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by Kyle Anzalone

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Netanyahu Approves Plans for Rafah Ground Invasion

Secretary of State Antony Blinken restated that Washington wants a plan for the Palestinians living in the city before Tel Aviv attacks

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved a ground assault on Rafah. At least 1.5 million Palestinians are crammed into the border city, many displaced from other regions of the besieged enclave. The White House has requested that Tel Aviv have a plan for the Palestinians before attacking.

The Israeli prime minister's office said Netanyahu "approved the plans for action in Rafah." Friday's announcement, said the military is "prepared for the operational side and for the evacuation of the population." The statement did not provide details or a timeline for the attack.

Humanitarian organizations have warned an assault on Rafah would exacerbate the catastrophic situation facing the people of Gaza. The attack would go against the wishes of Tel Aviv's primary backer, Washington.

On Thursday, Netanyahu said Israel would resist all international pressure and go ahead with the operation. "As prime minister of Israel, I reject this pressure. We have been doing this successfully for five months already; this is record time in the history of Israel's wars," he told Israeli troops, according to a press release from his office. "I will continue to reject the pressure. We will enter Rafah. We will complete the elimination of Hamas's battalions. We will restore security and we will bring total victory for the people of Israel and state of Israel."

The remarks follow criticism of Netanyahu by President Biden and several US requests not to attack without a plan for the Palestinian civilians living in Rafah. Earlier in the week, Tel

Aviv said it would create “humanitarian islands” within the Strip for the large number of refugees sure to be displaced by the ground assault.

The plan appeared untenable as there is not enough aid entering Gaza to maintain such “islands,” and Israeli forces have routinely attacked areas deemed safe zones. On Friday, Blinken [appeared to reject](#) the humanitarian islands proposal.

“We have to see a clear and implementable plan, not only to get civilians out of harm’s way but also to make sure that once they are out of harm’s way, they are appropriately cared for,” he said.

However, it is unclear what, if any, action the White House will take if Tel Aviv ignores US pleas not to attack Rafah. The United States is Israel’s primary supporter and has substantial leverage over Tel Aviv.

One point of influence is weapon sales. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 69% of Israeli weapons [imports](#) from 2019-2023 came from US suppliers. Since October 7, the White House has approved over 100 weapon sales for Tel Aviv, and the US has shipped Israel weapons on a near daily basis.

Still, the White House appears to be unwilling to take any action to rein in Tel Aviv. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Tuesday [refuted](#) a report from POLITICO that said President Biden was considering conditioning military aid to Israel if it invades Rafah.

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