

UN Human Rights Council affirms forced displacement of Palestinians a war crime

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Geneva, May 8 (RHC)-- The UN Human Rights Council says Israel has strict obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure the safety of civilians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said on Tuesday, according to international law, Israel must ensure civilians have access to medical care, adequate food, safe water and sanitation.

“Failure to meet these obligations may amount to forced displacement, which is a war crime,” Shamdasani said. “There are strong indications that this [Rafah offensive] is being conducted in violation of international humanitarian law.”

The remarks came hours after Israeli forces seized the Rafah border crossing with Egypt in a push against the southern city. The medical staff in the southern city say they are concerned by the closure of the Rafah crossing amid Israeli threats of a ground invasion.

The UN and aid agencies have urged Israel to halt Rafah incursion, warning Gaza is on brink of famine and needs humanitarian aid.

The UN human rights office says Israel has denied the agency access to two main crossings into the Gaza Strip, warning that only one day of fuel is available inside the territory.

Meanwhile, the UN rights chief said the latest Israeli order for Palestinians to evacuate eastern Rafah was inhuman. Volker Turk warned Israel’s failure to meet the obligations of international humanitarian law with regard to the displaced civilians may amount to a war crime.

The World Health Organization has also said the evacuation order will create an unprecedented level of humanitarian need.

Reactions are pouring in over the Israeli invasion of Rafah.

The EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, has said he is dismayed by Israel’s total disregard of calls from the international community.

China has also reacted to the invasion of Rafah. A foreign ministry spokesperson said Beijing strongly calls on Israel to heed the overwhelming demands of the international community and stop attacking Rafah.

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