

Rafah, Jabalia... 'Hell on Earth'

The slaughter in Gaza has spread from Jabalia in the north to Gaza City, Deir al-Balah and Nusseirat. A full-scale invasion of Rafah is imminent. Over 800,000 Palestinians have fled Rafah, but nowhere in Gaza is safe.

Now troops are firing in central Rafah, in the Brazil neighbourhood and Al-Shaboura camp close to the border crossing with Egypt.

The US knows all about the invasion. On 22 May National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan expressed US support for Israel's declared war aim: "the defeat of Hamas everywhere in Gaza... we're going to be looking at whether there is a lot of death and destruction from this operation or if it is more precise and proportional".

But so far, death and destruction in Rafah is ignored.

In early May, the Abu Youssef al-Najjar hospital was ordered to evacuate, and access to the European Hospital was cut off. Kuwaiti Hospital director Dr Jamal al-Hams told the BBC that medical equipment was out of action as staff treated "cases of torn abdomen and intestines, and cases of skull fractures with parts of the brain outside the skull."

Border crossing

The Rafah border closed after Israel seized the Palestinian side on 7 May. No aid can enter Gaza from Egypt; the US floating pier is no replacement for food and fuel deliveries by land as famine looms. Incredibly, Israel blamed Egypt for the closure and proposed



Palestinians prepare to flee Rafah on 7 May

re-opening it with Egypt under Israeli army control. Egypt insists Palestinian authorities must manage the crossing.

Attacks on Jabalia

Jabalia is home to Gaza's biggest refugee camp. On 12 May journalist Hossam Shabat tweeted "We thought the first days were the worst, then we thought the starvation was the worst, but this bombing is like nothing we've seen. Today alone, Jabalia refugee camp was bombed at least 100 times." Six UN schools were besieged by artillery fire, and quadcopters fired on journalists.

On 20 May, Israeli missiles hit the emergency department of Kamal Adwan hospital. Patients ran for their lives, as others were wheeled through the streets on trolleys, or cradled by staff. The hospital is no longer functioning.

Al-Awda is the only maternity and orthopaedic hospital in the area. Hundreds were trapped in a total siege by snipers and artillery. By 23 May, only 14 patients and a few staff remained. Dr Marwan Faihi told Al Jazeera "Today, the Israeli military forced nearly all of us from the hospital. We have been ordered to leave and keep walking west."

Hell on Earth

In early May, the World Food Programme highlighted "full-blown famine" in northern Gaza. On 21 May, UNRWA suspended food distributions in Rafah due to insecurity and the lack of supplies. A day earlier, senior U.N. aid official Edem Wosornu said "**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.**"