

South Africa calls for ICJ intervention over Israel's ground invasion of Rafah

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Legal Counselor of the ministry of foreign affairs of Israel Tal Becker (C) looks on at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on January 12, 2024. (Photo by AFP)

Pretoria, February 13 (RHC)-- South Africa has filed an "urgent request" at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over Israel's planned ground invasion of the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, urging its intervention to protect Palestinian rights.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the South African government urgently appealed to the ICJ to assess Israel's recent declaration to expand its military presence in Rafah, which is the last refuge for surviving people in Gaza.

South Africa's office of the presidency said it was gravely concerned that the unprecedented military offensive against Rafah has already led to and will result in further large-scale killings. "It was gravely concerned that the unprecedented military offensive against Rafah, as announced by Israel, has already led to and will result in further large-scale killing, harm and destruction." the statement read.

The statement added, "This would be in a serious and irreparable breach of the Genocide Convention and of the Court's Order of 26 January 2024."

Last month, the ICJ ordered Israel to take all measures to prevent its troops from committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, in a case brought by South Africa. Israel was also ordered to immediately ensure that Palestinians have access to basic services and humanitarian assistance.

In a landmark judgment, the ICJ determined that it was "plausible" that Israel has committed acts that violate the Genocide Convention.

The latest Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed hundreds of Palestinians, raising the death toll from the onslaught since early October to nearly 28,500.

The attacks are now focusing on Rafah. The city lies on the border with Egypt and hosts some 1.4 million displaced Palestinians who have been forced to leave their homes due to heavy Israeli bombardments in other parts of the strip.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the Israeli military on Friday to prepare to evacuate civilians from Rafah ahead of a planned ground operation against the city. Aid organizations, however, say such a move will be nearly impossible, given the scale of devastation elsewhere in Gaza and the huge number of people trapped in the besieged area.

The Palestinian resistance Hamas movement has warned that Israel's planned ground offensive in Rafah could cause tens of thousands of casualties. Several countries have also expressed concern over Israel's plan to launch a large offensive in Rafah.

Iran's foreign minister recently issued a stern warning over Israel's planned ground invasion of Rafah, saying it will have serious consequences for the regime.

China has also called on Israel to immediately stop its planned ground assault on densely populated Rafah, warning of a "serious humanitarian disaster."

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