



Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on Rafah, Gaza

09 February 2024



UNICEF/UNI501860/EI Baba

On 11 January 2024, a child stands beside tents at a shelter centre situated within Al-Aqsa University in the Gaza Strip

Available in: English [العربية](#)

NEW YORK, 8 February 2024 – “UNICEF is urgently calling on the parties to refrain from military escalation in Rafah Governorate in Gaza where over 600,000 children and their families have been displaced – many of them more than once.

“An escalation of the fighting in Rafah, which is already straining under the extraordinary number of people who have been displaced from other parts of Gaza, will mark another devastating turn in a war that has reportedly killed over 27,000 people – most of them women and children.

“Thousands more could die in the violence or by lack of essential services, and further disruption of humanitarian assistance. We need Gaza’s last remaining hospitals, shelters,

markets and water systems to stay functional. Without them, hunger and disease will skyrocket, taking more child lives.

“I appeal to all parties to the conflict to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law. That includes taking the utmost care to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure, to meet civilians’ essential needs and facilitate rapid, safe, and unimpeded humanitarian access. Military operations in densely populated residential areas can have indiscriminate effects.

“We need an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, and the safe and immediate release of all hostages – especially children – who have suffered so much.

“A humanitarian ceasefire will save lives. It will allow for the expansion of the humanitarian response, and help provide the best protection for children whose lives and futures are hanging in the balance.”

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