Vatican

Vatican News



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, reads Pope Francis' speech at the high-level segment for heads of state and government at COP28, the U.N. Climate Change Conference Dec. 2 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (CNS/Courtesy of U.N. Climate Change COP28/Christopher Pike)

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The same week U.S. President Donald Trump reiterated his idea of emptying Gaza of more than 2 million Palestinians so it could become a "Riviera of the Middle East," a top Vatican official said there must be no deportations.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said one of the "key points" of what must happen in Gaza is "no deportations."

The cardinal spoke to reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony at the Embassy of Italy to the Holy See Feb. 13 marking the signing of the Lateran Pacts of 1929 in which the Vatican and the Italian state recognized each other as sovereign nations and normalized relations.

Trump had first said the U.S. would "take over" Gaza and "own" the strip of land, which faces the Mediterranean Sea and borders Egypt and Israel. Smaller than the West Bank — the other territory making up the Palestinian state — the Gaza Strip was established as a refuge for Palestinians who fled or were forced from their homes during the war in 1948, which ended with the establishment of the State of Israel.

Speaking alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a White House press briefing Feb. 5, Trump said they were focusing on the future of the region after the 15-month-long Israeli-Hamas conflict ended in a ceasefire. Gaza has been "an unlucky place for a long time," Trump said, and it should not be rebuilt and occupied "by the same people."

"The U.S. will take over the Gaza Strip" and "level it out" in order to "create an economic development" to create jobs and housing "for the people of the area," he said.

Asked by reporters at the White House Feb. 9 if the U.S. would force the exodus of Palestinians, Trump said, "You're going to see that they're all going to want to leave," according to The Associated Press. He claimed in an interview with Fox News

the same day that Palestinians would not want to return "because they're going to have much better housing" somewhere else.

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According to Vatican News, Parolin told reporters that "neighboring countries are not willing (to take in refugees); we heard for example the king of Jordan recently who absolutely said 'no.'"

An unnamed Italian official had noted that any mass deportation "would create tension in the area," the cardinal added.

"We have to find a solution, and the solution in our opinion is a two-state solution because this also means giving hope to the people," he said.

Parolin also commented on a recent phone call between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Trump had told reporters Feb. 13 that he and Putin agreed to begin negotiations to end the war in Ukraine.

Later in the day he told reporters in the Oval Office that Ukraine and "other people," too, would be involved in the peace talks.

Parolin said, "A just peace is needed." Diplomatic efforts are continuing and "there is lots of activity, many small openings."

The Vatican hopes the possibilities "will materialize, and we hope that we can arrive at a peace that, in order to be solid and lasting, must be a just peace, including all the parties involved and taking into account the principles of international law and the declarations of the U.N," he said.

"Everything that is proposed is useful because we need to put an end to this carnage," he added.