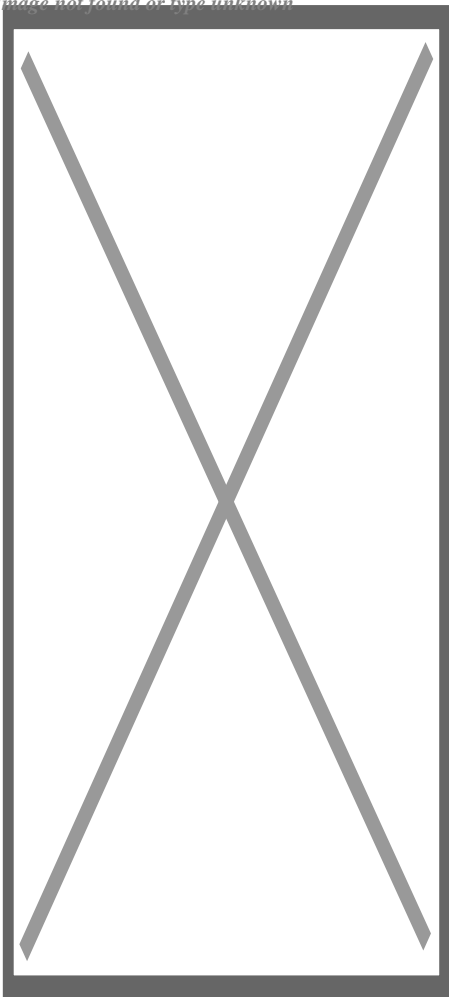


Israel orders 1.1 million people to evacuate northern Gaza within 24 hours

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**A young man carries a little girl following an Israeli strike, as battles between Israel and the Hamas movement continue for the sixth consecutive day in Rafah
Gaza has been under relentless aerial bombardment from Israel after the attack of Hamas inside Israel [File: Said Khatib/AFP]**

***** UN warns it is ‘impossible for such a movement to take place without devastating humanitarian consequences’ *****

Gaza City, October 13 (RHC)-- Israel's army has ordered the evacuation of all civilians living in Gaza City and in the north of the Gaza Strip ahead of a feared ground offensive on the besieged enclave. The directive came on Friday on the heels of what the United Nations said was a warning they received from Israel to evacuate 1.1 million people living in the north of Gaza within 24 hours.

The order, which comes on the seventh day of a war and “total blockade” declared by Israel following an unprecedented Hamas incursion and deadly attack, directs residents of Gaza City to flee deeper south into the Gaza Strip, a narrow coastal territory that is home to about 2.3 million people.

“This evacuation is for your own safety,” the Israeli military said, in a warning it said was sent to Gaza City civilians. “You will be able to return to Gaza City only when another announcement permitting it is made. Do not approach the area of the security fence with the State of Israel,” it added in a statement.

It warned that “in the following days”, the Israeli army “will continue to operate significantly in Gaza City and make extensive efforts to avoid harming civilians.”

More than 1,500 people – about half of them children and women – have been killed in relentless Israeli bombardment on Gaza since Hamas attacked Israel October 7, in a surprise operation that killed more than 1,300 people in Israel.

The Hamas Authority for Refugee Affairs also told residents in the north to “remain steadfast in your homes and to stand firm in the face of this disgusting psychological war waged by the occupation.”

The broad order for all of Gaza's north also applies to all UN staff and to the hundreds of thousands of people who have taken shelter in UN schools and other facilities since Israel launched round-the-clock air strikes on Saturday.

“The United Nations considers it impossible for such a movement to take place without devastating humanitarian consequences,” spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said. “The United Nations strongly appeals for any such order, if confirmed, to be rescinded avoiding what could transform what is already a tragedy into a calamitous situation,” the spokesman said.

The global body also said its agency for Palestinian refugees is moving operations and foreign staff to southern Gaza, following the Israel army's evacuation order.

“UNRWA relocated its central operations centre and international staff to the south to continue its humanitarian operations and support to its staff and Palestine Refugees in Gaza,” the agency wrote on X.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday local health authorities in Gaza had informed it that it was impossible to evacuate vulnerable hospital patients from northern Gaza after Israel's military called for civilians to relocate south within 24 hours.

“There are severely ill people whose injuries mean their only chances of survival is being on life support, such as mechanical ventilators,” said WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic. “So moving those people is a death sentence. Asking health workers to do so is beyond cruel.”

As the news of the order spread, confusion and fear started spreading among panicked residents of the besieged enclave. “I have been receiving lots of phone calls from my father, my brother, my friends,” al Jazeera's Safwat al-Kahlout, reporting from northern Gaza, said. “What is the plan, where should we go,

is there a specific place in the south where we can go?” al-Kahlout said, adding that the order was impossible to follow.

Inas Hamdan, an officer at the UN Palestinian refugee agency in Gaza City, echoed the sentiment. “This is chaos, no one understands what to do,” said Hamdan, as she grabbed whatever she could throw into her bags as the panicked shouts of her relatives could be heard around her.

In the United States, progressive U.S. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez also denounced Israel’s push.

“Any person can see that ordering 1+ million people to move in under 24 hours is not possible. It is unacceptable,” she wrote in a social media post. “The UN has already deemed the order ‘impossible’ without ‘devastating humanitarian consequences’. Humanity is at stake. Nearly half are children. We must halt this.”

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