

GCSEE/ERMA STUDENTS CONDEMN THE ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS IN RAFAH, PALESTINE

We, **the students** of the European Regional Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South-East Europe (GCSEE/ERMA), class of 2023-24, **wish to express our deepest condemnation of the continued Israeli airstrikes against displaced Palestinians in Rafah.**

The atrocities committed against the Palestinian population extend beyond the recent events and are a continuation of a seventy-five-year-long history of occupation, displacement, killing, torture, and humiliation of Palestinians. Given ERMA's commitment to advancing children's rights, **we strongly condemn and express our devastation and rage at the deliberate targeting of civilians, including many children,** by Israeli forces in an area designated as 'safe zone', in violation of International Humanitarian Law.

According to latest estimates, at least 45 people, mostly women and children, were killed in an airstrike and following fire that broke out in Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah. A camp sheltering displaced civilians became a scene of horror and devastation. Eyewitnesses describe seeing dismembered children, charred remains, and thick smoke emerging from the camp, as well as hearing the screams of hopeless families. The airstrike came at night, just as many wrapped up evening prayers. A video circulating on social media shows a Palestinian man holding a beheaded child as smoke and fire engulf Rafah.

The similarities between the UN-protected 'safe area' status of Srebrenica and the 'safe' designation of the camp in Rafah sheltering people who fled violence in the south are impossible to miss. Much like the civilians in Srebrenica, Palestinians in Rafah have nowhere else to go, are facing constant bombardment, and have almost no access to running water, food, or medical supplies. We are yet again witnessing a monumental failure of the international community to activate all possible means to stop the Palestinian genocide committed by the occupying forces and funded by the imperialist powers.

As the annihilation of the Palestinian people and land advances, we want to underscore that it is the forces of imperialism, colonialism, racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia that frame narratives and policies that allow for the ethnic cleansing of entire communities. The normalization of the suffering of people of color across the world perpetuates a cycle of violence and dispossession that is deeply rooted in historical and systemic inequalities. This systematic dehumanization not only justifies and relativizes the ongoing atrocities but also desensitizes the global community to profound injustices.

We hereby reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the Israeli occupation and apartheid. We call on states and international organizations to facilitate an expeditious end to the conflict and apartheid.