

Israeli military orders tens of thousands of Palestinians to evacuate eastern Rafah ahead of imminent assault

Israel orders civilians to flee eastern Rafah

The Israeli military has ordered Palestinians sheltering in eastern Rafah to flee west before an expected ground assault. About 1.5 million people, many of whom have been displaced multiple times, are sheltering in Rafah under dire conditions.



Rafah, May 6 (RHC)-- Israel's military has ordered tens of thousands of people in the southern Gaza city of Rafah to evacuate, signalling that a long-expected ground invasion could be imminent.

The evacuation order comes as indirect ceasefire talks between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas appeared to stall amid intense disagreements between the warring sides.

The United States and Qatar, which have been mediating the talks along with Egypt, were expected to hold discussions on Monday in Doha, but state-linked media in Egypt said the ceasefire talks had stalled after a rocket attack killed four Israeli soldiers on Sunday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to send ground forces into Rafah to attack Hamas fighters regardless of any truce, despite key ally the US, other countries and aid groups raising concerns over a humanitarian crisis in the city.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has condemned the Israeli army's "forced, unlawful" evacuation order in Rafah, saying that it could lead to "the deadliest phase of this conflict."

Jan Egeland, secretary-general of the international non-profit NRC, says there are not enough resources in Israel's self-declared al-Muwasi humanitarian zone, where the army instructed some 100,000 people in Rafah to relocate.

Hamas called on the international community to move quickly "to stop the crime that is threatening the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians." It also called on international agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), to stay in Rafah and support the people there.

Israel's genocidal war of aggression on Gaza has driven around 80 percent of Gaza's population of 2.3 million from their homes and caused vast destruction in several towns and cities.

Since October, the death toll in Gaza has surpassed 34,700 people, mostly women and children, according to Palestinian health officials.

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