

Palestine – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #24

Reporting period: 08/04/2024 to 14/04/2024

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

Highlights

- On 13 April, the ETC team presented the Security Communications Systems (SCS) coverage maps to the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and Area Security Cell for Rafah, Gaza City, Jabalia and Deir Al Balah to support the UNDSS contingency planning.
- On 13 April, the findings of the IT assessment were presented to UNDSS, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the World Food Programme (WFP) on the availability of more than 700 pre-pay Wi-Fi hotspots in Rafah, Deir Al Balah and Khan Yunis. The availability of Wi-Fi hotspots is aimed at supporting agencies and partners with access to reliable communication platforms, informed planning, and response in these areas.
- On 07 April, the ETC team, in collaboration with UNDSS conducted a meeting with Motorola dealer, BCI Telecommunications and Advance Technology company in Ramallah, West Bank, regarding the planned setup of SCS repeater sites in Deir Al Balah and Khan Yunis.



UNRWA reports that over 75% of the population in Gaza are now displaced.
Photo WFP/Ali Jadallah

Situation overview

Israeli bombardment from the air, land, and sea continues to be reported across much of the Gaza Strip, resulting in further civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure. On 11 April, the Israeli military [announced](#) that a ground operation had commenced in central Gaza.

The capacity of humanitarian agencies to operate safely and effectively across Gaza remains heavily compromised by recurrent restrictions of access to the north, the import of critical equipment, and recurrent intense hostilities.

Telecommunications Overview

Internet connectivity remains a primary communications challenge across the Gaza Strip, and it is expected to worsen due to the escalation of ground operations in Central Gaza and internally displaced people's movement to their original locations in the North.

Voice and SMS services provided by Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)—Jawwal and Ooredoo—are operational, although limited to Rafah and some locations in the north of Gaza. The network is

congested due to the increased number of subscribers and few operational telecommunications towers.

The internet services from both MNOs—Jawwal and Ooredoo—are non-operational in Gaza. This situation existed before the onset of conflict on 07 October 2023. Paltel and Ajyal Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have restored 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.

ETC Activities

Coordination

The ETC continues to coordinate 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.

Since 09 January, 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.

The ongoing limited access to internet connectivity in Gaza restricts coordination to face-to-face meetings at the Joint Humanitarian Operations Centre (JHOC) and Area-Based Coordination (ABC) with limited online collaboration and engagement among partners and agencies operating remotely.

Internet connectivity

On 13 April, the ETC team presented the findings of the IT assessment to UNDSS, OCHA and WFP on the availability of more than 700 pre-pay Wi-Fi hotspots in Rafah, Deir Al Balah and Khan Yunis. The availability of Wi-Fi hotspots is aimed at supporting agencies and partners with access to reliable communication platforms, informed planning, and response in these areas.

Security Communications Systems (SCS)

On 13 April, the ETC team presented the SCS coverage maps to the UNDSS and Area Security Cell for Rafah, Gaza City, Jabalia and Deir Al Balah to support the UNDSS contingency planning.

On 10 April, the ETC received a request from UNDSS to facilitate the procurement of cables and accessories including docking stations and antennas intended for SCS Very High Frequency (VHF) radios and satellite phones in Gaza. The team is exploring the viability of procurement of these items from Cairo or Dubai.

On 07 April, the ETC telecommunications specialist, in collaboration with UNDSS conducted a meeting with Motorola dealer, BCI Telecommunications and Advance Technology company in Ramallah, West Bank, regarding the planned setup of SCS repeater sites in Deir Al Balah and Khan Yunis. On 15 April, BCI is expected to share the quotation with UNDSS for the SCS repeater setup in Deir Al Balah.

The import clearance for the 30 pre-approved VHF digital radios that arrived at Tel Aviv airport on 02 April, is scheduled for the week starting 15 April, with facilitation from the UNDP. The radios were shipped by WFP Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications Emergency and Support (FITTEST) in Dubai and will be received by UNDSS in Jerusalem for configuration and further distribution to UN agencies in 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. However, preliminary information received suggests the SCS equipment in Gaza City and Jabalia might have been stolen. The ETC plans to conduct physical assessments at these sites to make informed recommendations, once authorized safe access to these locations is secured.

There is an urgent requirement to expand the VHF radio coverage in Deir al Balah and Khan Yunis, particularly in anticipation of the humanitarian response expanding further to the north with the population movement. On 07 April, the ETC identified two potential sites which are expected to provide better SCS coverage, with provisioning of a solar-powered solution and internet connectivity in Deir Al Balah. The location details of these sites are shared with Paltel, for their engineering team to conduct an assessment for the SCS repeater installation.

Access to information for communities

The ETC meeting with First Response Radio and other humanitarian partners—to discuss the prerequisites for the importation of Frequency Modulation (FM) broadcasting equipment into Gaza has been rescheduled from 08 April to 16 April. Previously, on 29 March, the ETC team engaged with humanitarian partners and provided guidance and support on identifying viable solutions for the importation of FM broadcasting equipment for public messaging and to provide access to information for communities in Gaza, including guidance on operating licenses.

Staffing

There are currently four dedicated ETC staff deployed in the response. The ETC coordinator is in Rafah since 25 March to continue the ETC presence and enhance coordination efforts and face-to-face engagement with partners. The ETC coordinator is scheduled to return to Cairo on 15 April for handover to a replacement coordinator who is scheduled to arrive in Cairo on 18 April.

The deputy ETC coordinator resumed his responsibilities on 14 April following annual leave and continues to support the response while based in Cairo. The deputy ETC coordinator will hand over to his replacement, who is scheduled to arrive in Cairo on 16 April and further to deploy in Gaza on 22 April. The ETC telecommunications specialist has been in Cairo since 10 April and is scheduled to deploy to Gaza on 15 April to continue ETC's presence and support agencies and partners with technical advice and guidance on telecommunications services in Gaza. The ETC Information Management Officer (IMO) continues to support the response while based in Cairo.

Dashboard

See the [ETC Dashboard](#) for an overview of planned and operational services.

Funding

The ETC remains 64% 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 for inclusion.

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 reach of operations will remain limited without a prolonged ceasefire, safe access, and significant funding for the humanitarian response.

The issuance of entry visas for staff intending to deploy to Gaza remains prolonged and challenging.

Cybersecurity continues to be a pressing issue. Caution in using technology platforms applies, including the use of social media and press platforms.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Teleconference with partners on the response in Gaza will be held on **Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 13:00 UTC**.

The previous Global ETC Teleconference was held on 03 April 2024. 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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