

## Israel's Rafah invasion must stop now, say UN experts

GENEVA (10 May 2024) – The Israeli military's ground operation targeting eastern Rafah is a culmination of a seven-month long campaign to forcibly transfer and destroy Gaza's population, UN experts\* warned today.

"The long-threatened Rafah invasion must not be seen as a foregone conclusion," the experts said. "Israel must halt this assault."

On 6 May, as international efforts to negotiate a ceasefire, end the massacre in Gaza and ensure the release of hostages gathered steam, the Israeli military moved forward with an offensive into the southern corner of the besieged Gaza Strip, where around 1.4 million Palestinians are sheltering. Israeli forces shuttered the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, further cutting off life-saving humanitarian aid, supplies and fuel needed to run Gaza's remaining hospitals and water desalination plants.

The experts said the Rafah invasion was yet another flagrant violation of Israel's obligations as an occupying power. "In light of the grievous humanitarian situation on the ground, no evacuation order issued by Israel can be considered compliant with international humanitarian law," they said. International law stipulates that Israel must ensure displaced civilians are protected and have continuous access to food, safe water, and medical assistance.

"This is even more critical when Israel has been warned that its acts may amount to genocide," the experts said. "Further displacement of Gaza's population through evacuation orders or military operations contravenes [binding provisional measures](#) imposed on Israel by the International Court of Justice."

The so-called 'expanded humanitarian area' of Al Mawasi, where the Israeli military has instructed evacuees to go, is already without sufficient food, water, medicine, hygiene products, electricity, shelter and access to education for children; it cannot cope with a population influx. "The forcible transfer of civilians, mostly women and more than 600,000 children—including wounded children—from Rafah pushes Palestinians across Gaza further into critically desperate humanitarian circumstances," the experts said.

Over the past seven months, Israel has repeatedly attacked areas where evacuees were instructed to go.

"While past violations must be duly investigated and accounted for, new abuses must be prevented," they said.

"States with influence over Israel have described any incursion into Rafah as a 'red line'," the experts said. "They must immediately put those words into practice

and stop this disastrous campaign by ending the flow of arms into Israel and withholding investment and political support.”

ENDS

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