

Netanyahu Doubles Down on Planned Assault on Rafah

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*Israeli **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** said Sunday that Israel would proceed with its plans to assault Rafah, the southernmost city in Gaza, where over 1.5 million refugees are sheltering.*

"No international pressure will stop Israel," Netanyahu said during a meeting of Israel's cabinet, adding, "If we stop the war now before achieving all of its goals, the meaning is that Israel had lost the war, and we will not allow this."

"We will operate in Rafah," Netanyahu said. "This will take several weeks, and it will happen."

On Friday, the Israeli military approved a plan for an offensive in Rafah, combined with the displacement of refugees sheltering there to camps to the north, which Israeli officials called "humanitarian islands."

Netanyahu reiterated his plans to attack Rafah following a speech Thursday by US Democratic Senate Majority Leader **Charles Schumer**, who called Netanyahu an "obstacle" to "peace" and said the prime minister had "lost his way." US **President Joe Biden** effectively endorsed Schumer's remarks, saying it was a "good speech."

But Netanyahu's statements Saturday demonstrated that these verbal criticisms by US officials have no effect on the conduct of the genocide. Israel continues to kill over 100 people every single day, while the entire population of Gaza is on the verge of starvation.

Amid all this, US funding and weapons to Israel continue to flow uninterrupted, and the

White House has made it clear it has no “red lines” for what crimes Israel is allowed to commit before the US stops providing it with arms and funding.

The United States has already offered a pre-emptive endorsement of the assault on Rafah by making the only qualification the existence of a “plan” to relocate the civilian population.

On Sunday, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported that 13,000 children have been killed in Gaza to date, adding that many children affected by malnutrition in Gaza “don’t even have the energy to cry.”

“What’s happening now is more than 13,000 children already have been killed, which is an astronomical, horrifying number,” said **UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell** in an interview on CBS News Sunday.

She added,

“Thousands more have been injured or we can’t even determine where they are. They may be stuck under rubble. Thousands more have lost one or both parents. Some of these children, you’ve seen them on the news, they’re just by themselves managing their younger siblings. I mean, it’s a horrifying situation.”

Russell said that one in three children under the age of two is suffering from acute malnutrition.

She continued,

“I’ve been in wards of children who are suffering from severe anemia and malnutrition, and the whole ward is absolutely quiet because the children, the babies, don’t even have the energy to cry.”

In a report published Sunday, the UK-based charity Oxfam said Israel continues to “systematically and deliberately block and undermine any meaningful international humanitarian response.”

Oxfam reported that the deliberate starvation of the population of Gaza has only worsened since the ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) calling on Israel to stop killing Palestinians and to allow food into Gaza.

“The ICJ order should have shocked Israeli leaders to change course, but since then conditions in Gaza have actually worsened,” Oxfam Middle East and North Africa **Director Sally Abi Khalil** said Sunday. “Israeli authorities are not only failing to facilitate the international aid effort, but are actively hindering it. We believe that Israel is failing to take all measures within its power to prevent genocide.”

To date, Israel has killed over 32,000 people in Gaza since October 7, with tens of thousands more missing. Between March 14 and 15, Israeli forces killed 149 Palestinians in Gaza and injured 300 more.

On Sunday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced that the military is once again launching a raid on Al-Shifa Hospital, raising the prospect that doctors and patients will be killed by IDF troops.

“The IDF is conducting a high-precision operation in limited areas of Shifa Hospital following concrete evidence that demanded immediate action,” the IDF said in a statement.

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*Featured image: Israeli airstrike on an apartment building in Rafah, the last refuge in southern Gaza.
Photo credit: MENAFN*

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