

# MAP warns of catastrophic health and humanitarian disaster amid Israel's imminent invasion of Rafah

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Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) warns that the health and humanitarian disaster in Gaza will reach catastrophic new levels if the Israeli military invades the city of Rafah, in southern Gaza. The international community must take urgent action to protect the more than one million people currently sheltering in Rafah, and push for an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

Following Israel's 'evacuation' orders for areas in northern and central Gaza, many Palestinians fled to the south, including to the cities of Khan Yunis and Rafah. Rafah is now currently hosting over half of Gaza's 2.3 million population. Extreme overcrowding has forced many displaced people to sleep on the streets, in the grounds of hospitals, or in makeshift tents in schools. Now, they may be forced to flee once more as Israeli forces prepare to invade the area. A military assault on the city would lead to thousands of new civilian deaths and injuries.

Despite Israel having told displaced Palestinians to flee there, the city is being subjected to the Israeli military's increasingly intense, indiscriminate bombardment. Overnight on 7 February, [Israeli military airstrikes killed 14 people](#), including five children. On 6 February, [Israeli forces killed three Palestinians](#), including a journalist, his mother and sister, in a strike on a house in western Rafah.

Mohammed Al Khatib, MAP's Programme Manager in Gaza who has been displaced several times from his home in Gaza City and is now sheltering in Rafah, described the dire situation: "Rafah is now one of the most densely populated areas in the world, if not the most densely populated area."

There are only two government hospitals in Rafah, [both of which are only partially functional](#), as well as one NGO hospital, and a handful of field hospitals that have been set up to try and alleviate the huge influx of injuries. But the sheer number of internally displaced people has overwhelmed the

available bed capacities in hospitals, which are now unable to meet the healthcare needs of the population.

The closest larger hospitals are in Khan Yunis, which can take hours to reach for emergency care due to damaged roads and transport infrastructure. All of Khan Yunis' hospitals have also experienced relentless airstrikes and shelling nearby, posing a [severe threat to the safety of hundreds of healthcare workers and patients, and thousands of internally displaced people](#).

Israel's systematic dismantling of Gaza's health system means that, as of 7 February, there are [no fully functional hospitals](#), and a significant percentage of hospitals and primary health care centres are only partially operational.

The ongoing bombardment and siege has killed more than [27,700 people and injured more than 67,100](#) in Gaza over the past four months, around 70% of whom are women and children.

Urgent action must be taken now if this new crisis in Rafah is to be averted. World leaders need to use all tools at their disposal to demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire, and protection for civilians in Gaza. We reiterate our continuous warnings about the very real prospect of mass displacement of Palestinians into Egypt.

It is crucial that our political leaders acknowledge the gravity of the situation, act to protect civilians, and heed the call from [36 UN experts to prevent genocide](#) against the Palestinian people.

**MAP is calling on our leaders in the UK to immediately intervene to save Gaza's hospitals. [Please email your MP here](#).**

Photo: Rafah, Palestinian Territories. 20 Jan, 2024. Palestinians crowd at a local street market in Rafah (Credit: © dpa picture alliance / Alamy Stock Photo).

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