

With de facto endorsement from Biden, Israel broadens Rafah onslaught

Andre Damon
23 May 2024

Israel's attack on Rafah, the southernmost city in the Gaza Strip, has now displaced nearly 1 million people and massively intensified famine throughout the entire territory.

This assault is taking place with the effective endorsement of the Biden administration, despite Biden's earlier public declarations that a full-scale attack on Rafah would be a "red line" for the White House.

On Tuesday, an unnamed senior Biden administration official told reporters, "It's fair to say that the Israelis have updated their plans. They've incorporated many of the concerns that we have expressed," giving the administration's stamp of approval for the widening attack on the city.

On Thursday, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said that Israel had not carried out "major maneuvers into dense urban areas." He added, "What we have seen so far has not been that."

This is an absurd falsehood. Israel has been bombing Rafah non-stop and is pushing armored columns deep into the city, leading to the total suspension of humanitarian operations amid widespread hunger and starvation.

As a result of the offensive, only 150 trucks of food have entered Gaza since May 6. "We're going back to levels of aid that we were getting in October when the war first started," said Sam Rose, planning director for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

On Monday Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant told US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in a meeting that Israel intends to broaden its offensive into the city. "We are committed to broadening the ground operation in Rafah to the end of dismantling Hamas and recovering the hostages," Gallant said. Sullivan posed for a photo shaking the hand of black-shirted Gallant on

the day that the International Criminal Court's (ICC) lead prosecutor brought charges against him.

In a column published the same day, *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius said that US and Israeli officials had reached an agreement over the plans to attack Rafah. Ignatius wrote, "Israeli leaders have reached a consensus about a final assault on Hamas's four remaining battalions in Rafah," in a move that "Biden won't oppose."

The *Times of Israel* wrote:

[T]he Biden administration appeared to signal its initial approval of the operation launched by Israel early Tuesday morning to take over the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt.

It added, "Spokespeople for the administration said the goals of the operation were legitimate."

In response to the ICC's charges against Netanyahu, the Biden administration has effectively dropped its earlier token criticisms of the Israeli government, with Biden declaring Tuesday:

It is clear that Israel wants to do all it can to ensure civilian protection. Contrary to allegations against Israel made by the International Court of Justice, what's happening is not genocide.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate amid ongoing mass starvation imposed by

the Israeli blockade.

In a briefing to the United Nations Security Council Tuesday, Edem Wosornu, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, called the situation “hell on earth.”

Wosornu said:

To be frank, we are running out of words to describe what is happening in Gaza. We have described it as a catastrophe, a nightmare, as hell on earth. It is all of these and worse.

She added, “And living conditions continue to deteriorate as a result of heavy fighting, particularly in Jabalya and eastern Rafah, as well as Israeli bombardment from air, land and sea.”

She noted that more than 35,000 people have been killed and another 79,000 injured, with 17,000 children unaccompanied or separated from their families.

She declared:

Since October 2023, 75 percent of the population in Gaza—1.7 million people—has been forcibly displaced within Gaza, many of them up to four or five times, including as a result of repeated IDF-issued evacuation instructions.

In a statement, the UN’s World Food Program (WFP) said it was running out of food in central Gaza. “Humanitarian operations in Gaza are near collapse,” said WFP spokesperson Abeer Etefa, adding that unless food is provided “in massive quantities, famine-like conditions will spread,” she said.

On Tuesday, Israeli troops launched raids into the Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank, attacking a local hospital and killing a doctor, a teacher and a ninth grade student.

“Undercover forces raided the area suddenly, and they were firing at any moving body in the street,” said ambulance driver Hazim Masarwa to *Al Jazeera*. “They were targeting anything moving.”

In a statement, the UN Human Rights Office in Palestine said:

We are horrified by the deadly Israeli Forces operation in Jenin: 7 Palestinians killed, including two children, one on his way to school, a school teacher, and a doctor. This senseless bloodshed must stop, and those responsible must be held accountable.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact