

# Jews, Christians Celebrate Purim, Palm Sunday as Israel Fights for Victory over Hamas

JERUSALEM, Israel – As Jews celebrated the holiday of Purim and Christians celebrated Palm Sunday, Israel and the U.S. continue to spar over whether or not Israel's military will launch an operation into Rafah, the last stronghold in Gaza.

The faceoff puts the Biden administration and the Netanyahu government on a collision course.

Israel's defense minister is off to Washington, saying he wants to make sure Israel continues to get arms and what it needs for its air defense systems.

He'll also argue that in addition to Israel, the United States has a vital interest in seeing Hamas defeated.

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Yet, Vice President Kamala Harris on Sunday wouldn't rule out consequences for Israel if it launches its military operation in Rafah to defeat Hamas. She posted on X, "We have been clear in multiple conversations and in many ways that any major military operation into Rafah would be a huge mistake."

Those consequences could include placing conditions on future U.S. military aid.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded for Israel when he met Friday with Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"I also said that we have no way to defeat Hamas without going into Rafah and eliminating the rest of the battalions there. And I told him that I hope we will do it with the support of

the USA, but if we have to, we will do it alone,” Netanyahu stated.

In Gaza, the Israel Defense Forces announced that after six days of fighting, they have captured or killed 170 Hamas terrorists who used the al-Shifa Hospital as a base.

“This operation is not over,” said IDF Spokesman Daniel Hagari. “Right now, Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists are barricading themselves inside Shifa hospital wards. Hamas is destroying Shifa Hospital.”

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In the north, the IDF hit Hezbollah sites after the Iranian-backed terror group fired at least 50 rockets into Israel.

Israel claims the United Nations refugee agency known as UNRWA should be banned after solid evidence surfaced that dozens of its workers took part in the Oct. 7, massacre.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres gave only what Israel considered a lukewarm admission that it happened, saying, “In UNRWA, there might have been infiltrations from Hamas.”

But Guterres insists the U.N. has investigated and has taken “measures.”{eoa}

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