

Palestine – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #2

Reporting period: 01/11/2023 to 07/11/2023

The ETC was activated for the conflict crisis in Gaza on 31 October 2023. Situation Reports are published weekly.

Highlights

- 07 November 2023 marks one month since the escalation of hostilities in Gaza.
- Following ETC activation on 31 October, the ETC Coordinator relocated to Cairo on 02 November where many humanitarian response agencies are setting up coordination mechanisms until access to Gaza is possible. The coordinator is convening the UN ICT Working Group from Cairo to maximize partner resources.
- The ETC has developed a three-month response plan. Based on engagement with OCHA and partners on the ground, the ETC plans to provide communications services for humanitarians in three key operational locations, tentatively identified as Kahn Yunis and two sites in Rafah.
- The ETC is focusing on establishing pathways to import critical telecommunications equipment into Gaza to set up services for humanitarians. Identifying an importation corridor into Gaza is an urgent need for the cluster and its partners. Efforts are underway to obtain the necessary authorizations from the authorities and to identify a route for equipment through either Egypt or Israel.



Residents of Gaza staying in a UN logistics centre near the Egyptian border. Photo: OCHA

Situation overview

Armed conflict between Palestinian militant groups and Israeli military forces began on 07 October 2023. Since then, intense airstrikes and a complete siege in the Gaza Strip has resulted in a humanitarian crisis.

Intense bombardments across the Gaza Strip continued over the past week, primarily in northern Gaza and Gaza city, which have been largely cut off from the rest of the strip.

About 1.5 million people in Gaza are internally displaced. As of 05 November, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reported that 717,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) are sheltering in 149 UNRWA facilities.

As of 05 November, there has been a total of 451 trucks entering Gaza through the Rafah Crossing with Egypt since 21 October to deliver essential humanitarian items.

On 01 November, the Rafah Border Crossing opened for the movement of people for the first time since 10 October.

The Kerem Shalom crossing with Israel—the main entry point for goods prior to the hostilities—remains closed, as does the Israeli pedestrian crossing of Erez.

The UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) released an [updated Flash Appeal](#) on 06 November requesting US\$1.2 billion. Interventions included in the Appeal aim at meeting the needs of 2.7 million people—including the entire population of Gaza and 500,000 people in the West Bank—by the end of 2023. The original appeal, launched on 12 October, asked for \$294 million to support nearly 1.3 million people.

Telecommunications overview

After being cut at around 03:00 on 01 November, Gaza's telecommunications and internet services were gradually restored after almost nine hours of blackout. This is the second occurrence in a week of telecommunications blackout. During this time, rescue teams were unable to locate thousands of injured people still under the rubble. Civilians were unable to receive updated information on where they can access humanitarian relief and where they may move to be in lesser danger.

Since the escalation of hostilities, the Gaza Strip has experienced a significant reduction in internet access. Sixty percent of electric boxes and remote switches are out of service, 65 percent of households and businesses have lost access to the network, and 36 percent of local fibre routes have been lost due to fibre cuts affecting both fixed and mobile networks. Almost half of local networks are also damaged, which includes street poles, cables, and fibre trenches.

The Mobile Network Operator (MNO), Jawwal—which serves over 85 percent of Gaza's residents—has lost 65 percent of its radio sites.

The Paltel Group reports that 17 percent of households in Gaza are currently connected to their network.

The 16 pre-existing humanitarian helplines remain operational for people in Gaza to request assistance.

Gaza has been under full electricity blackout since 11 October. Desperately needed fuel to power essential infrastructure (including telecommunications) is still unable to enter Gaza. Multiple solar panels on the roofs of standing buildings, particularly in Gaza city, have reportedly been destroyed in the past few days. This has eliminated one of the remaining sources of energy.

ETC Activities

Coordination

Following ETC activation on 31 October, the ETC Coordinator relocated to Cairo on 02 November and is convening the UN ICT Working Group to maximize partner resources and is participating in the National Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). Many humanitarian response agencies are setting up coordination mechanisms in Cairo and Jerusalem, until access to Gaza is possible.

The ETC has compiled the results of the ICT capacity and needs survey distributed to partners on 30 October. The survey maps the geographical and operational areas affected by the conflict in Gaza to identify available services and assess the specific needs of its partners in the region. Responses representing 21 humanitarian organizations were received. The information collected is informing the ETC response plan.

The ETC Concept of Operations (ConOps) is developed for a three-month response plan. Based on information from OCHA and engagement with partners on the ground, the ETC plans to provide

communications services for humanitarians in three key operational locations, tentatively identified as Kahn Yunis and two sites in Rafah. Reliable communications networks are needed to enable humanitarians to stay connected in high-risk situations, restore security communications networks for UN staff, and to coordinate response activities.

The ETC is working with OCHA on joint messaging for information dissemination to the population. Key messages will be communicated through leaflets or FM radio channels, which are still used by 30% of people in Gaza.

Importation of equipment

The ETC is focusing on establishing pathways to import critical telecommunications equipment into Gaza to set up services for humanitarians. Identifying an importation corridor into Gaza is an urgent need for the cluster and its partners. Efforts are underway to obtain the necessary authorizations from the authorities and to identify a route through either Egypt or Israel, and to consolidate this information for partners.

All items going into Gaza need to be approved by the Israeli authorities. Any items brought via Egypt also needs to have importation permits from the Egyptian authorities and agreement with the Egyptian Red Crescent, who are the sole consignee of goods for the Rafah Border Crossing.

On 01 November, the ETC worked in partnership with OCHA, UNRWA, UNDSS, and the UN ICT Working Group to submit a list of essential telecommunications equipment to import into Gaza, submitted via OCHA for engagement with the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT). The kit includes essential equipment, pre-configured for radio communications and satellite connectivity with solar power solutions for up to four locations in Gaza. Further specifications on each item was submitted to COGAT via OCHA on 03 November. The ETC awaits the response on which/if the items can enter Gaza through Israel.

The ETC is leading on the coordination of requests for Starlink and other connectivity equipment. Currently, there are no active Starlink terminals present in Gaza. The ETC is exploring all commercial and in-kind opportunities to strengthen communications networks for humanitarians in Gaza, including but not limited to Starlink.

Staffing

The ETC is mapping staffing needs for the response in Gaza for three months, including for the continuation of coordination and information management activities, as well as the deployment of technical ICT specialists. These positions will be remote until secure accommodation in Gaza is obtained.

Dashboard

See the [ETC Dashboard](#) for an overview of planned service locations.

Funding

The ETC has appealed for US\$800,000 funding through the revised Flash Appeal and is exploring other channels of funding with partners. The cluster is currently operating on emergency funds.

The updated Flash Appeal released on 06 November is requesting US\$1.2 billion to meet the needs of the entire population of Gaza and 500,000 people in the West Bank.

Challenges

All humanitarian agencies and personnel are facing major constraints in providing humanitarian assistance due to safe access, movement restrictions, and shortages of electricity and fuel.

Telecommunications networks in Gaza are affected and unreliable.

There are lengthy processes to obtain authorizations to import and use ICT equipment in Gaza.

All humanitarian items going into Gaza through Egypt need to be approved by the Egyptian Red Crescent who are the sole consignee of goods for the border crossing, as well as the Israeli authorities.

Only the Rafah Border Crossing is open to transport relief items into Gaza. The Kerem Shalom border crossing remains closed since the start of the conflict. Even before the current crisis, ICT equipment importation via this route took 4-5 months.

The reach of operations will remain limited without a humanitarian pause and significant funding for the humanitarian response.

The risk of cybersecurity issues in this emergency is considered high.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Teleconference with partners on the response in Gaza will be held on **09 November at 12:00 UTC**.

The previous Global ETC Teleconference was held on **02 November**. All minutes are uploaded [here](#).

Contacts

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

www.etcluster.org/emergency/palestine-conflict

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