

April 30, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are deeply concerned by Prime Minister Netanyahu's stated plan to launch a ground offensive in Rafah. An estimated 1.3 million forcibly displaced Palestinians are currently sheltering in Rafah, a city built to host 300,000. Even in the absence of further military escalation, overcrowded conditions, the near total collapse of sanitation infrastructure, the spread of disease, and a dire scarcity of food, water, and medicine in Rafah, could kill thousands more by August.

You [emphasized](#) to Prime Minister Netanyahu that a military operation in Rafah "should not proceed without a credible and executable plan" for protecting those sheltering there, and senior administration officials [continue](#) to discuss it with their Israeli counterparts. We, the undersigned humanitarian, human rights, foreign policy, and other concerned organizations, want to be clear that no such credible humanitarian plan is feasible in the current crisis. An Israeli military operation into Rafah would profoundly exacerbate the already catastrophic levels of need and the humanitarian emergency for millions of civilians with nowhere left to go.

Displaced Palestinians in Rafah are effectively trapped with no safe alternatives. Many of them are too young, elderly, sick, starving, injured, or disabled to move again. Those physically able to leave Rafah would be exposed to life-threatening health and security risks during their movement, while staying in the densely populated city during an attack by the Israeli military would directly endanger their lives. The risks they bear in the absence of an offensive are already extreme and unacceptable; on Sunday, April 21, Israeli military strikes on Rafah [killed](#) 14 children, and were only the latest in "near-daily air raids" on Rafah.

Today, the entire population of Gaza is experiencing extreme hunger. The latest report by the Integrated Phase Classification system found that famine is "imminent" in northern Gaza, and USAID Administrator Samantha Power has acknowledged that reports of ongoing famine are credible. Dozens of children have already died due to starvation. If the status quo continues, the deaths attributable to starvation and disease will soon eclipse the already-staggering human toll caused by Israeli bombardment and urban warfare. The meager amount of aid that actually does reach civilians in Gaza primarily enters through Rafah Governorate, which also serves as the main hub for the distribution throughout the entire enclave. An Israeli ground operation in Rafah would not only sever this lifeline but result in a collapse of humanitarian aid distribution throughout Gaza, with immediate and catastrophic consequences for the 2.3 million Palestinians already struggling to survive.

Additionally, we fear an offensive in Rafah would spur escalating violence across the region and derail ongoing negotiations for a ceasefire in Gaza and for the release of the remaining Israeli hostages. The Egyptian government has expressed deep concern over the potential advance of Israeli troops into Rafah,

highlighting the strain such actions could place on regional stability. The regional stakes have not been this high since the war began, and the simplest way to avoid further violence is for the U.S. government to take more concrete steps to prevent an offensive in Rafah from taking place.

We urge your administration to use all of its influence to prevent such an operation from occurring in order to avoid further catastrophic loss of civilian lives, and urgently work toward a sustained ceasefire, dramatically increased humanitarian access, and accountability for crimes committed in this conflict.

Signed,

350.org

ActionAid USA

Alliance of Baptists

American Friends of Combatants for Peace

American Friends Service Committee

Americares

Amnesty International USA

CARE

Charity & Security Network

Children in Conflict

Christian Aid

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)

Center for American Progress

Center for Civilians in Conflict

Center for International Policy

Church World Service

DAWN

Demand Progress Education Fund

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Humanity & Inclusion

IM Swedish Development Partners

Indivisible

Islamic Relief USA

Islamic Relief Worldwide

KinderUSA

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

MedGlobal

Médecins du Monde / Doctors of the World International Network

Mennonite Central Committee

Middle East Democracy Center

Minnesota Peace Project

MoveOn

Nonviolent Peaceforce

Norwegian Refugee Council

Oxfam America

Pax Christi USA

Premiere Urgence Internationale

Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness

Refugees International

Save the Children US

SEIU

The Episcopal Church

The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)

The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

Truman Center

Vento di Terra

Win Without War