

New Nakba as hundreds of thousands flee attacks by Israel's genocidal war machine

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Palestinian children pack onto a truck to evacuate Rafah, Gaza, on May 8, 2024. Photo: (Via

Rafah, May 15 (RHC)-- Today marks Nakba Day (The Day of Catastrophe) -- commemorating the expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians from their homeland in 1948 -- to make way for the creation of the state of Israel. On this 76th anniversary, the United Nations announced that more than half a million Palestinians have been displaced in war-torn Gaza in recent days, as Israel intensifies its attacks across the besieged territory.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) estimated that nearly 450,000 Palestinians have been forced to leave the densely-populated southern city of Rafah due to escalating military operations in the city, where more than a million people had sought shelter. Some 100,000 people were also displaced in the north.

"People face constant exhaustion, hunger and fear. Nowhere is safe. An immediate ceasefire is the only hope," UNRWA said in a post on X.

Israeli tanks have pushed deeper into eastern parts of Rafah, with residents saying they could see smoke billowing above eastern districts of the city and heard explosions after the occupying regime bombarded a cluster of houses.

Israeli tanks, bulldozers and armored vehicles have also surrounded evacuation zones and shelters in the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, with fierce gun battles continuing in the area. The Israeli military has ordered more residents to evacuate parts of the north, while at least 82 Palestinians have been killed in the past 24 hours during the regime's relentless air attacks.

According to UN deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq, evacuation orders in the north have displaced at least 100,000 people so far.

Francesca Albanese, UN special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, also said in a post on X that Israel is using the terms "evacuation orders" and "safe zones" to create the illusion that its military operations ensure protection of civilians. However, she said, this "humanitarian camouflage" has turned Gaza into a place without civilians.

Meanwhile, the spokesman for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres says the UN chief is "appalled" by Israel's escalating military activity in and around Rafah. "Civilians must be respected and protected at all times, in Rafah and elsewhere in Gaza. For people in Gaza, nowhere is safe now," Stephane Dujarric said, adding that Guterres has reiterated his call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

On May 7, the Israeli regime entered Rafah's eastern sector and seized control of Gaza's side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, which is the main corridor for the transfer of aid into the besieged strip, despite widespread international opposition.

The incursion came after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas said it had agreed to a ceasefire proposal put forward by mediators Qatar and Egypt.

About 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering in Rafah. The city had been designated a "safe zone" by the Israeli military. Palestinians are now struggling to evacuate Rafah since the Israeli military dropped leaflets ordering them to leave.

The new tragedy comes as Palestinians are set to commemorate the 76th anniversary of the Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe) on May 15, when hundreds of their fellow Palestinians were forcibly evicted from their homeland by Israelis in 1948.

This year's Nakba Day will be commemorated amid Israel's relentless attacks against the Gaza Strip.

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