



## Statement by UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Adele Khodr, on intensifying hostilities in Rafah and North Gaza

14 May 2024



UNICEF/UNI571253/EI Baba

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**AMMAN, 14 MAY 2024** – "The escalation of hostilities in Rafah and throughout the Gaza Strip has deepened the suffering of hundreds of thousands of children, who have endured an unrelenting nightmare for the past 218 days. We cannot accept their plight being livestreamed as collateral damage in a conflict they never chose.

"Last week, a long-feared military operation began in Rafah, displacing over 448,000 people to unsafe areas like Al-Mawasi and Deir al Balah. Meanwhile, heavy bombardment and ground operations have spread to northern Gaza, leaving a trail of destruction in areas

such as Jabaliya refugee camp and Beit Lahia. At least 64,000 people there have been forced to flee their devastated homes.

“Civilians – already exhausted, malnourished, and facing numerous traumatic events – are now facing increased death, injury, and displacement among the ruins of their communities. The very humanitarian operations that became the only lifeline for the whole population across the Strip are threatened.

“Since the start of the most recent escalation, UNICEF has been facing increased challenges to transport any assistance into the Gaza Strip. Fuel shortage remains a critical issue.

“Major hospitals in the north within evacuation zones, including Kamal Adwan, Al Awda, and the Indonesian Hospital, find themselves in the crossfire, which severely disrupts the delivery of critical medical supplies and puts numerous lives at risk. Those at imminent risk of famine are now cut-off from any help.

“I’m also very concerned about water infrastructure and access to clean water and sanitation across Gaza. In the north, vital wells have suffered great damage, while in Rafah at least eight facilities are down, impacting around 300,000 people, many of them children who will likely revert to contaminated water and become seriously ill. When water fails, children suffer the most.

“Border crossings must be swiftly opened, and humanitarian organizations allowed to safely move and provide critical life-saving assistance upon which all children in Gaza depend. Failure to do so will lead to a tragedy even greater than what we have already witnessed – an outcome we must urgently work to avoid.

“After over seven months of conflict, with tens of thousands of lives lost and countless appeals for ceasefire, the violence persists. It is crucial that weapons go silent and children’s rights are respected. The children of Gaza, who have endured unimaginable horrors, deserve an immediate ceasefire and a chance for a peaceful future.”

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