



## GNI Statement on the Communications Restrictions in Gaza

The Global Network Initiative (GNI) expresses deep concern regarding the serious restrictions to freedom of expression taking place in the context of the conflict between Hamas and Israel. In particular, GNI condemns the significant restriction of internet and telecommunications services across the Gaza Strip, resulting in a near-total communications blackout. GNI calls on all actors to respect the Laws of Armed Conflict and International Human Rights Law, including by working to ensure civilian connectivity to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and services.

Over the last few weeks, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and telecommunications companies in the Gaza Strip have reported [significant drops in traffic](#). Evidence [suggests](#) this is the result of the combination of damage to civilian telecommunications infrastructure, electric grids, [lack of fuel](#), and Israeli government-mandated technical disruptions by upstream providers. The Israeli Ministry of Communications [updated a press release](#) on 23 October to acknowledge plans for “the shutting down of cellular communications and Internet services to Gaza.”

As a result of these restrictions, multiple international and humanitarian organizations, including the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), [Palestinian Red Crescent](#), [UNICEF](#), [Médecins Sans Frontières](#), [OHCHR](#), and [ActionAid](#), as well as [news organizations](#), have reported losing contact with their teams in Gaza, hindering their ability to provide vital services and report on developments. The UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has [called](#) for the “protection of telecom infrastructure and the essential right to communicate.”

In addition to these concerns around connectivity, individuals and companies have also [reportedly](#) faced government pressure to restrict expression that is clearly protected under international human rights law. While governments and companies have respective duties and responsibilities to address illegal content, including hate speech, they must safeguard the right to freedom of opinion and expression by respecting principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity, proportionality, and non-discrimination.

*As a multistakeholder organization comprising many of the world’s leading tech companies, academics, civil society organizations, and investors, GNI works to protect and advance freedom of expression and privacy rights in the technology ecosystem. Based on the diverse experiences and expertise of our membership, our approach generates collaboration towards a more rights-respecting legal environment for technology users around the world.*