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STATEMENT OF THE BUREAU OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE ON
THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

14 February 2024

Bureau Warns Against Israeli Military Offensive into Rafah

The Bureau of the Committee strongly condemns the threats of an Israeli invasion into the city of Rafah, the last refuge of about 1.5 million forcibly displaced Palestinians in the Gaza Strip who are staring death in the face without access to food, medical care, and safe shelter. The Bureau reiterates its calls for an immediate ceasefire and a halt to any plans for a military incursion into Rafah, which will endanger the lives of countless civilians, many of whom are women and an estimated 600,000 children who have already been displaced multiple times.

Rafah is a crucial lifeline for humanitarian operations in Gaza. An Israeli offensive will halt the provision of humanitarian aid to besieged Palestinian civilians, who, after months facing bombings, disease, and hunger now confront the fear and terror of a looming military onslaught. This is the latest threat to Palestinian civilians in war of collective punishment, potentially involving acts of genocide.

The Bureau fully supports South Africa's urgent follow-up request to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for further provisional measures to avert an Israeli military offensive in Rafah, which would violate the ICJ's Order of 26 January 2024 issued in the context of the Genocide Convention. It calls on Israel to comply with and prevent further breaches of the Court Order.

The UN system and the international community must persist in preventing further mass atrocities, harm, deprivation, forced displacement of Palestinian civilians and further destruction in Gaza and Rafah specifically. Prompt action by all concerned must counteract Israel's amply documented violations of international humanitarian law, including efforts to ensure protection of the Palestinian civilian population, in accordance with international law and the relevant UN resolutions.

The Bureau once again makes an urgent call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, a halt to the forced displacement of the Palestinian people, unhindered access to humanitarian aid and the unconditional release of all hostages in Gaza and all Palestinian prisoners arbitrarily detained in Israel.

The Committee Bureau reaffirms its longstanding call for a just and peaceful resolution to the question of Palestine in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions to end the Israeli occupation, realize the rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination and return, and achieve the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine.

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