

Egypt Opens Gaza's Rafah Crossing After Almost Three Months



Cairo, November 20 (RHC)-- Egyptian authorities have allowed the opening of the Rafah crossing east of the country to the besieged Gaza Strip after nearly three months of closure. The reopening over the weekend, which would last for three days and comes on a humanitarian basis, is meant to reduce the increasing number of people stranded on both sides of the frontier.

It has been a routine for Egypt over the past 10 years to keep Rafah closed in what many call Cairo's alignment with Israel against the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, the dominant force in Gaza. Hamas only recently ceded administrative control of the enclave to the Palestinian Authority, the organization that controls the occupied West Bank, in an Egyptian-brokered unity deal meant to ease frictions between the two sides. Hamas forces withdrew from Rafah and another crossing to the occupied territories in early November.

Many sought to link the Saturday opening to the Palestinian Authority's amicable ties with Egypt. However, there was no report that the two sides had reached an agreement to run the crossing on a regular basis, which the regime in Tel Aviv has fiercely opposed over the past years.

Israel has launched two wars on Gaza since Hamas took office in 2007 while the regime maintains a crippling siege on the Mediterranean enclave, leaving many in desperate need of medicine and other humanitarian stuff.

According to official estimates by Hamas, some 30,000 people are on the waiting list to find the chance to travel across Rafah. The crossing has opened only 17 times this year and the last time it was open for a similar three-day period was some 80 days ago.

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