

*EU's foreign policy chief says  
planned Israeli offensive in  
Rafah is alarming*

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Brussels, February 10 (RHC)-- The Israeli regime's plans for a military offensive on Rafah in the Gaza Strip are "alarming," the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borell has said. Borell said on X on Friday that "1.4 million Palestinians are currently in Rafah without a safe place to go, facing starvation".

Four months into Israel's assault on Gaza, the regime's military forces have now ramped up airstrikes on Gaza's far south, where more than half of the territory's population of 2.4 million has been forcibly

displaced.

Israel's warplanes bombed the city overnight on Thursday and Friday. At least three children were among eight people killed on Friday morning in the military attacks on homes in Rafah, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent. Five of those killed were members of one family.

"Reports of an Israeli military offensive on Rafah are alarming," he added. "It would have catastrophic consequences worsening the already dire humanitarian situation and the unbearable civilian toll."

Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told officials to "submit to the cabinet a combined plan for evacuating the population and destroying the battalions" of Hamas holed up in Rafah, his office said.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) has warned that Israel's bombardment of Gaza's overcrowded border town of Rafah would be a "recipe for disaster." Philippe Lazzarini, the head of UNRWA, said on Friday that an offensive in Rafah would be a "recipe for disaster" given that 1.4 million people had taken refuge there.

"You have 1 million 400 thousand people, you have dozens of kilometers of people living in the streets in plastic makeshifts ... and you try and figure out a military offensive in the middle of these completely exposed, vulnerable people, it's a recipe for disaster." "Any large-scale military operation among this population can only lead to an additional layer of endless tragedy that's unfolding."

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a post on X on Friday that an Israeli incursion into Rafah would "exponentially increase what is already a humanitarian nightmare with untold regional consequences."

UNICEF, the UN agency for children, also warned that more than 600,000 children and their families have been displaced to Rafah, many of them multiple times, as a result of Israeli attacks.

Since it started its war on Gaza in early October, 1.9 million people – 85 percent of Gaza's population – have been internally displaced. The Israeli attacks have also killed almost 28,000 people so far, according to the Gaza health ministry.

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