Palestine, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #18
Date: 03/04/2024 **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:

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Attendance (37)

Chair (ETC)	**Brent Carbno**
Access Now	Ben Grazda
	Giulio Coppi
ACTED	Héloise Vacheret
Cisco	Kevin Murphy
	Matt Altman
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger
ETC Global	Caroline Teyssier
	Komi Amedjonekou
	Mufaro Masuka
	Maria Saleh
ETC Palestine	Bipin Jha
	Burak Sezgin
	David Pickering
Global Communities	Shahd Mohndes
Government of Luxembourg	Gilles Hoffmann
GSMA	Bryce Hartley
International Rescue Committee	Alan Mooney
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	Doris Maritza Delago
	Mustafa Ahmed Ali Al Mahdi
Internews Network	Stijn Aelbers
Medical Aid for Palestinians	Sam Wahlstrom
NetHope	Anja Delaquis
NRC	Amanda Terron Garcia
Première Urgence Internationale	Clément Buisson
Save the Children	Lour Kuttab
	Hassan Akil
UNICEF	Marc Dieng
	Nabiha Faruqui
UNESCO	Aslam Badran
UN Women	Nabeel Algharawy
US Department of State	Joseph K Burton

WFP	Angel Buitrago
	Aramais Alojants
	Sami Alio
WHO	Hani Dodin
	Mohammed El Sheikh

Agenda

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

Minutes

1. Situation update

- Intense Israeli bombardment and ground operations as well as heavy fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas armed groups continue to be reported across much of the Gaza Strip, particularly in Deir Al Balah and areas surrounding Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. This has resulted in further civilian casualties, mass displacement (over 75% of the population have been internally displaced across the Gaza Strip – some multiple times), and destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure.

- 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.

- Voice services from Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) Jawwal and Ooredoo are operational in Rafah, although the network is congested due to increased users and few operational telecommunications towers, due to fuel allocation limitations. The internet services from both MNOs are non-operational in Gaza. This situation existed before the onset of conflict on 07 October 2023.

- Paltel and Ajyal Internet Service Providers (ISPs) resumed internet services in parts of Rafah and Deir Al Balah, though with intermittent connectivity, significantly affecting humanitarian responders to access critical information for delivering lifesaving aid.

- Iridium and Thuraya satellite phone voice services are operational across the Gaza Strip.

2. Global ETC update

Coordination/equipment

- The ETC continues to coordinate with and support humanitarian actors including UN agencies and humanitarian partners operating in Gaza with technical needs, guidance, and setting realistic expectations on available telecommunications services in Gaza.

- On 04 April, the ETC along with other clusters engaged in Area-Based Coordination (ABC) meetings in Khan Yunis and Deir Al Balah. The ABC approach has been adopted following the population movements and the expansion of humanitarian response northwards, resulting in clusters shifting their meetings from the Joint Humanitarian Operations Centre (JHOC) in Rafah to communities in Deir Al Balah and Khan Yunis.

- On 02 April, the ETC received confirmation from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) regarding the approval secured from the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) to import an additional 20 satellite phones into Gaza. However, COGAT requested that these phones must be procured from Gilat Telecom in Israel and must only be intended for use by UN international staff in Gaza. The ETC is coordinating with OCHA and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) to develop a distribution plan among the UN agencies in Gaza.

- Since 09 January, with the presence of ETC staff in Gaza, the ETC has conducted 22 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) assessments in 15 locations and supported 18 humanitarian agencies with repairs, technical advice, and guidance on the use of ICT equipment and services.

Internet connectivity

- On 28 March, the ETC supported WFP by assessing Wi-Fi hotspot availability in Deir Al Balah. The findings from this assessment are being collated for WFP's efforts in registering refugees and displaced people to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian aid in Deir Al Balah and Rafah.

Security Communications Systems (SCS)

- On 02 April, the 30 pre-approved Very High Frequency (VHF) digital radios arrived at Tel Aviv airport. The radios were shipped by WFP Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) in Dubai and will be received by UNDSS in Jerusalem for configuration and further distribution to UN agencies in Gaza. The ETC is collaborating with UNDSS in Jerusalem for the swift release of the VHF radios, their configuration, assignment of call signs, and facilitating their delivery to Gaza.

- As of early March, the latest high-resolution satellite mapping shared by partners has revealed that the VHF repeater sites in Gaza City and Jabalia are still standing, while the repeater site in Khan Yunis has been destroyed. The ETC is planning to conduct physical assessments at these sites to make informed recommendations, once authorized safe access to these locations is secured.

Access to information for communities

- On 29 March, the ETC engaged with partners and provided guidance and support on identifying viable solutions for the importation of FM broadcasting equipment for public messaging in Gaza, including guidance on operating licenses.

Staffing

- There are currently four dedicated ETC staff deployed in the response. The ETC coordinator is deployed to Rafah, Gaza, on 25 March and is scheduled to return to Cairo on 15 April for handover to a replacement ETC coordinator. The ETC deputy coordinator is on annual leave and is scheduled to resume his role on 14 April, while being based in Cairo. The ETC Telecommunications Specialist has been in Jerusalem since 01 April

supporting the coordination of the arrival and configuration of VHF radios. The Information Management Officer (IMO) continues to support the response while based in Cairo.

Funding

- The ETC remains 64 per cent funded out of the US$800,000 requested in the Flash Appeal to undertake its coordination and information management activities to address the immediate needs in Gaza. The current Palestine Flash Appeal expired on 31 March. The revised Flash Appeal, incorporating ETC's budget requirement of US$1.8 million until 31 December 2024 was submitted to OCHA on 16 March.

Challenges

- The safety concerns of humanitarian aid workers in Gaza have significantly intensified, following the killing of seven humanitarian aid workers on 01 April.

- Limited access to electricity, fuel, and telecommunications services continues to impede the humanitarian response in Gaza. The Importation of telecommunications equipment into Gaza is prolonged and extremely challenging.

- The risk of cybersecurity issues in this emergency is considered extremely high. Caution in using technology platforms applies, including the use of social media and press platforms.

3. Partner Updates

- N/a

4. AOB

- N/a

The next teleconference will be held on Wednesday 17 April 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
COGAT	Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FITTEST	Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ISP	Internet Service Provider
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MNO	Mobile Network Operator

NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
RBC	Regional Bureau Cairo
SCS	Security Communications Systems
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
VHF	Very High Frequency
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Minutes: Bipin Jha, ETC Palestine Information Management Officer.