

Fighting rages in Rafah as Israel steps up invasion despite international outcry

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Palestinians gather as rescuers search for casualties trapped under the rubble of a house hit in

an Israeli strike, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, in Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, on May 14, 2024.

Rafah, May 17 (RHC)-- Fighting between the Palestinian resistance forces and Israeli troops have raged in Gaza after Tel Aviv vowed to intensify its ground invasion in Rafah. Witnesses on Friday reported fierce battles overnight in and around the Jabalia refugee camp in the north of the war-ravaged Gaza Strip.

Israeli helicopters carried out heavy strikes around Jabalia, while artillery units shelled homes near Kamal Adwan Hospital in the camp.

According to Gaza's Civil Defense agency, the bodies of six people were retrieved and several wounded people were evacuated after an air strike targeted a house in Jabalia. Rescue teams were trying to recover people from under the rubble of the Shaaban family home on al-Faluja Street in the camp, it said.

Israeli tanks also surrounded the entrance of Beit Hanoon town, where some families from Jabalia have fled to take refuge.

The Israeli military vowed to "intensify" its ground invasion in Rafah despite international concerns for the hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians in the southern city. Israeli minister of military affairs Yoav Gallant on Thursday said "additional forces will enter" the Rafah area on the border with Egypt and "this activity will intensify."

Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the onslaught on Rafah was a "critical" part of the regime's plans.

Witnesses said Israeli warships launched strikes on Rafah, where more than 1.4 million Palestinian civilians have been sheltering.

Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, said in a statement that it "targeted enemy forces stationed inside the Rafah border crossing... with mortar shells".

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli forces killed a young Palestinian man and injured a child as confrontations erupted during raids against Bal'a and Anabta towns.

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