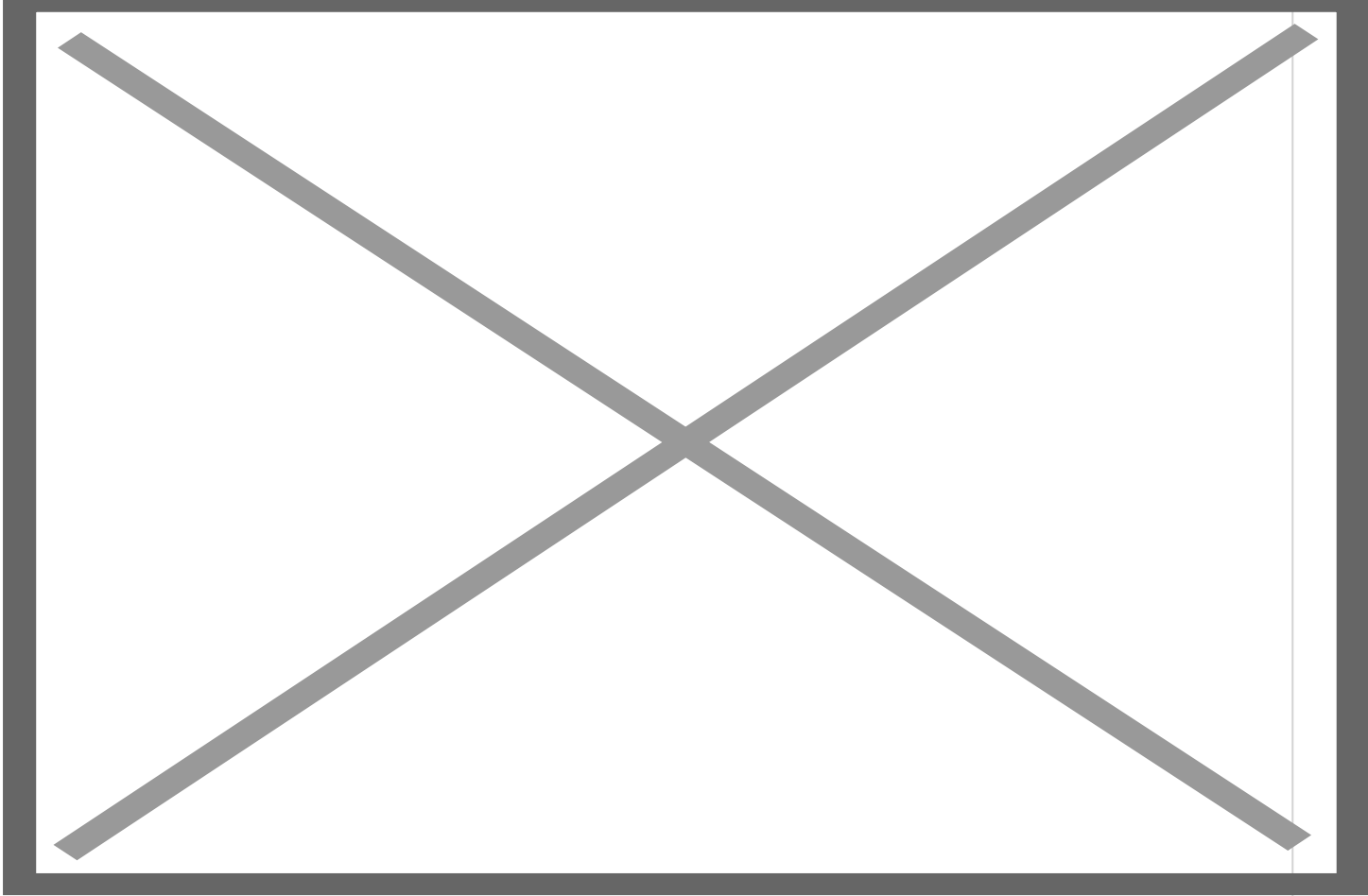


UNRWA affirms Israel's safe zones claim false; no place safe in Gaza

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Geneva, May 13 (RHC)-- The head of the United Nations' agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has rejected Israel's claim about setting up so-called safe zones for the displaced people of Gaza as "false and misleading." UNRWA's Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini made the remark in a Sunday post on X social media platform.

Since the onset of its genocidal war on Gaza over seven months ago, the Israeli occupation forces have been pounding Gaza with incessant attacks from air, sea and land, mass-killing the helpless civilians in the blockaded territory.

Throughout its Gaza onslaught, the regime has claimed to have determined “safe zones” for civilians, encouraging them to take shelter there. However, as admitted by various UN officials, there have been actually no safe havens for displaced Gazans, as Israeli forces’ indiscriminate strikes and artillery fire have been wreaking havoc on those areas, which had been previously declared safe by the regime, including the southern cities of Rafah and Khan Yunis.

“The claim of ‘safe zones’ is false and misleading. No place is safe in Gaza. Period,” the UNRWA chief said.

On Saturday, the Israeli military ordered Palestinians to evacuate more areas in Rafah in a further indication that the regime is preparing to expand its military operations in the city despite widespread international opposition.

The new evacuation orders issued by the regime cover areas in the center of Rafah, forcing tens of thousands more people to move to “an expanded humanitarian area” in al-Mawasi, situated in the western part of Gaza, where aid workers have described its conditions as “horrific.”

“The Israeli authorities continue to issue forced displacement orders also known as ‘evacuation orders’. This is forcing people in Rafah to flee anywhere and everywhere,” Lazzarini said. And he added: “Since the war began, most people in Gaza have moved multiple times: on average once a month. They desperately sought safety that they never found.”

Lazzarini added that the displaced people of Gaza have no choice but to stay in UNRWA’s shelters, which have been already bombed out by Israeli forces.

On Saturday, the UN agency estimated that “150,000 people have now fled Rafah since [last] Monday, looking for safety where there's none.”

It added, “At least 300,000 people affected as further areas across Gaza Strip receive new evacuation orders today, both towards central Rafah in the south and Jabalia in north Gaza.”

Since the beginning of Israel’s genocidal war on Gaza, the regime has killed at least 35,034 civilians, most of them women and children, leaving 78,755 Palestinians injured.

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