

Israel's planned invasion of Rafah risks killing hundreds of thousands, UN says

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Online Desk: The United Nations humanitarian aid agency says hundreds of thousands of people would be “at imminent risk of death” if Israel carries out a military assault in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. The border city is a critical entry point for humanitarian aid and is filled with displaced Palestinians, many in densely packed tent camps.

An Israeli airstrike in Rafah overnight Friday killed seven people — mostly children. The Biden administration, which provides Israel crucial military and diplomatic support, says it opposes a Rafah invasion unless Israel provides a “credible” plan for protecting civilians there.

Northern Gaza is experiencing “full-blown famine,” according to the head of the U.N. World Food Program, Cindy McCain. The comments from the head of the agency that distributes food assistance go farther than others, as the U.N. and others have said the Palestinian territory is on the brink of famine.

The Israel-Hamas war has driven around 80% of Gaza’s population of 2.3 million from their homes and caused vast destruction in several towns and cities. The death toll in Gaza has soared to more than 34,500 people, according to local health officials.

The war began Oct. 7 when Hamas attacked southern Israel, abducting about 250 people and killing around 1,200, mostly civilians. Israel says militants still hold around 100 hostages and the remains of more than 30 others.