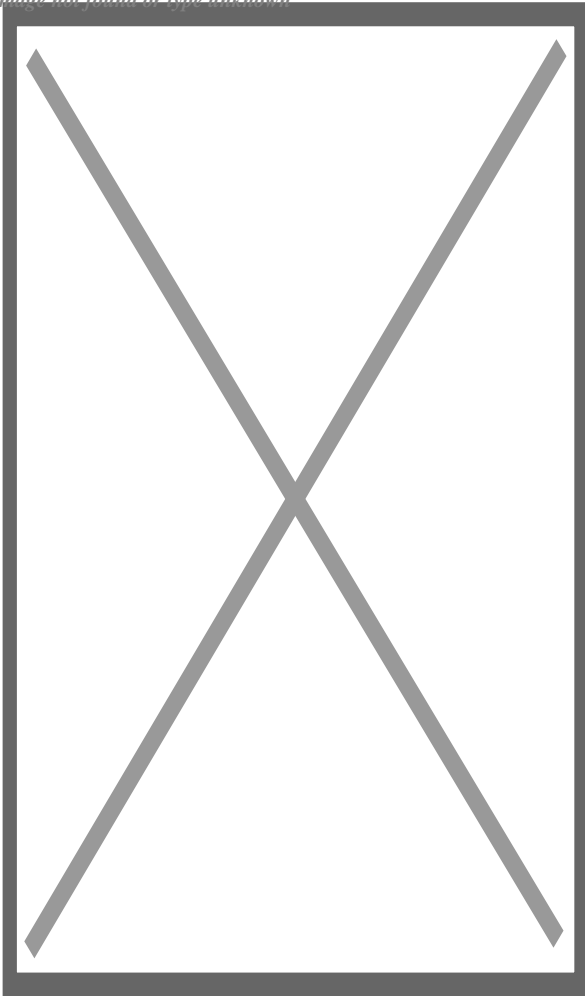


# *Palestinians await Israeli attack on Rafah and certain death*

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**Feryal al-Najjar lives in constant fear that her children will be killed [Abdelhakim Abu Riash/Al Jazeera]**

Rafah, February 9 (RHC)-- Seham al-Najjar and her family have nowhere else to run if Israel intensifies its assault on Rafah, a town in southernmost Gaza. Like 1.8 million people, Seham fled to Rafah in search of relative safety from Israel's relentless bombardment and ground invasion in other parts of the Gaza Strip.

She arrived weeks ago with 20 members of her family from Khan Younis, a city that Israel designated as “safe” at the start of the war and then reduced to rubble in December. Seham fears that Rafah could suffer an even worse fate.

Israeli Prime Minister “Benjamin Netanyahu wants to take this area from [Palestinians] and give it to the Zionists,” Seham, 30, told Al Jazeera. “Nowhere in Gaza is safe.” Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Rafah are bracing for an Israeli onslaught that could add to the long list of atrocities committed in Gaza, according to rights groups and United Nations agencies.

They said Israel has deliberately and disproportionately targeted civilians in Gaza in retaliation for Hamas’s surprise attack on Israeli communities and military outposts on October 7, in which 1,139 people were killed and 240 taken as captives into Gaza by fighters from the Qassam Brigades and other armed Palestinian groups.

Israel has responded by killing 27,000 Palestinians and injuring more than 66,000 in attacks that have reduced most of Gaza to rubble, including homes, hospitals, museums and universities. The carnage has killed more than 1 percent of Gaza’s population in just four months, prompting the International Court of Justice to warn last month that genocide is “plausible” in Gaza.

The UN says “everything must be done” to halt a planned offensive on Rafah, but Israel has disregarded the concerns and killed scores of people in the city already. “Gaza is one of the most densely populated places on Earth, and Rafah is now the most densely populated place in Gaza. Any sort of military campaign or air strike would amplify risks of disproportionate attacks,” said Omar Shaki, the Israel-Palestine director at Human Rights Watch.

The family has been displaced multiple times since October 7, first fleeing their home in Jabalia refugee camp to Khan Younis, where they took shelter in a factory for a couple of months.

With Khan Younis increasingly pounded by Israeli forces, they realised there was no safety to be had there, and they left for Rafah, where most of the displaced civilians are staying in schools and residential buildings or sleeping in tents pitched on cold streets.

“This is the last place in Gaza... If they attack us here, then where else can we go?” Feryal asked. “We’ll have to stay here and die.”

Even if Israel delays its offensive on Rafah, thousands of civilians could die of starvation in Gaza. Most have little access to food or clean water due to Israel’s policy of blocking the delivery of aid.

Israel has also razed farm areas as part of what Human Rights Watch said is a broader policy of using starvation as a weapon of war – a war crime. “Every day for the last four months,” Feryal said, “we heard news that there may be a possible ceasefire, but one never arrived. “Now we need a ceasefire. Enough of this nonsense.”

Qatar, Egypt and the United States are working to broker a truce between Israel and Hamas, which would see an exchange of Israeli and Palestinian captives as well as the scaling-up of aid to the besieged enclave.

Netanyahu says Israel wants to control the Philadelphi Corridor, the strip of land on the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, to ensure that Hamas cannot smuggle weapons into Gaza. But any operation to control that border may drive hundreds of thousands of Palestinians over the border into Egypt, according to Palestinians in Gaza and Egyptian officials.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has consistently been against “the dilution of the Palestinian cause” by driving Palestinians off their lands and leaving them to fight for their right of return as past

generations of Palestinian refugees are doing.

Egypt said Israel should allow Palestinians to return to northern Gaza before any sort of military operation begins in Rafah. Cairo also warned that any attempt by Israel to control the Philadelphi Corridor risks upending the 1979 Camp David Accords, a peace deal between Egypt and Israel that demilitarised the border.

“It’s hard to anticipate what the next step is going to be [for Egypt] should such an Israeli attack [on Rafah] materialise,” said an expert on Egypt, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject. “Egypt’s agency is limited in this situation.”

Meanwhile, Seham is living with her fears that the world is going to allow Israel to commit massacres in Rafah. “We are waiting to be martyred,” she said. “We know that wherever we go and whatever we do, we’ll be killed.”

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<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/346799-palestinians-await-israeli-attack-on-rafah-and-certain-death>



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