

# UN: 800,000 People Fled Rafah Amid Israeli Invasion

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – Nearly 800,000 Palestinians have been displaced from Rafah since the Zionist regime launched its onslaught against the southern Gaza city last week, Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has said.

Lazzarini decried the repeated displacement of Palestinians in the statement.

“Since the war in Gaza began, Palestinians have been forced to flee multiple times in search of safety that they have never found, including in UNRWA shelters,” Lazzarini said.

“When people move, they are exposed, without safe passage or protection. Every time, they are forced to leave behind the few belongings they have: mattresses, tents, cooking utensils and basic supplies that they cannot carry or pay to transport.

“Every time, they have to start from scratch, all over again.”

Saturday saw intense fighting across Gaza – not just in Rafah – with Israeli attacks killing dozens of Palestinians.

Around 1.5 million Palestinians had taken refuge in Rafah prior to



*Palestinians move past destroyed buildings along a street in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on May 14, 2024.*

the incursions, having fled there from the ravages of the war that began following a retaliatory operation against the occupied territories by Gaza’s resistance groups.

The Gazans, who have now left the city, have fled to “the middle areas and [the southern Gaza city of] Khan Yunis, including to destroyed buildings,” Lazzarini said.

Al-Mawasi, a 14-square-kilometer town on the coast, as well as the central city of Deir el-Balah, were “crammed” with

recently displaced people, he added.

“Every time, they are forced to leave behind the few belongings they have ...Every time, they have to start from scratch, all over again.”

The Israeli military has, meanwhile, seized the Rafah crossing in southern Gaza, which borders Egypt and serves as the main point of entry for aid supplies, including fuel, into Palestinian territory.

The move came as part of an all-out siege that the regime has been

enforcing against the entire Gaza simultaneously with the war.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has reiterated his call for a solution for the Gaza Strip, saying the Zionist regime’s ongoing war on the besieged territory “is an open wound that threatens to infect the entire region.”

Guterres made the remarks in a post on X, as Israel intensified its ground invasion of Gaza’s southernmost city of Rafah despite international concerns for the hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians there.

“The only permanent way to end the cycle of violence and instability is through a two-state solution, Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security,” with Al-Quds as the capital of both, he said.

The most intense fighting for weeks is now taking place on both the northern and southern edges of the besieged Palestinian territory.

Rafah, which quite recently was a shelter for more than 1.4 million Palestinian civilians, has seen some 640,000 of its inhabitants flee to other areas due to Israel’s looming full invasion.

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avoiding travel by car, due to unpaved roads and the rain making the grounds muddy and impassible, the national television reported.

Iran’s Red Crescent said it has lost contact with three members of the search and rescue teams because of bad weather and the thick fog.

An emergency service spokesperson earlier told Tasnim that an emergency air ambulance was dispatched to the area, “but unfortunately, due to heavy fog, further aerial operations were not possible.”

The spokesperson added that eight emergency ambulances from the city of Tabriz had been sent to the area, as well as emergency rescue teams to conduct a search of the area and provide urgent medical services.

Iranian army chief of staff Major General Muhammad Bagheri ordered the utilization of all resources of the army and the IRGC to aid with the rescue and search operation efforts, state media reported.

Following the reports, Fars news agency and Raisi’s Instagram page called on Iranians to pray for the president, who has been in office since June 2021. National media also aired prayers being held for the safety of the president around the country.

Speaking to Mehr news agency, the head of Iran’s relief and rescue organization asked Iranians to follow the news on official media and “under no circumstances go to the area to avoid interference with the rescue operation.”

Official media also reported that the Iranian government cancelled a planned cabinet meeting and instead convened an emergency meeting with its crisis management committee.

As the news of the incident broke, people took to various social media platforms to pray for the safety of the president and those accompanying him.

“Humanity is with Raesi,” wrote Rev Laskaris, a U.S.-based social media influencer, on X.

“Pray for Iranian President Raisi,” tweeted Ehsan Safarenejad, an Iranian geopolitical analyst.

“Pray for Iranian President Raisi & Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian,” wrote Jackson Hinkle, a prominent U.S.-based social media influencer and commentator.

“Please pray for Jenab Ebrahim Raisi [ @raisi\_com ], a true supporter of Palestine and the oppressed people of the world,” posted Sajjad Kargili, a political activist based in Kargil, India.

“I hope the President and the Foreign Minister of Iran are safe. President Raisi just visited Azerbaijan and together with the President of Azerbaijan, they inaugurated a dam on the border between the two countries. Then he returned to Iran by helicopter, and FM Abdollahian, was also on the plane,” tweeted Hu Xijin, the former chief editor of the Chinese state-run daily Global Times.

“Pray for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Pray for Iranian President, Ibrahim Raisi. Pray for his safety and his entourage,” wrote Ahmed Jahaf, a Yemen-based journalist.

“A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi is missing somewhere in Azerbaijan. Control room trying to contact the crew. Let’s pray for the safety of all staff inside,” tweeted Syed Zaigham Kazmi, a London-based social media user.

“Pray for the safety of Ibrahim Raisi,” wrote Huma Zehra, an X user from Pakistan.

“Some miracle will happen! Let’s pray for the safety and security of the #Iran’s President #Raisi and others accompanying him,” wrote Dr. Alyan Yashin, a social media user, sharing photos of President Raesi and three of his companions on board the helicopter.

## Iran...

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modern engineering standards, he added. Addressing the inauguration, President Raisi says relations with Azerbaijan go beyond mere neighborhood.

“As Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei] said our relationship with the friendly, brotherly and neighboring country of Azerbaijan goes beyond neighborliness. Our relationship is a strong kinship bond that has roots in the beliefs of the two nations ... and connects our history and civilization,” he said.

“This heartfelt relationship between the two countries and the two nations is unbreakable.” Raisi said Tehran-Baku ties should expand

to regional and international cooperation. He said the enemies do not want to see progress in Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic.

“Some may not be happy with the bond between Iran and Azerbaijan, but what is important to us is the interests of the two nations and the two countries.

“Iran believes that any progress in Azerbaijan is its own progress and that any insecurity along the common border will damage both states,” the president said.

Aliyev, for his part, said that the meeting between the Iranian and Azeri presidents has a message for the region and the world.

No one can create misunderstanding and division between the two countries, he emphasized, describing developing bilateral relations as positive.

Azerbaijan’s ties with Iran were strained in January last year following an attack on the country’s embassy in Tehran, which prompted Baku to close it and evacuate staff over what it called a “terrorist act.”

An initial Iranian investigation found that the attack was motivated by “personal and family-related problems.”

## Hezbollah...

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The movement has vowed to keep up its retaliatory operations as long as the Tel Aviv regime continues its onslaught on Gaza.

On Sunday, Yemen’s Ansarullah resistance movement called on the international community to intervene and exert pressure on the Zionist regime to stop its brutal attacks and war crimes against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

“If it were not for the sake of the United States’ support for the Zionist regime, such crimes would not have been committed. Assaults on houses, schools and residential neighborhoods across the Gaza Strip convincingly show the failure and inability of the Zionist enemy to confront Palestinian resistance fighters.

“We remind Arab and Muslim nations of their responsibility and ask them to break silence,” the Ansarullah political bureau said in a statement.

It went on to urge the international community to employ all means at its disposal to pressure the Israeli regime to end its bloody onslaught against the Gaza Strip, and lift the all-out blockade imposed on the region.

Ansarullah touched on the daily massacre of Palestinians in the coastal territory adds to the Zionist regime’s long list of crimes and atrocities, urging Arab and Muslim nations not to remain silent in this regard.

It said the ongoing Israeli atrocities against the people of Gaza are an outstanding example of the usurping regime’s genocidal war against the Palestinian population there.

Ansarullah finally lauded pro-Palestinian protests at university campuses across the United States and other Western countries against the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

## U.S....

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at least 31 people, according to Wafa news agency. Several others were wounded.

Ahead of Sunday’s talks, an Israeli official said prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his senior aides would try to reach agreement with Sullivan about the need for press ahead with the Rafah push.

The Gaza Civil Emergency Service said in a statement rescue teams have so far recovered the bodies of 150 Palestinians killed by Zionist troops in recent days, and that 300 houses had been struck by Israeli aerial and ground fire.

At least 35,386 Palestinians have been martyred in Israeli strikes since Oct. 7, according to the enclave’s health ministry. Aid agencies have warned of widespread hunger and shortages of fuel and medical supplies.

The U.S. military said on Friday trucks had started moving aid ashore from a temporary pier built by its forces, the first to reach the besieged enclave by sea in weeks.

The Popular Resistance Committee (PRC), an armed group that fights alongside Hamas in Gaza, released a statement saying the pier had been built to ease political pressure on Israel, and that any Israeli or U.S. troops on its territory would be considered a legitimate target.

On Saturday, Hamas also raised concerns about the pier and warned against any foreign military force in Gaza.

# Hamas: Netanyahu Prefers Own Interests To Israeli Forces’ Lives

GAZA (Dispatches) – The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas says the Zionist regime’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prefers his own interests to the lives of the regime’s forces.

Abu Obeida, spokesman for al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas’ armed wing, made the remarks in a short statement on Saturday.

The regime is pressing on with a genocidal war against the Gaza Strip, where Hamas is headquartered. It launched the

war last October in response to a retaliatory operation by Gaza’s resistance groups, during which around 250 Zionists were taken captive.

Abu Obeida said the Israeli military was “throwing [the regime’s] soldiers into the alleys of Gaza to return in coffins” in an effort to find the remains of the captives, whom the military has “deliberately targeted and killed.”

“Netanyahu would rather have his soldiers killed while search-

ing for remains than go for a prisoner exchange that does not serve his political and personal interests,” the spokesman added.

On Thursday, Hamas said the Israeli regime’s bombing of the Gaza Strip had killed 70 percent of the Zionist captives.

“The Zionist enemy wants to recover the remaining captives by force, killing them by bombing,” Khalil al-Hayya, deputy chief of Hamas’ Political Bureau, said in an interview with

Lebanon’s al-Manar television network.

Hamas released 105 of the captives during a week-long truce in late November.

The group recently agreed to another truce proposal tabled by Egyptian and Qatari mediators, but the regime rejected the proposal.

The Israeli war has so far claimed the lives of more than 35,300 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

# Report: Palestinian Shepherds Suffocating as Israeli Settlers Steal More Lands

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Palestinians in the occupied West Bank have reported a rise in land seizures by armed Israeli settlers, who are establishing makeshift shepherding outposts and refuse to leave the area.

Shepherds living in the West Bank and the Jordan valley are facing multiple challenges. Their sheep are confined to pens while the surrounding grazing land remains inaccessible due to aggressive settlers who have taken over the area, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported on Saturday.

Human rights groups have reported that Israeli settlers in shepherding outposts are armed and have used attack dogs to intimidate Palestinians, leading to the death of

livestock and damage to property. To make matters worse, the exorbitant cost of food further deprives these shepherds of their means of survival.

An ongoing relentless population displacement is occurring in the Jordan Valley, where 18 pastoral communities have been compelled to vacate their residences in the West Bank due to settler intimidation, as revealed by data from the Israeli organization B’Tselem in March.

Based on the findings, the ethnic cleansing of this region has reached its peak as in the central Jordan Valley’s ridge alone, four entire communities and another 25 lone families have been compelled

to leave, all due to the relentless intimidation imposed by illegal Israeli settlers.

Additionally, B’Tselem emphasized that settler groups received support from Israeli military forces.

On November 28, 2023, masked settlers got into a resident named Jamal’s sheep pen while he was away. Allegedly, they pierced the ears of 35 animals, tagged them with their own numbers, and reported to the authorities that the sheep had been stolen from them.

Consequently, Jamal was arrested, fined 17,000 shekels (approximately \$4,700), and is now monitoring his flock from a neighboring farm. His children can identify their missing sheep as they roam

on what used to be their property.

This is only one example of how Israeli settlers confiscate Palestinian properties with the help of Israeli forces.

In another case, settlers planted an Israeli flag in the center of the enclave, and when a shepherd uprooted it he and his neighbors were attacked and beaten by settlers.

Despite all settlements being deemed illegal under international law, the situation in the Jordan Valley has taken a turn for the worse amidst the ongoing Israeli aggression on October 7, as a disturbing trend of Israeli settlers invading Palestinian homes at night left them with no choice but to flee under threat.

# Iraq Parliament Fails to Elect Speaker

BAGHDAD (AFP) – Iraq’s lawmakers failed to elect a speaker as neither of the two main candidates secured a majority during a tense session of parliament.

It is the latest in a series of failed attempts to replace the former head of parliament who was dismissed in November, with political bickering and divisions between key parties derailing every attempt so far.

Saturday’s vote was the closest yet to selecting a new head of the 329-member parliament,

with 311 lawmakers showing up for the session and the leading candidate falling just seven votes short.

The parliament’s media office announced that 137 lawmakers chose Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, the oldest MP, while 158 picked Salem al-Issawi.

However, candidates require at least 165 votes to win.

Many lawmakers did not return for a second attempt on Saturday, with local media sharing

videos of a brief brawl between MPs and reporting that at least one of them was injured.

The parliament’s media office then announced that the session had been adjourned.

Iraq, a mosaic of different ethnic and religious groups, is governed by complex power-sharing arrangements.

The largely ceremonial role of president traditionally goes to a Kurd, that of prime minister to a Shia, while the speaker of parliament is usually Sunni.