



# The Sabra Report

## UN Warns Of 'Slaughter' If Israel Launches Ground Assault on Rafah

Ido Vock & Jacqueline Howard, BBC News, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### Recap:

Despite intense international pressure, Israel will press ahead with its offensive in Rafah, Hamas's final stronghold, after allowing civilians to evacuate [1]. The operation is complicated by the 1.5 million Palestinians currently in the area.

### The Context:

- ✦ Israel has routed Hamas's forces in Northern & Central Gaza and intends to finish the job in Rafah. This week, Israel rescued two hostages from Rafah, marking its first successful extraction of captives in months. The pair was abducted from Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak on the morning of October 7<sup>th</sup>, when terrorists killed 1,200 people and took 253 hostages from southern Israel. It is believed that 130 hostages remain in Gaza – not all of them alive – after 105 civilians were released from captivity during a weeklong truce in late November. 229 IDF troops have been killed since the start of the war [2].
- ✦ South Africa has asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to issue new constraints on Israel's offensive in Rafah saying it was "gravely concerned." In January, the ICJ heard a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide against Palestinians and under court rules, the judges will have to consider South Africa's new request as a matter of priority [3].
- ✦ Israel is under increasing pressure to pause the fighting and swap Palestinian prisoners for Israeli hostages. Israel believes only military pressure will bring the release of its hostages and is committed to destroying Hamas completely. The US warned Israel not to conduct a military operation in Rafah without a "credible and executable" plan to protect civilians [4] while French President Emmanuel Macron said further forced displacements of people could also bring regional escalation. [5].
- ✦ In preparation for the Israeli offensive, Egypt mobilized tanks to reinforce the border it shares with Gaza and ensure no Palestinians could enter Egyptian territory [6]. On Monday, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry denied an AP report claiming Egypt would cancel its accord with Israel, which the countries signed in 1979.

### Conversation Points:

- ✦ Was Israel's decision to continue in Rafah vindicated by its successful rescue operation?
- ✦ Is it reasonable to expect Israel to halt the war without completely neutralizing the existential threat on its border?
- ✦ How can Israel prevent Hamas fighters from leaving Rafah with Palestinian civilians?
- ✦ Why don't critics of Israel also expect Egypt to care for Palestinians in Rafah?
- ✦ Is Hamas less responsive to international pressure with all focus on Israel?

#### Notes:

1. [Israel vows action against Hamas in Rafah amid global calls for restraint](#), Nidal Al-Mughrabi and Maayan Lubell, Reuters, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
2. [IDF rescues 2 hostages from south Gaza's Rafah in daring nighttime operation](#), EMANUEL FABIAN, Times of Israel, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
3. [South Africa Asks Top U.N. Court to Act Against Israel's Plans for Rafah](#), New York Times, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
4. [South Africa asks UN court to urgently examine Israel's targeting of Rafah in ongoing genocide case](#), GERALD IMRAY, AP, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
5. [Israel vows action against Hamas in Rafah amid global calls for restraint](#), Nidal Al-Mughrabi and Maayan Lubell, Reuters, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
6. [UN aid chief warns against possible spillover from Gaza into Egypt](#), Jerusalem Post, FEBRUARY 15, 2024
7. [Egypt pushes back on reports it will cancel peace with Israel over Gaza war](#), Jerusalem Post, FEBRUARY 15, 2024

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