

An Israeli Incursion Into Gaza's Rafah Will Be an Unprecedented Humanitarian Catastrophe

Sunday 11 February 2024, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 11 February 2024).

All we can do now is to request, beg, cry out: Don't enter Rafah. An Israeli incursion into Rafah will be an attack on the world's biggest displaced persons camp. It will drag the Israeli military into committing war crimes of a severity that even it has not yet committed. It is impossible to invade Rafah now without committing war crimes. If the Israel Defense Forces invades Rafah, the city will become a charnel house.

Boys sit outside as displaced Palestinians, who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes, take shelter in a tent camp in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on Thursday. Credit: Ibraheem Abu Mustafa / Reuters

Around 1.4 million displaced people are now in Rafah, sheltering in some cases under plastic bags that have been turned into tents. The American administration, the supposed gatekeeper of Israeli law and conscience, has [conditioned the invasion of Rafah](#) on an Israeli [plan to evacuate](#) the city. There is not and cannot be any such plan, even if Israel manages to come up with something.

It is impossible to transport one million entirely destitute people, some of whom have been displaced two or three times already, from one "safe" place to another, that always turn into killing fields. It is impossible to transport millions of people as if they were calves meant for shipment. Even calves cannot be transported with such cruelty.

There is also nowhere to evacuate these millions of people. In the devastated Gaza Strip, there is nowhere left to go. If the Rafah refugees are moved to Al-Mawasi, as the IDF will propose in its humanitarian plan, Al-Mawasi will become the site of a [humanitarian disaster](#) the likes of which we haven't seen in the Strip.

Yarden Michaeli and Avi Scharf [report](#) that the entire population of the Gaza Strip, 2.3 million people, is supposed to evacuate into an area of 16 square kilometers (6.2 square miles), about the size of Ben-Gurion International Airport. All of Gaza in the area of the airport, just imagine.

Amira Hass [calculated](#) that if only one million people go to Al-Mawasi, the population density there will be 62,500 people per square kilometer. There is nothing in Al-Mawasi: No infrastructure, no water, no electricity, no homes. Only sand and more sand, to absorb the blood, the sewage, and the epidemics. The thought of this is not only bloodcurdling, it also shows the level of dehumanization Israel has reached in its planning.

People walk along a crowded main street in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, on Thursday. Credit: Mohammed Abed / AFP

Blood will be spilled in Al-Mawasi, as it has been spilled recently in Rafah, the penultimate safe haven offered by Israel. The Shin Bet security service will come up with some beat officer affiliated with Hamas who has to be eliminated by dropping a one-ton bomb on the new tent camp. Twenty bystanders, most of them children, will be killed. The military correspondents will tell us, their eyes shining, about the wonderful work the IDF is doing in liquidating the top command of Hamas. [Total victory](#) is near, Israelis will be sated once again.

But even through this force-feeding, the Israeli public [must wake up](#), and with it the Biden administration. This is an emergency more dire than any other during this war. The Americans must block the invasion of Rafah with actions, not words. Only they can stop Israel.

The conscientious sector of the Israeli public seek sources of information other than the “cakes for soldiers” stations here that call themselves news channels. Watch pictures of Rafah on any foreign network – you [won't see anything](#) in Israel – and you'll understand why it can't be evacuated. Imagine Al-Mawasi with the two million displaced people, and you'll understand the war crimes that are rampant here.

On Saturday, the body of six-year-old Hind Hamada – or Rajab, in some news outlets – was found. The girl had [became famous](#) all over the world after the moments of terror she and her family experienced on January 29 in the face of an Israeli tank – moments that were recorded in a phone call with the Palestinian Red Crescent, until her aunt's screams of terror stopped. Seven members of the family were killed; only little Hind was saved, and her fate had remained a mystery ever since.

Hind was found dead in her aunt's burned car at a gas station in Khan Yunis. She had been wounded, covered by the seven bodies of her relatives, and she bled to death before she could extricate herself from the vehicle. Hind and her family had responded to Israel's “humanitarian” call to evacuate. Anyone who wants thousands more Hinds should invade Rafah, whose population will be evacuated to Al-Mawasi.

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P.S.

• Haaretz. Feb 11, 2024 3:23 am IST:
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