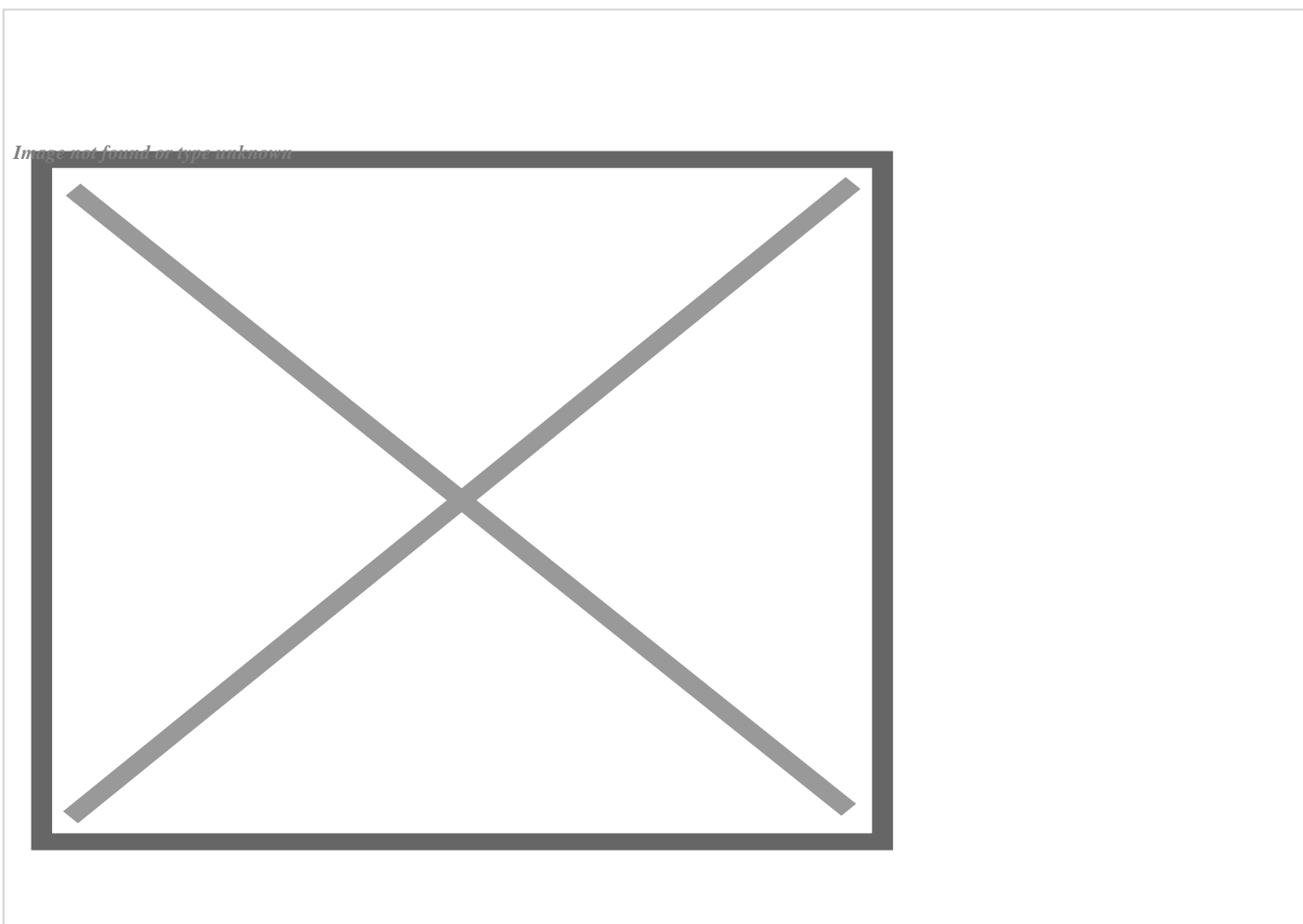


Israeli army tanks move into Rafah's city center as full-scale invasion appears to be underway



Rafah, May 29 (RHC)-- Israeli tanks penetrated the heart of Rafah on Tuesday despite global outrage over a strike that set ablaze a crowded camp in Gaza's far-southern city, killing 45 people according to Palestinian officials.

Israeli tanks were "stationed on the Al-Awda roundabout in the center of the city of Rafah," a witness said. A Palestinian security source confirmed tanks were in the center of Rafah where Israeli troops launched a controversial assault earlier this month.

Sunday evening's camp strike, which Gaza medics said also left hundreds of civilians with shrapnel and burn wounds, drew condemnation from world leaders. The sight of the charred carnage, blackened corpses and children being rushed to hospitals led UN chief Antonio Guterres to declare that "there is no

safe place in Gaza. This horror must stop."

Meanwhile, in Geneva, a World Health Organization official said the last working hospital in Rafah could stop functioning and a substantial number of deaths could be expected if Israel launches a "full incursion" into the southern Gaza City.

"If the incursion would continue, we would lose the last hospital in Rafah," Richard Peeperkorn, the WHO representative for Gaza and the occupied West Bank, said on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly in Geneva on Tuesday.

He said that in the case of a "full incursion," a contingency plan involving treating patients in a string of ill-equipped field hospitals "will not prevent what we expect: substantial additional mortality and morbidity." The comments came as Israeli tanks were reported to have advanced into the centre of Rafah.

Peeperkorn said that of the three hospitals in Rafah, only one was "barely functional." He said the Abu Youssed Al-Najar Hospital, which had previously serviced 700 dialysis patients, was no longer operating.

Peeperkorn said its closure had had a direct impact on the WHO's ability to get medical supplies into Gaza. "Almost 100 percent of the medical supplies, essential medicines, equipment, they actually come from El Arish [in Egypt] through the Rafah crossing," he said. "There are currently 60 trucks that are in El Arish waiting to get into Gaza."

Since the Rafah closure, WHO has only been able to get three medical supply trucks through the Karem Abu Salem crossing, which Israelis call the Kerem Shalom crossing, Peeperkorn said.

Meanwhile, WHO spokesperson Margaret Harris said that since Israel launched its offensive in Rafah, "there's been an abrupt halt to all medical evacuations," warning that more people will die waiting for treatment due to the halt.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from central Gaza's Deir el-Balah, said Israeli tanks are "pushing deeper into Rafah right now from two major axes." "First, along the Philadelphi Corridor into the city centre, and second, from the eastern part of Rafah city all the way down to an area known as the al-Awda traffic circle," he said.

Israel's three-week-old Rafah offensive stirred renewed outrage after an air raid on Sunday ignited a blaze in a tent camp in a western district, killing at least 45 people.

Israel claimed it had targeted two senior Hamas operatives in a compound and had not intended to cause civilian casualties.

On Tuesday, 21 Palestinians were killed and dozens of others wounded in an Israeli attack on an area with tents housing displaced people in al-Mawasi, west of Rafah, according to Palestinian medical officials.

Artillery shelling in Rafah reached as far as the vicinity of the Kuwait Specialist Hospital, Al Jazeera's Mahmoud said on Tuesday, which has been pushed out of service. Three field hospitals in western Rafah city, are also all out of service, he said.

Rafah was a major entry point for humanitarian relief before Israel stepped up its military offensive on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt earlier this month and seized control of the crossing from the Palestinian side.

Thousands of Palestinians in Gaza are estimated to require urgent medical evacuation, but few have been able to leave the besieged territory since October 7th last year.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/355941-israeli-army-tanks-move-into-rafahs-city-center-as-full-scale-invasion-appears-to-be-underway>



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