
Israeli Army labels Gaza City ‘combat zone,’ UN warns of risk



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The Israeli military on Friday designated Gaza City a “dangerous combat zone,” signaling an escalation in its offensive against the besieged enclave’s largest urban center.

According to an army statement, earlier pauses in operations no longer apply to the city, with

forces preparing for a wider assault. Military spokesman Avichay Adraee said the decision followed “political and security assessments” and would allow for intensified action against armed groups, while claiming that humanitarian channels would remain open.

Residents described the city under heavy bombardment, with Israeli airstrikes striking multiple neighborhoods including Al-Karama, Al-Saftawi, Abu Iskandar, Al-Jalaa Street and the Intelligence Towers area. Eyewitnesses reported continuous drone and fighter jet activity over northern and eastern districts, where fires and plumes of smoke filled the skyline.

Humanitarian agencies expressed alarm. The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) cautioned that nearly one million civilians could face renewed displacement. “With famine already present in Gaza, further escalation would deepen suffering and push more people toward catastrophe,” the agency said.

Since October 2023, the conflict has killed more than 63,000 Palestinians, while a full blockade imposed in March has led to famine, disease outbreaks and the collapse of essential services for Gaza’s 2.4 million residents.

International scrutiny continues to mount. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israeli leaders on war crimes charges, while Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice.

