

Syria & the Surrounding Countries

ETC Situation Report #38

Reporting period 01/10/2019 to 30/11/2019

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 31/01/2020.

Highlights

- The ETC deployed two IT Associates to Qamishli to boost ICT capacity on the ground following the deteriorating security situation in north east Syria.
- The ETC has finalized the installation of the new security communications network in Deir ez-Zor.
- The Global ETC Coordinator and ETC Coordinator for the surrounding countries visited Damascus from 4–7 November on a joint oversight mission to support the ETC team in Syria.



ETC Senior IT Associate Omar Mardini makes upgrades to communications infrastructure at a WFP warehouse evacuation site in Qamishli.

Photo: WFP/ETC

Situation Overview

Hostilities continue to impact the civilian population, with an increase in airstrikes and ground shelling in southern Idlib, northern Hama, eastern Latakia and western Aleppo governorates, resulting in civilian deaths and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. These include attacks on 4 and 6 November that impacted four hospitals. On 20 November, at least 16 civilians were killed when a missile hit an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Idlib province. Humanitarian partners have scaled up to meet the growing needs of the population as a result of ongoing hostilities. October saw the highest number of trucks crossing from Turkey since the start of the cross-border operation in 2014, with 926 moving life-saving humanitarian assistance – double the amount provided in January of this year. However, there are gaps in the response due to funding shortfalls. Colder temperatures, compounded by the risk of flooding, will bring additional hardship to thousands of Syrians in need.

Response

- As a result of the deteriorating security situation in north east Syria in late October, the ETC deployed two ETC IT Associates to Qamishli to reinforce ICT capacity and assist in connectivity upgrades to the WFP warehouse in Akkad, which may be used as a UN evacuation site if the situation continues to escalate.
- The ETC deployed on 18 October to finalize the installation of the new security communications network in Deir ez-Zor. The site now has a fully functioning UN hub with all required ETC services in place. The radio network covers the city and parts of the surrounding areas. The ETC trained 20 UN staff in Deir Ez-Zor on using VHF radio networks.
- The Global ETC Coordinator and ETC Coordinator for the surrounding countries (Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) visited Damascus from 4–7 November on a joint oversight mission to support the ETC team in best adjusting and planning the operation as per the current requirements. The mission included a field visit to Homs where the ETC has established and maintains radio network services for the entire humanitarian community.

Planned Response

- The Resident Coordinator's office has submitted a request for approval to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for the deployment of additional staff to support the ETC operation in Syria, including an Information Management (IM) Associate.
- The ETC is waiting for approval from MoFA to deploy vital security communications infrastructure in Tartous following the assessment mission in August. The ETC currently provides some radio network coverage in Tartous 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.
- An ETC telecommunications associate is scheduled to depart for Rukban settlement camp on the border with Jordan in early December as part of a 10-day UN/Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) convoy. The convoy is the final phase in a series of UN-assisted voluntary departures of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) remaining in the camp. The ETC will provide connectivity and telecommunications services to humanitarian staff participating in the convoy.
- The ETC is preparing to implement a link upgrade at the hub in Aleppo to improve connectivity services for humanitarians operating there.
- The UN is assessing the need to set up a new hub in Al Tabqah in the north east of Syria following the recent escalation of conflict. The site will also include staff accommodation. If confirmation is received, the ETC will conduct an assessment mission to set up ETC services.

- The Operational Management Team (OMT) may upgrade the field office in Hama to a full UN hub. This will require the deployment of security communications and reliable connectivity services. The new hub will potentially be deployed in a new building.
- Due to funding of USD25 million received to support the affected population in the south of Syria, a UN hub may be re-established in the region of Dar'a. The hub would require ETC services.

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 major challenge.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference on Libya, Mozambique, Syria and Yemen operations will take place in **January 2020**.

Information

- Humanitarian ICT responders supporting the Syria operation across the region are encouraged to share their contact details with 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/document/etc-syria-dashboard>



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Acronyms

ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IM	Information Management
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OMT	Operational Management Team
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
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

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: Syria.ETC@wfp.org