

Thousands more Gazans head for Rafah

by UPI

RAFAH, Egypt - Thousands more people crossed the Egyptian border from Gaza to take advantage Thursday of what most feared would be a brief shopping opportunity. Estimates of the number of people at the Rafah crossing ranged from 100,000 to 400,000 from an area with a total population of 1.5 million, The New York Times reported. On the other side, Egyptians traveled to Rafah to hawk everything from potato chips to camels and commercial quantities of cement. Hamas fighters used explosives to blow holes in the border fence Wednesday, allowing Gazans, mostly isolated since the party took control last year, to cross to Egypt. President Hosni Mubarak said Wednesday he had told border guards to "let them come in and eat and buy food and then go back." Imad Mustapha, who had worked for the unity government before the Hamas takeover, told Voice of America he expects Egypt to block the Rafah crossing soon. "I did not expect that," he said of the opening. "It was really something you cannot even see in a dream -- just to open the borders between us and Egypt. But it is OK for us just to go out from that big prison."

Â© 2008 United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

Thousands more Gazans head for Rafah by UPI