

## Syria & the Surrounding Countries

### ETC Situation Report #37

Reporting period 01/08/2019 to 30/09/2019

The ETC operates under the 'Whole of Syria (WoS)' approach which comprises activities in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan for an effective humanitarian response inside Syria. The next report will be issued on or around 30/11/2019.

### Highlights

- The ETC assisted the UN/Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) convoy to Rukban settlement camp with connectivity and telecommunications services for 42 humanitarian staff participating in the convoy.
- On 21 August, the ETC received approval to proceed with the migration of all radio infrastructure in Syria.
- A radio communications capacity building workshop was held for UN agencies operating across Syria to build technical capacity in using the new radio equipment.



ETC Telecommunications Associate Muhammad Khaled sets up solar panels to provide connectivity to humanitarians operating as part of the convoy to Rukban settlement camp.

*Photo credits: WFP/ETC*

### Situation Overview

Hostilities in northwest Syria continue to have a devastating effect on civilians as well as on humanitarian needs and partners' ability to deliver. Fighting continues across Idlib, northern Hama and western Aleppo governates, as well as frequent security incidents across northern Aleppo governorate which is taking a heavy toll on an estimated four million people. While airstrikes having a significant impact on civilians decreased following the announcement of a ceasefire on 31 August, local sources continue to report isolated airstrikes and sporadic shelling along the frontlines in southern Idlib governorate. Although this brief lull in airstrikes brought a much-needed respite for civilians, the severity of the humanitarian situation in northwest Syria continues to be alarming.

## Response

- An ETC telecommunications associate travelled between 16–24 August with the UN/Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) convoy to Rukban settlement camp on the border with Jordan. The ETC provided connectivity and telecommunications services to a total of 42 humanitarian staff who participated in the convoy. The main objective of the convoy was to assess the needs of up to 24,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) still residing at the camp.
- A maintenance mission was carried out at the Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Damascus to improve the security communications services for humanitarians. This included replacing all antennas and installing a new tower.
- On request from the UN Relief Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a one-day maintenance mission to Daraa took place on 25 August to repair a High Frequency (HF) radio installation which was reported faulty after a storm. The service is now fully operational, as confirmed by UNRWA.
- On 21 August, the ETC received approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to proceed with the migration of all radio infrastructure in Syria. The ETC has started to procure the necessary equipment.
  - A three-day radio communications capacity building workshop was held in Toulouse, France for 20 participants from various UN agencies from 10–12 September. The training aimed to build technical capacity for all agencies using the new equipment for VHF radio within the country.
- The ETC Syria Coordinator attended the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2020 workshop in Cairo from 23–27 September to determine ETC activities and budget in Syria and the surrounding countries for next year.

## Planned Response

- The ETC Coordinator was on mission at the field office in Tartous from 4–8 August to meet with UN partners to discuss the set-up of vital security communications infrastructure in the city. The ETC currently provides some radio network coverage from a base station but this does not extend to handheld devices. There is a need to deploy at least one repeater to improve these services.
- The ETC is finalising the network in Deir ez-Zor with the main activity being the deployment of the security communications infrastructure. The equipment for deployment is ready and the ETC has sent a request to MoFA for approval to carry out this activity.
- The ETC received approval from MoFA to relocate the UNICEF satellite terminal in Homs to Deir ez-Zor. The satellite terminal has been moved to Deir ez-Zor by road and planning for the installation phase is ongoing.
- The ETC is preparing to upgrade the link to improve connectivity at the hub in Aleppo.



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- The ETC is requesting additional staff to support ETC operations including an Information Management (IM) associate.
  - The ETC Coordinator for the surrounding countries (Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) and the Global ETC Coordinator are planning to conduct a joint oversight mission to Syria in the week of 3 November.

## Challenges

- Lack of access to operational areas and receiving the deployment authorisations from relevant authorities is a major issue which frequently affects the timely implementation of ETC activities across Syria.
- Importing telecommunications equipment into Syria remains a challenge.

## Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference on Libya, Mozambique, Syria and Yemen operations will take place on 23 October 2019.

## Information

- Humanitarian ICT responders supporting the Syria operation across the region are encouraged to share their contact details with [Syria.ETC@wfp.org](mailto:Syria.ETC@wfp.org) to facilitate coordination efforts.
- A dedicated information-sharing space has been created on the ETC website <https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/syria-civil-unrest>. Organisations involved in the ICT response are encouraged to share updates with the ETC community to support the overall humanitarian response.

## Shared ICT Services

**ETC Dashboard:** <https://www.etcluster.org/node/10219>



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## Contacts

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## Acronyms

CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HF	High Frequency
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IM	Information Management
ISP	Internet Service Provider
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
S4C	Services for Communities
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
VHF	Very High Frequency
WFP	World Food Programme
WoS	Whole of Syria

**All information related to ETC operations can be found on the ICT Emergency website: [www.ETCluster.org](http://www.ETCluster.org)**

**For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: [Syria.ETC@wfp.org](mailto:Syria.ETC@wfp.org)**