

US reiterates “ironclad” support for Israel, as hundreds of thousands displaced from Rafah

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With Israel expanding its assault on Rafah and launching indiscriminate bombings and assaults throughout the Gaza Strip, 20 percent of Gaza’s population has been forced once again to flee their homes and shelters over the past week.

Under these conditions, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan gave a full-throated endorsement of US support for Israel at a press briefing Monday, making clear that the Biden administration will continue to supply weapons to the Netanyahu government.

“No president has stood stronger with Israel than Joe Biden,” Sullivan declared. “He was the first president ever to visit Israel during wartime. He is protecting Israel at the United Nations. He mobilized a coalition to directly defend Israel against an unprecedented Iranian attack. He led the bipartisan effort to pass a supplemental that ensures Israel’s defense and military edge for years to come. His commitment to Israel is ironclad.

“The United States has sent a massive amount of military assistance to Israel,” Sullivan said. “We are continuing to send military assistance, and we will ensure that Israel receives the full amount provided in the supplemental,” referring to \$14 billion in additional military spending for Israel in a bill passed last month.

Sullivan declared that the obstacle to peace is Hamas, not Israel, stating, “There could be a ceasefire tomorrow if Hamas simply released women, wounded and elderly hostages.” He did not mention that Hamas has already agreed to these terms, which were rejected by the Netanyahu government.

He then flat out denied the reality of the genocide being carried out by Israel, stating, “We do not believe what is happening in Gaza is a genocide,” adding, “We have been firmly on record rejecting that proposition.”

Sullivan likewise denied that Israel was deliberately hampering the entry of food aid to Gaza.

Explaining why he was making these comments, Sullivan declared, “There’s been a lot more heat than light in the recent coverage and commentary about the war between Israel and Hamas,” and he wanted to “lay out the administration’s view.”

The clear implication was that Sullivan was clarifying comments made by US President Joe Biden last week, that “if they go into Rafah, I’m not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah.”

Sullivan clarified that the position of the administration is that Israel had not launched a major ground attack on Rafah, despite the fact that its military offensive in the city has already killed hundreds and led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

On Monday, Israeli forces killed a foreign UN staffer in Gaza for the first time since the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) invaded Gaza in October. Israeli soldiers fired on a clearly marked UN vehicle, killing one occupant and injuring another.

“They were targeted while they were riding in a UN vehicle bearing the UN flag,” said a statement from Gaza’s government media office.

The same day, a group of Israelis set fire to the perimeter of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, according to Israeli rights group HaMoked.

The same day, footage emerged of far-right Israelis attacking food aid shipments at the Rafah border, spending hours destroying truckloads of food as Israeli police forces stood by and did nothing. It was the second time in one week that the grounds were set on fire.

In a speech Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to continue the assault on Gaza,

declaring, “We will not stop until we bring about the collapse of the Hamas terror regime. We will exact revenge from those who perpetrated the [October 7] attack, till the very last one of them. We will sever their arms so that they can no longer raise them against Israel.”

Israeli forces carried out raids throughout the entire Gaza Strip, targeting not only Rafah but also Jabalia and Zeitoun in Northern Gaza.

Over the past 24 hours, 57 Gazans were killed, while the official death toll now stands at over 35,000, Gaza’s government media office said Monday.

At least 360,000 Palestinians have been forced to flee Rafah over the past week, the UN said Monday, as well as 100,000 in Northern Gaza, amounting to one-fifth of Gaza’s entire population. The vast majority have been displaced multiple times. Roads heading north are full of people desperately attempting to flee.

“We don’t know where to go. We have been displaced from one place to the next. ... We are running in the streets,” one woman told Reuters.

“Forcing over one million displaced Palestinians in Rafah to again flee without a safe place to go is unlawful and will have catastrophic consequences,” Human Rights Watch said in a statement.

As a result of the Israeli military offensive, virtually all food aid distribution has been cut off from entering the Gaza Strip. Abeer Etefa, a spokeswoman for the UN’s World Food Programme, said Monday that the vast majority of food distribution in Gaza had been suspended. “The majority of distributions have stopped due to the evacuation orders, displacement, and running out of food,” she said. “The situation is becoming increasingly unsustainable.”

Sally Abi Khalil, Middle East director of the Oxfam charity, said in a statement, “The situation is desperate, with so many people in Gaza living in fear and being forced to endure inhumane and unsanitary conditions caused by sustained Israeli bombardment.”

In a statement, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Joyce Msuya said that “those who’ve escaped death and injury now risk losing their lives because of a lack of food, safe water, medicine and healthcare.”

She continued, “Every day, scores of women give birth in horrifying conditions, often without anesthesia

or medical aid, as bombs explode around them. Mothers watch their babies die in their arms because they don’t have enough milk to keep them alive. And children are dying because they don’t have enough food or water.”



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