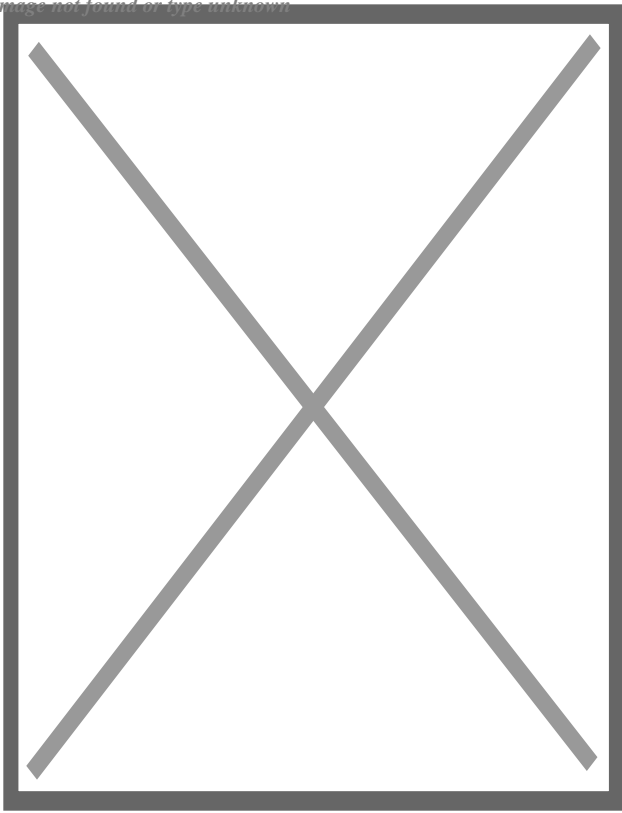


Netanyahu says Israeli cabinet to approve operational plans on Rafah next week

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Tel Aviv, February 25 (RHC)-- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced that the regime's war cabinet is set to approve "operational plans" for the ground invasion of the southern city of Rafah in the Gaza Strip, despite widespread global condemnation.

Netanyahu made the remarks in a news conference on Saturday, saying he would convene the cabinet next week to approve operational plans related to Rafah, including the evacuation of the civilian population from the city.

Rafah, situated in the Gaza Strip's closed southern border with Egypt, is home to nearly 1.5 million Palestinians who have been displaced due to Israel's genocidal war on the territory. Israel had

designated Rafah a “safe zone,” but it is now threatening an all-out military offensive, leaving the people sheltering there terrified with nowhere left to go.

International concerns are growing as Israel’s ground invasion of Rafah is looming large, with world leaders expressing grave concerns over the military operation against the densely populated area in the far south of Gaza.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Netanyahu noted that his cabinet is working to reach another framework for the release of Israeli captives held in Gaza. “That is why I sent a delegation to Paris and tonight, we will discuss the next steps in the negotiations,” the Israeli premier said.

Talks for a prisoner swap deal between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas began in the French capital, Paris, on Friday.

Hamas has already said the only way for the group to release Israeli captives alive is for the Israelis and their supporters to accept its conditions, including the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

The resistance group exchanged 80 Israeli captives for 240 Palestinian prisoners during a pause in the Gaza war that ended on December 1st. The truce, which was mediated by Qatar and other countries, also allowed the delivery of badly-needed humanitarian aid into Gaza after weeks of Israeli attacks on the territory.

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