya Papotti
Rakesh Bharania
Corinna Schaefer
Eric Knudson
Abed Rabbo Sameh
Lars Ruediger
Mufaro Masuka
Rita Oneissi
Burak Sezgin
David Pickering
Komi Amedjonekou
Hossam Metwally
Ayman Barakat
Bryce David Hartley
Gilles Hoffmann
Roland Nurenberg
Alfredo Bermudez
Claudiu Mateescu
Dalal Abu Saleh
Alan Mooney
Amro AIMoghraby
Moayyad Fares
Newton Muli
Adel Darwin
Mustafa Ahmed Ali Ai Mahdi
Sam Wahlstrom

Mercy Corps
NetHope
Office of the Quartet (Palestine)
Save the Children

Search for Common Ground
Terre des Hommes (TDH)
UNDSS
UNICEF

UNESCO
UNRWA

UN Women
USAID

US Department of State

WFP

WHO

Nadeen Abu-Rub
Anja Delaquis
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 Schecter
Joseph Burton
Sylvia Yacoub
Gia Rowley
Angel Buitrago
Ansoumane Camara
Aramais Alojants
Amirullah Syarif
Emma Gilson
Lionel Marre
Michael Dirksen
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Sami Alio
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Akil Hassan
Mohammed Elsheikh

Agenda

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

Minutes

1. Situation update

- The intense Israeli air, land, and sea bombardments as well as ground operations and fighting with Hamas armed groups continued across much of the Gaza Strip. According to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, at least 25,700 have been killed and 63,370

injured between 07 October 2023 and 22 January 2024. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reports that 1.9 million people—approximately 90% of the Gaza population—are internally displaced and 60% of the infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged.

- The capacity of humanitarian agencies to operate safely and effectively anywhere in Gaza remains heavily compromised by recurrent denials of access to the north, restrictions on the import of critical equipment, and recurrent intense hostilities, among other factors.
- The United Nations (UN) Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) ad interim for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) visited Gaza on 23 January to engage authorities to facilitate humanitarian interventions and meet civilians. The Head of UNRWA has been appointed the Deputy HC for Palestine.
- Voice call services were gradually restored to most of Gaza during the evening of 19 January, having been shut down for over one week since 12 January. However, internet remains down across the whole of Gaza. The blackout of telecommunications restricts people in Gaza from accessing lifesaving information and impedes other forms of humanitarian response.
- Electricity to charge devices is limited in certain areas that have generators and solar power solutions. Other locations are completely without power since the shutdown of Gaza's sole power plant by Israeli authorities on 11 October.

2. Global ETC update

Coordination/equipment

- On 17 January, the ETC met with the CDAC Network to discuss information needs for the population in Gaza. CDAC Network is a global alliance of organizations working to ensure people can access safe, trustworthy information and communicate during crises, and is a Global ETC partner.
- The ETC met with the Inter-Agency Coordination Cell Group (ICCG) in Cairo on 17 January to discuss cluster responses in Gaza. The ETC presented its challenges and status of the response in Gaza.
- On 18 January, the ETC met with Importation and Customs Clearance Together (IMPACCT) to discuss the importation and customs clearance process for telecommunications and ICT equipment in Cairo. This is part of a planning process to aid the prepositioning of equipment in El-Arish at the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) warehouse, for eventual importation into Gaza once approval from the authorities is issued. IMPACCT fosters a dialogue between aid donors and national customs administrations to help crisis-affected people rapidly get the humanitarian assistance they need, in line with the UN's vision.
- On 18 January, the ETC met with the Palestine UN HC, the WFP Palestine Country Office (CO) Country Director (CD), and the Deputy Country Director (DCD) to discuss the status of the ETC response in Gaza and request the HC to engage the Israeli Coordinator of

Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) in seeking authorization for the importation of telecommunications equipment into Gaza. The UN HC is scheduled to meet COGAT on 25 January.

- On 19 January, the ETC attended the national ICCG meeting for the OPT to discuss ongoing emergency response cluster operations in Gaza. The [updated Flash Appeal](#) was discussed, and the interagency group proposed a 9-month extension with budget revision to respond to the evolved needs in Gaza. The updated response plan will also be reflected in the Flash Appeal.

Access to Information for the population

- Global ETC, REACH, and the World Bank discussed the World Bank's Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA), scheduled for publication by 31 January. The meeting discussed the possibility to benchmark the World Bank methodologies against the methodologies used by REACH during the Palestine-Gaza Information and Communication Dynamics assessment report. The World Bank shared their bi-weekly qualitative assessments. The RDNA findings may be useful for the planned updated January version of REACH during the Palestine-Gaza Information and Communication Dynamics assessment report.
- The ETC met with UNRWA representatives and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to discuss communication needs. UNRWA is currently contracting BBC for a special program to be aired on the BBC from Ramallah (located in the West Bank) and neighbouring countries. This program is intended to cover child protection and education needs in Gaza. The ETC is also exploring a community radio option to be hosted by UNRWA to facilitate message outreach for the affected communities.

Communications services

- Voice telecommunications services were gradually restored to most of Gaza starting on the evening of 19 January, having been shut down for one week since 12 January. The calls are often congested, resulting in calls being queued up for an average waiting time of two minutes to connect.
- Internet connectivity service from Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)—Jawwal and Ooredoo—and Paltel Internet Service Provider (ISP) remains down across the whole of the Gaza Strip.
- The ETC conducted data connectivity assessments from 19 to 23 January at several humanitarian offices and guesthouse locations.
- Since 09 January, the ETC has supported 10 humanitarian agencies with ICT assessments, technical advice and information, quick repairs, and guidance on the use of ICT equipment. The organizations include Action Against Hunger (ACF), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Logistics Cluster United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNDSS, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UNOCHA, WFP and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The ICT needs of four organizations—the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), United Nations International

Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF), and the UK-Med—are pending technical assistance from the ETC.

- The ETC is assisting UNDSS to identify, procure, and install a solar power solution for the VHF digital radio repeater installed at Al Shaboura Clinic, Rafah. The repeater is currently powered by a generator at Al Shaboura Clinic that operates daily from 0730 until 1600. A solar power solution would enable the repeater to be operational for 24 hours a day.
- On 18 January, the ETC met with ERC in El-Arish, who requested to receive the Very High Frequency (VHF) handheld radios as an in-kind donation from the ETC to use in Egypt to resolve a shortage of the devices among their staff. ERC seeks to facilitate an enhanced cross border communications system for humanitarian responders in Gaza. The ETC is consulting on both the internal administrative, authorization and technical feasibility for the implementation of this approach.

Staffing

- The ETC Coordinator—Komi Amedjonekou—is in Cairo, Egypt, since 09 January jointly with the Deputy Coordinator—Hossam Metwally—and continues to remotely support all Gaza response activities. David Pickering deployed to Cairo on 23 January to take over from Komi as the ETC Coordinator.
- The ETC Senior ICT Specialist—Burak Sezgin—is in Rafah, Gaza, since 08 January to conduct technical engagements with local actors, ICT needs assessments, and offer technical telecommunications support to other humanitarian responders. Burak is tentatively scheduled to depart Gaza on 29 January and go back to Jerusalem.
- Mufaro Masuka—ETC Information Management Officer—continues to remotely support the response from Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), until entry visa, travel documents, and contract are finalized for the identified replacement candidate. The WFP Standby Partnership unit has identified the replacement candidate from WFP Standby partner—RedR Australia—who is currently being onboarded to fully take over the role starting 01 February.

3. Partner Updates

Office of the Quartet

- The Office of the Quartet¹ highlighted that MNO—Oreedoo—improvised and used microwave links to the existing optical fibre cable to establish partial connectivity in a few sites in the north during the week-long communications blackout between 12 and 19 January.
- The Office of the Quartet intends to closely support Oreedoo in maintaining the availability of telecommunications services in the few operational sites.

¹ The Office of the Quartet was established in East Jerusalem in 2002 by the Quartet on the Middle East: <https://www.quartetoffice.org/>

- The Office of the Quartet requested support from humanitarian responders to lobby and advocate to the authorities to ensure maintenance and protection of service provision from the existing licensed telecommunications operators in Gaza.

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. ITU is collaborating with the ETC to seek approval to share the contact details of the eight UN agencies' focal points with the Ministry. 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.
- ITU is carrying out efforts and seeking support to rebuild telecommunications infrastructure in Gaza. The process is still at initial phase and ITU welcomes any other humanitarian responders to be part of the coordinated approach.

4. AOB

- N/a

The next teleconference will be held on Wednesday 07 February 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
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CD	Country Director
COGAT	Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DCD	Deputy Country Director
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
ICCG	Interagency Coordination Cell Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IMPACCT	Importation and Customs Clearance Together
ISP	Internet Service Provider
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MoH	Ministry of Health
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
OPT	Occupied Palestine Territory
RDNA	Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment
SBP	Standby Partnership
SCS	Security Communication System
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
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.