



[U.S. Vice President Harris Warns Israel of Consequences If It Launches a Destructive Military Assault on Rafah](#)

In a recent interview conducted by ABC News, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris warned Israel against an assault on the Palestinian city of Rafah, which experts contend would be calamitous in exacerbating the already dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza and resulting in the killing of many displaced civilians who are taking refuge there. The interview was conducted surrounding statements from various U.S. elected officials, including U.S. Senators and President Biden, who have been increasingly critical of Israel's military operations in Gaza and fervently oppose an attack on Rafah. Israel's detrimental War on Gaza has killed upwards of 32,000 Palestinians, a horrifying figure that would escalate with an assault on Rafah and a failure to allow more humanitarian aid to enter the besieged enclave. Currently, around 1.5 million people are taking shelter in the southern Gaza city, many of whom were directed to flee there for safety from the Israeli onslaught on northern Gaza.

Vice President Harris addressed these humanitarian concerns, telling ABC News "I have studied the maps – there's nowhere for those folks to go," reaffirming the importance of preventing a ground offensive. When asked if assaulting Rafah constituted a red line for the U.S. support of Israel, Harris emphasized that "we have been clear in multiple conversations [that] any major military operation in Rafah would be a huge mistake." When pushed on whether the United States would consider repercussions for Israel, she commented that "I am ruling out nothing," suggesting that there may be consequences for Israel if they decide to still proceed with the military assault on Rafah. Vice President Harris is just one of the latest and many U.S. officials who have criticized Israel's plans to invade Rafah. Recently, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called for Israel to hold new elections, stating that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is "an obstacle to peace." President Biden has repeatedly warned Netanyahu against a Rafah military offensive, and last week U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken insisted that a ground assault on Rafah would be both "a mistake" and "unnecessary."

Relations between the United States and Israel have continued to sour following the recent passing of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) ceasefire resolution, in which the U.S. abstained. Netanyahu had said that he would no longer be sending a delegation to Washington D.C., where they were supposed to discuss the Rafah offensive, but then later reversed his decision and stated that he is planning on sending a delegation of two Israeli officials to Washington D.C. as early as next week for talks regarding the possible military assault on Rafah. Still, this was the first time that the U.S. had not used its veto power to strike down a ceasefire resolution brought up in the UNSC. The White House has denied that their abstention reflected a policy change, although experts suggest that Biden will no longer provide unconditional support, due to domestic discontent and international pressures. White House National Security Spokesperson John Kirby said that Israel's initial decision to cancel the delegation was unfortunate, but that the Biden administration would continue to communicate concerns about Israel's policies, expressing that "nothing has changed about our view that a major ground offensive in Rafah would be a major mistake." This growing schism between the United States and Israel signals a situation which may deteriorate into a destructive Israeli assault on Rafah.

Despite warnings from an array of U.S. leaders including President Biden and Vice President Harris, Netanyahu has not strayed from his intention on attacking Rafah. In response to criticisms of his plan to initiate a ground assault

on Rafah, Netanyahu has claimed that “we have no way to defeat Hamas without entering Rafah,” a task that experts agree is wholly impossible. When addressing U.S. Secretary of State Blinken’s comments, Netanyahu added that “I told him that I hope we would do this with U.S. support but, if necessary, we will do it alone,” indicating that the Israeli prime minister is hellbent on attacking Rafah, no matter the cost. While Netanyahu claims that Israel is willing to go it alone, the country has historically relied on the sponsorship of the United States, with the U.S. providing nearly \$4 billion in aid to Israel annually and hundreds of arms transfers since early October alone. In light of growing evidence of Israeli human rights abuses and war crimes in Gaza, these arms sales have been criticized by U.S. lawmakers such as U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen, and many others. These Congressmembers have cited a U.S. law that states weapons transfers to Israel should be illegal due to Israel’s continued blocking of the flow of humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza. Other countries such as Canada have taken measures to ensure that their weapons are not being used by Israel to harm civilians. Recently, Canada’s parliament passed a non-binding motion to cease the further authorization and transfer of arms exports to Israel. Social justice and peace activists hope that policy shifts like this are marking a turn of the tide whereby members of the international community are beginning to push back against Israeli aggression and violations.