

# Palestine – Conflict

## ETC Situation Report #6

Reporting period: 29/11/2023 to 05/12/2023

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

## Highlights

- The escalated hostilities and damages to the main optic fibre cable routes resulted in a complete shutdown of telecommunications services in Gaza on 04 December.
- The ETC continues to coordinate a collective approach among partners for the importation of equipment into Gaza. The cluster developed and submitted a revised proposal to the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) on 05 December containing the consolidated description of all equipment for importation and installation in Gaza as well as how the equipment will be set and used.
- On 03 December, COGAT authorized the ETC to purchase and programme 20 satellite phones from Gilat Telecom—the sole authorized satellite technology service provider for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)—for use by international humanitarian staff in Gaza. The phones distribution will be managed by the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS).
- On 04 December, the Government of Luxembourg committed funding of US\$250,000 to the ETC response in Gaza. On 05 December, the Government of France allocated EUR250,000 to the ETC Palestine response. The combined funding to the ETC translates to 64% of the US\$800,000 requested in the Flash Appeal to undertake its activities and address the immediate needs in Gaza.



Buildings, telecommunications, and power infrastructure have been destroyed in Gaza due to the ongoing conflict. Photo: UNRWA.

## Situation overview

On 01 December—at about 0700—hostilities resumed following the truce observed from 24 to 30 November. On 05 December, the intensified air, land, and sea bombardments across Gaza as well as ground fighting between the conflicting parties continued. The fighting has now spread further south to include locations such as Khan Younis.

Although a limited aid distribution took place in Rafah governorate on 03 December, no distribution happened in the adjacent Khan Younis governorate from 03 to 04 December due to the intensity of hostilities and only resumed on 05 December.

On 01 December, the Israeli authorities issued a detailed map on social media in which the Gaza Strip is subdivided into numerous small areas. Reportedly, the map is intended to facilitate orders to evacuate people to specific areas ahead of targeted military operations. In addition to the area within Khan

Younis city, the largest area designated for evacuation includes localities east of Khan Younis that include Al Qarara, Khuza'a, Abasan, and Bani Suheila. Residents in these locations have been ordered to move further south to Rafah. These areas encompass 19 percent of the Gaza Strip.

According to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)—as of 05 December—over 1.8 million people (80 percent of the population) in Gaza are estimated to be internally displaced, including about 1.1 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are staying in at least 156 UNRWA shelters across all five governorates of the Gaza Strip.

## Telecommunications overview

On 04 December—at about 2030—the main Mobile Network Operator (MNO) and telecommunications service provider in Gaza—Jawwal—announced that all services had shut down due to damages on the main optic fibre routes. Partial telecommunications shut down occurred in Gaza city and northern Gaza a few hours earlier due to escalated hostilities. Humanitarian agencies and first responders have warned that telecommunications blackouts jeopardize the already constrained provision of life-saving assistance. Services from Jawwal were partially restored by the evening of 05 December.

Some humanitarian agencies are relying on their independent connectivity platforms for access to telecommunications services. It remains a priority for humanitarian responders to obtain authorization from the authorities to set up independent platforms for telecommunications to ensure coordinated humanitarian service delivery to the population of Gaza.

Electricity to charge devices is limited to 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.

## ETC Activities

### Coordination

The Global ETC Deputy Coordinator deployed to Cairo on 03 December to support the coordination of ETC activities in the Gaza emergency response. The dedicated ETC Coordinator is on compassionate leave and still waiting for issuance of entry documents to travel and be based in Jerusalem.

An ICT Specialist from WFP FITTEST deployed to Cairo on 04 December and will tentatively proceed to Gaza on 13 December as part of the ETC response for an initial technical engagement with local actors in Gaza. The ICT Specialist aims to gather information, assess the situation, and quantify the available equipment on the ground.

The ETC continues to coordinate a collective approach among partners for the importation of equipment into Gaza. The ETC team, the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the UNDSS, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) met with COGAT on 03 December to discuss the need for independent connectivity and security communications services solutions in Gaza to effectively deliver their mandate, including the urgent need to import telecommunications equipment there to set up the services.

COGAT has classified the ICT equipment for importation into three main categories and has requested all to provide further details and how the equipment will be set up and used in each category. The categories are;

- Satellite equipment (VSAT terminals and satellite phones);
- VHF radio security communications systems (SCS) equipment;

- Other (solar power equipment, installation consumables).

Based on the above, the group have developed a revised proposal containing the consolidated description of all equipment for importation and installation in Gaza as well how the equipment will be set up and used. The document will be submitted to COGAT on 06 December.

COGAT has stated that all satellite and telecommunications equipment intended for use in Gaza must be purchased and using services from local provider Gilat Telecom.

### Internet connectivity

During the meeting held on 03 December, the ETC alerted COGAT to the ongoing limited access to internet connectivity for humanitarian responders in Gaza, while UNOCHA raised the issue of limited fuel access for MNOs to power telecommunications towers. COGAT acknowledged the challenges and will consult the relevant authorities to find a lasting solution.

### Telephony

On 03 December, COGAT authorized the ETC to purchase and programme 20 satellite phones from Gilat Telecom for use by international UN staff in Gaza. The ETC will purchase the satellite phones, SIM cards, and airtime, while UNDSS will be responsible for managing and allocating the devices to the humanitarian operations in Gaza.

### Security communications services

The ETC continues to engage with the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) to possibly support with radio communications equipment. The support would augment the ERC capacity in effectively supporting the humanitarian community in the consignee role. ERC are licensed to operate VHF radio communication in Egypt and are the sole consignee for goods and equipment importation into Gaza.

The joint ETC and UNDSS Security Communication Security (SCS) implementation plan incorporates the immediate, mid-, and long-term actions to be taken. Reliable communications networks are needed to enable humanitarians to stay connected in high-risk situations, restore security communications networks for UN staff, and coordinate response activities.

### Staffing

Caroline Teyssier—Global ETC Deputy Coordinator—deployed to Cairo on 03 December to support the coordination of ETC activities in the Gaza emergency response until 10 December.

Hossam Metwally—ETC Palestine Coordinator—is currently on compassionate leave until 07 December. Hossam is still waiting for visa issuance to deploy to Jerusalem.

Burak Sezgin—ETC ICT Specialist—deployed to Cairo on 04 December and is tentatively scheduled to proceed to Gaza on 13 December as part of the ETC response for an initial technical engagement with local actors in Gaza.

## Dashboard

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

## Funding

On 04 December, the Government of Luxembourg committed funding of US\$250,000 to the ETC response in Gaza. On 05 December, the Government of France allocated EUR250,000 to the ETC Palestine response. The combined funding to the ETC translates to 64% of the US\$800,000 requested in the Flash Appeal to undertake its activities and address the immediate needs in Gaza. The funding will enable the ETC to carry out essential coordination and information management, as well as be ready to deploy shared communications services in up to two locations for the next 1 to 2 months, pending the evolution of the situation.

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

The intensity of hostilities has spread further south to include locations such as Khan Younis and limiting the safe movements of humanitarian responders.

Limited access to electricity, fuel, and telecommunications services continues to hamper the humanitarian response in Gaza.

The Rafah Border crossing between Egypt and Gaza is the only point open to deliver humanitarian relief items. The cross-border operations are now extremely restricted due to security checks and the lack of fuel.

Importation of telecommunications equipment into Gaza is lengthy and extremely challenging.

All items going into Gaza need to be approved by the Israeli authorities. Any items brought in 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.

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

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

## Meetings

The next Global ETC Teleconference with partners on the response in Gaza will be held on **06 December at 13:00 UTC**.

The previous Global ETC Teleconference was held on **22 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\*\*](http://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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