Palestine – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #67

Reporting period: March 2026

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated on 31 October 2023 in response to the crisis in Gaza. Situation Reports are published monthly.

Summary Points

- ETC and the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations (PNGO) network launched a dual-language connectivity portal for the Gaza City humanitarian hub on 16 March, introducing access-management and bandwidth-allocation tools to optimize shared connectivity for humanitarian partners.
- ETC assessed connectivity at proposed Relief Housing Unit (RHU) sites in Deir Al Balah, evaluating network coverage, mobile signal strength, and the availability of wireless internet services to inform site readiness.
- ETC strengthened emergency readiness by training two additional WFP staff on VHF radio programming, bringing the total to four, with a follow-on session scheduled for 01 April for WFP Jerusalem staff and ICT Working Group members.



The ETC field coordinator conducts VHF radio reprogramming in Deir Al Balah. Photo: WFP/Bipin Jha.

Situation Overview

Airstrikes, shelling, and gunfire continued across the Gaza Strip, resulting in additional casualties and further damage to civilian infrastructure. As of 31 March, Kerem Shalom remains the only operational entry point into Gaza, while Zikim Crossing remains closed. Rafah Crossing reopened on 19 March for limited two-way movement, enabling the resumption of critical medical evacuations and returnee travel suspended since the 28 February Middle East escalation.

Since Kerem Shalom reopened on 03 March, humanitarian partners have delivered limited volumes of humanitarian and commercial supplies, including fuel essential for sustaining life-saving operations. In early 2026, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) and the Board of Peace (BoP) were established as transitional mechanisms for civilian governance and post-ceasefire reconstruction. Stakeholder consultations on this framework are ongoing.

Telecommunications Overview

Telecommunications services in Gaza remain critically disrupted due to extensive infrastructure damage and limited access for repairs. Mobile data services are still unavailable, while operators maintain intermittent 2G voice connectivity using locally available resources. Coverage has been restored in Rafah, but ongoing import restrictions continue to impede broader network restoration.

Service continuity is severely constrained by restricted technical access, fuel shortages, and chronic power outages. Network sites rely on generators operating continuously without essential maintenance, increasing fuel inefficiency and the risk of permanent equipment damage. Damage to fibre backbones and microwave links has forced operators to depend on short-range, ad hoc solutions with limited reliability.

These constraints continue to affect humanitarian operations, which rely heavily on satellite phones, VHF/UHF radio, and in-person coordination in the absence of mobile data. Satellite voice services via Iridium and Thuraya remain the most dependable options, though their use requires prior authorization. Some partners are using low-bandwidth satellite messaging devices to maintain essential information flows.

Telecom operators also face workforce shortages due to displacement, movement restrictions, and safety concerns, limiting their ability to conduct repairs. Many teams rely on improvised tools and recycled components in the absence of formal supply chains. At the community level, households and small businesses increasingly depend on private generators, informal charging points, and improvised Wi-Fi hotspots where limited connectivity has been restored.

ETC Activities

Coordination

The ETC presented the full-phase rollout of Radio Insan (First Response Radio) at coordination platforms, including the Joint Humanitarian Operations Centre (JHOC) and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). Partners were encouraged to provide pre-recorded, approved humanitarian content to support access to critical information for affected populations in Gaza and the West Bank.

On 09 March, the ETC joined a multi-sector assessment of proposed RHU sites in Deir Al Balah, focusing on network coverage, mobile signal strength, and the availability of wireless internet services. The ETC continues to engage with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to restore and strengthen coverage at these locations.

The ETC also continued advocacy efforts to sustain telecommunications services in Gaza, securing allocations from the limited fuel deliveries that resumed on 03 March following the temporary halt caused by the 28 February border closures.

Internet connectivity

On 16 March, the ETC and the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations (PNGO) network launched a dual-language (English and Arabic) connectivity portal for the Gaza City humanitarian hub. The portal includes access-management controls, content-filtering, and bandwidth-allocation features designed to optimize shared connectivity for humanitarian operations.

Secure communications

The ETC is collaborating with WFP and UNDSS to finalize the 2026–27 security communications plan. Findings from the recent VHF radio audit and assessments of mobile radio installations are informing updates to the plan's annexes and supporting the reprogramming of UN radios with unified configurations.

In March, 15 VHF radios were reprogrammed, strengthening secure communications across operations.

On 14 March, the ETC trained two additional WFP staff on VHF radio programming, bringing the total to four, to enhance emergency readiness and operational capacity. An online session is scheduled for 01 April for WFP Jerusalem staff and ICT Working Group members. To date in 2026, 15 UN personnel (including 11 SOC operators in Gaza and Jerusalem) have been trained on security communications, with further sessions planned.

The ETC continues to reinforce critical communications for humanitarian operations in Gaza. Between 19 February and 08 March, a technical specialist was deployed to Jerusalem to support secure communications infrastructure and advance technical upgrades in line with UN standards.

The ETC is also engaging with WFP Palestine to expedite finalization of the Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with the satellite-based tracking solution provider, ensuring integrated device management and support across UN agencies in Gaza. In parallel, the ETC is exploring mounting solutions for these tracking units in Armoured Vehicles (AVs) to reduce the risk of device damage.

Further Information

- Visit the **ETC Dashboard** for an overview of planned and active services.
- See the **ETC Infographic** for key activity data, service locations, and operational highlights.
- Refer to the **ETC Factsheet** for detailed information and current funding needs.

Funding

The ETC urgently requires US$1 million to sustain critical telecommunications, coordination, and information management services in Gaza, in line with the requirements outlined in the 2026 Flash Appeal for the occupied Palestinian territory.

Challenges

Fuel Shortages: Inconsistent fuel supply, compounded by ongoing regional escalation, is hindering humanitarian operations including telecommunications services.

Limited telecommunications services: Voice and internet services remain limited due to widespread infrastructure damage, limited access, import restrictions, and a lack of repair equipment.

Lack of telecommunications equipment: Hostilities have destroyed key equipment, and ongoing import restrictions severely limit ETC's ability to restore and deliver its planned services.

Staff safety: Volatile security conditions and movement restrictions continue to compromise the safety and security of humanitarian staff and hinder the deployment of ETC services.

Cybersecurity risks: Cybersecurity threats remain high. Use of tech platforms, including social and press media, requires caution.

Funding: Limited funding continues to constrain ETC's ability to meet urgent communications needs.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Teleconference on the Gaza response will take place on **Tuesday 07 April 2026** at 13:00 UTC. All meeting minutes are available **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

For more information or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact:

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