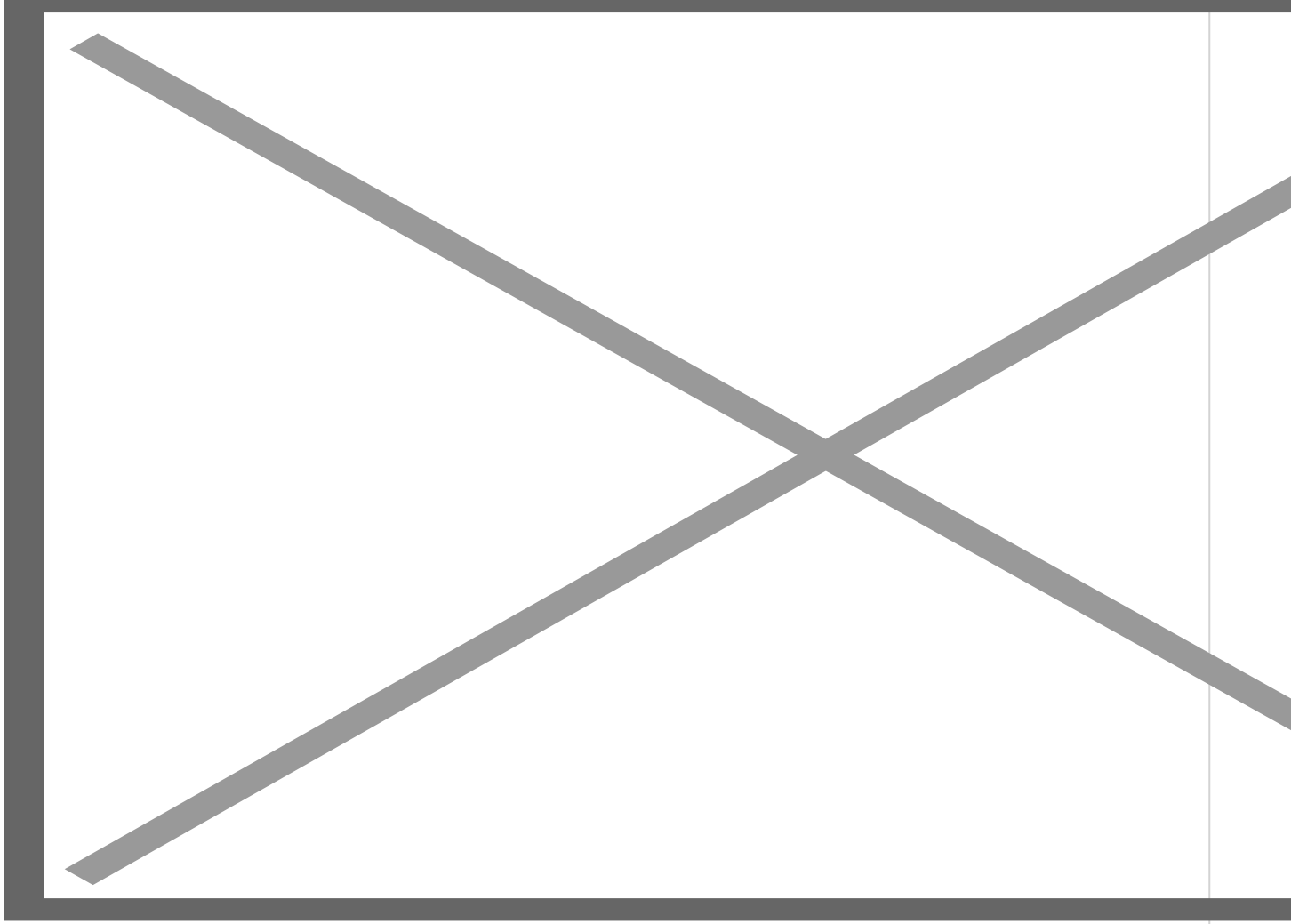


United Nations relief agency chief says number of civilians killed in Gaza is rapidly increasing

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Gaza City, December 5 (RHC)-- The number of civilians being killed in the Gaza Strip is "rapidly increasing" as Israel continues its bombardment and ground operations, the head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said on Monday.

"The resumption of the military operation and its expansion further in southern Gaza is repeating horrors from past weeks," UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said in a statement. "The number of civilians killed is rapidly increasing. Civilians, including men, women, children, older persons, the sick and people with disabilities are the most to suffer."

He added that another evacuation order to move civilians from Khan Younis into Rafah in southern Gaza due to Israel's ongoing bombardment "created panic, fear and anxiety."

Lazzarini said that at least 60,000 people were forced to move to an "already overcrowded UNRWA shelters, with more asking to be sheltered. Many have already been displaced more than once fleeing the war in other parts of Gaza."

UNRWA is currently housing more than 1.2 million people in shelters, including in southern Gaza, according to the agency.

"The evacuation order pushes people to concentrate into what is less than one-third of the Gaza Strip. They need everything: food, water, shelter, and mostly safety. Roads to the south are clogged," Lazzarini said, noting that access to water is limited in Gaza.

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