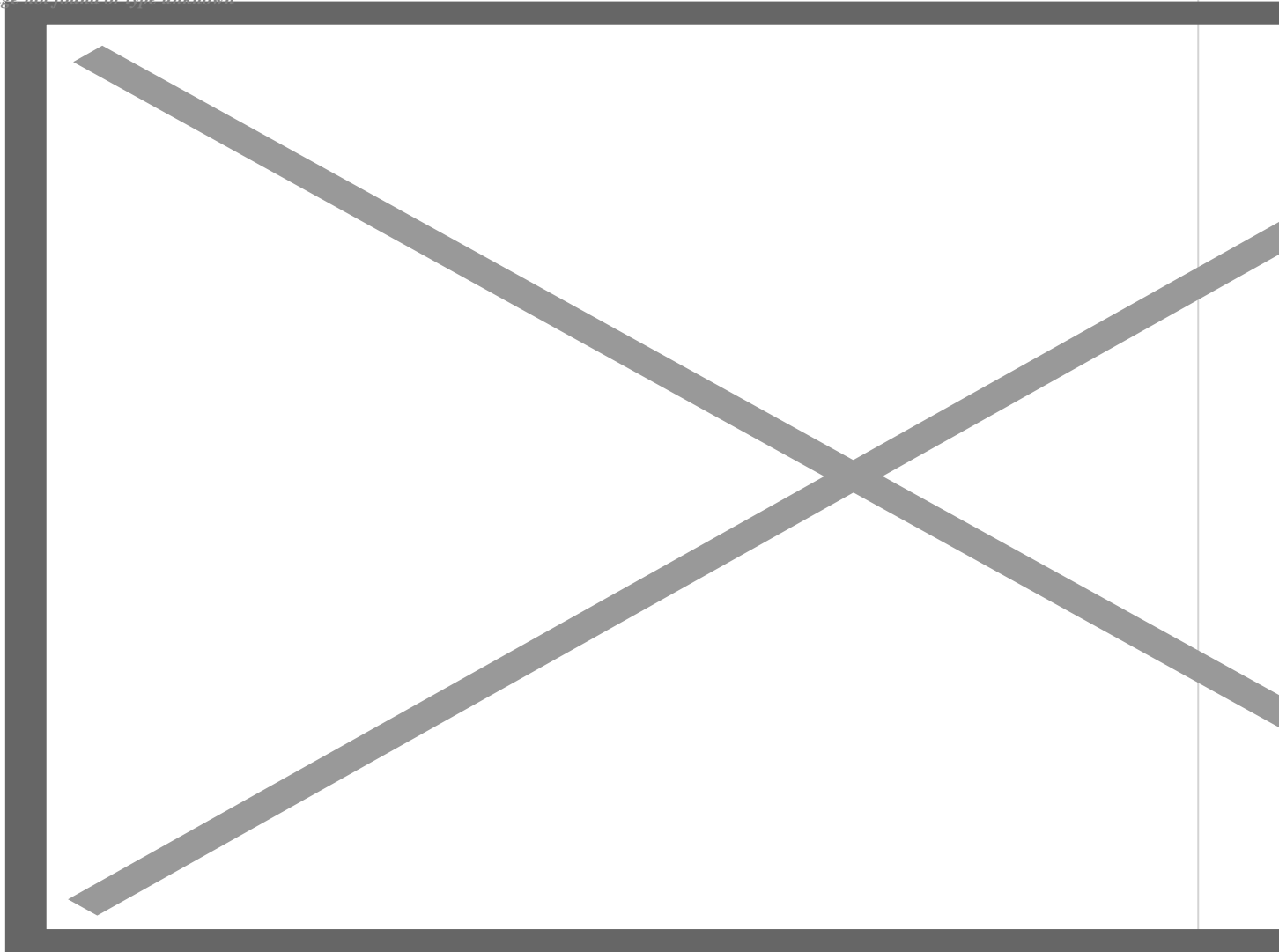


Israel threatens to invade Rafah and vows return to Khan Younis

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Palestinians wade in rainwater as they walk past a destroyed mosque on the first day of the Eid al-Fitr festival marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan, in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, April 10, 2024. (Photo by AFP)

Tel Aviv, April 11 (RHC)-- Israel's Benny Gantz says the regime will proceed with the ground invasion of the city of Rafah in southern Gaza. The minister for military affairs said on Thursday: "We will enter Rafah. We will return to Khan Younis. And we will operate in Gaza."

Rafah borders Egypt and more than 1.5 million Palestinians are now sheltering in the city. The regime faces deep division from within regarding the military operation in Rafah.

During a meeting of the regime's ministers, Yariv Levin, one of the ministers, said: "Regarding Rafah, I recommend not discussing the timing of entry. Once the enemy understands exactly when and how it will happen, it will translate into casualties (for Israeli soldiers), more explosive devices and booby-trapped houses."

Foreign Minister Israel Katz intervened in the discussion. "Why are we waiting? We should already be there (in Rafah)."

Bezalel Smotrich, a key member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right regime, has said the military must intensify operations in central Gaza, as well as in Rafah. Israel has pulled most of its troops out of southern Gaza apparently to recuperate.

Israel also faces tremendous international pressure to end its campaign of death and destruction in Gaza and allow more humanitarian aid into the starving territory. Several countries, the United States included, have urged Israel to abandon plans for the Rafah operation.

Separately on Thursday, the Israeli military announced the launch of a new "targeted" operation in central Gaza. Before the ground troops started the incursion, warplanes and artillery struck the outskirts of the Nuseirat refugee camp.

In one recent Israeli airstrike near a cemetery east of Rafah, five people were killed. Three people were also killed in Janayna, Wafa news agency reported. According to Gaza's Health Ministry, Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip have killed 63 people and wounded 45 more over the past 24 hours.

The Israeli savagery has pushed 85 percent of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine.

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