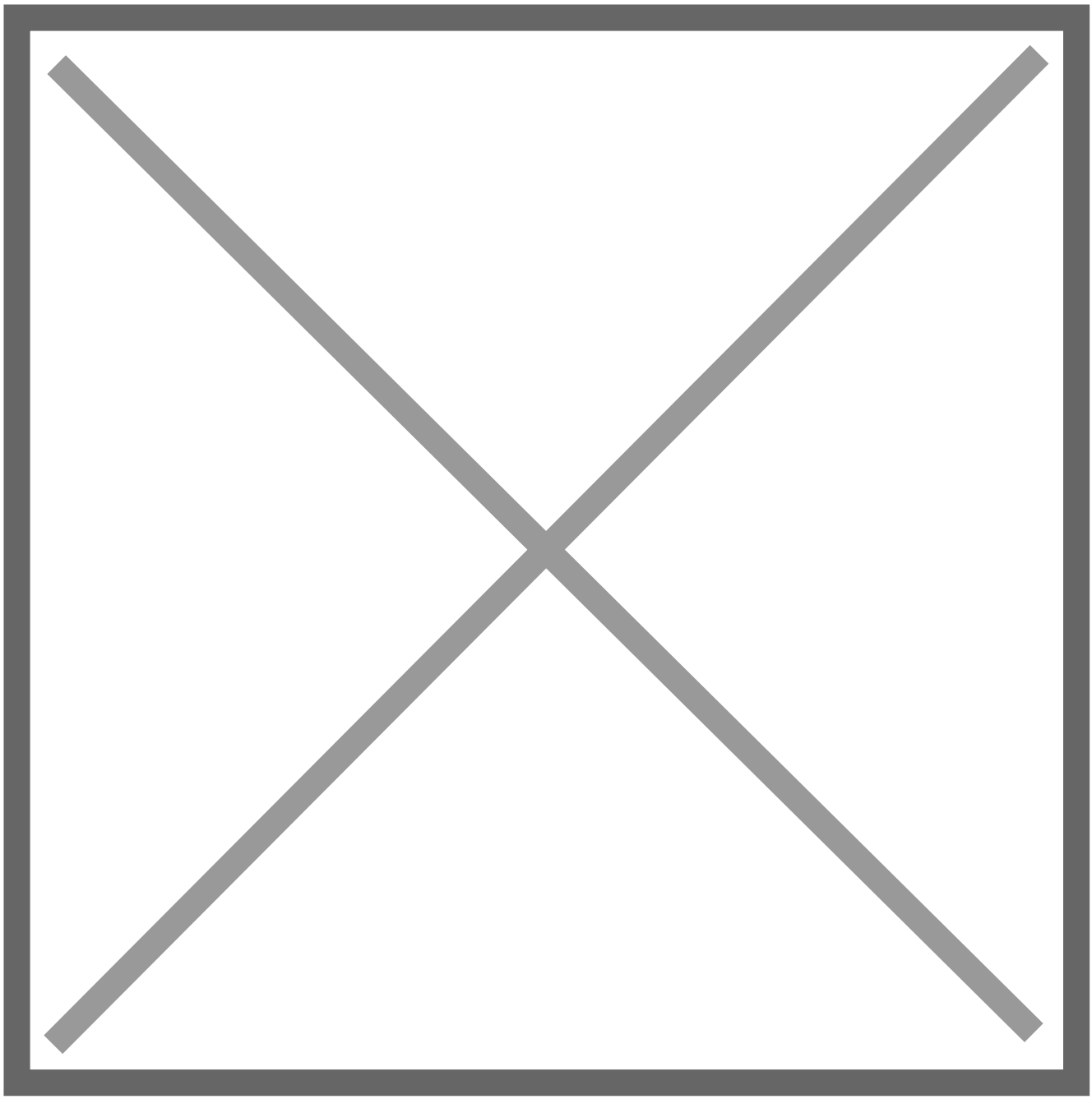
News



Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, delivers the homily as he celebrates Christmas Eve Mass at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, West Bank, Dec. 24, 2025. (OSV News/Reuters/Ammar Awad)

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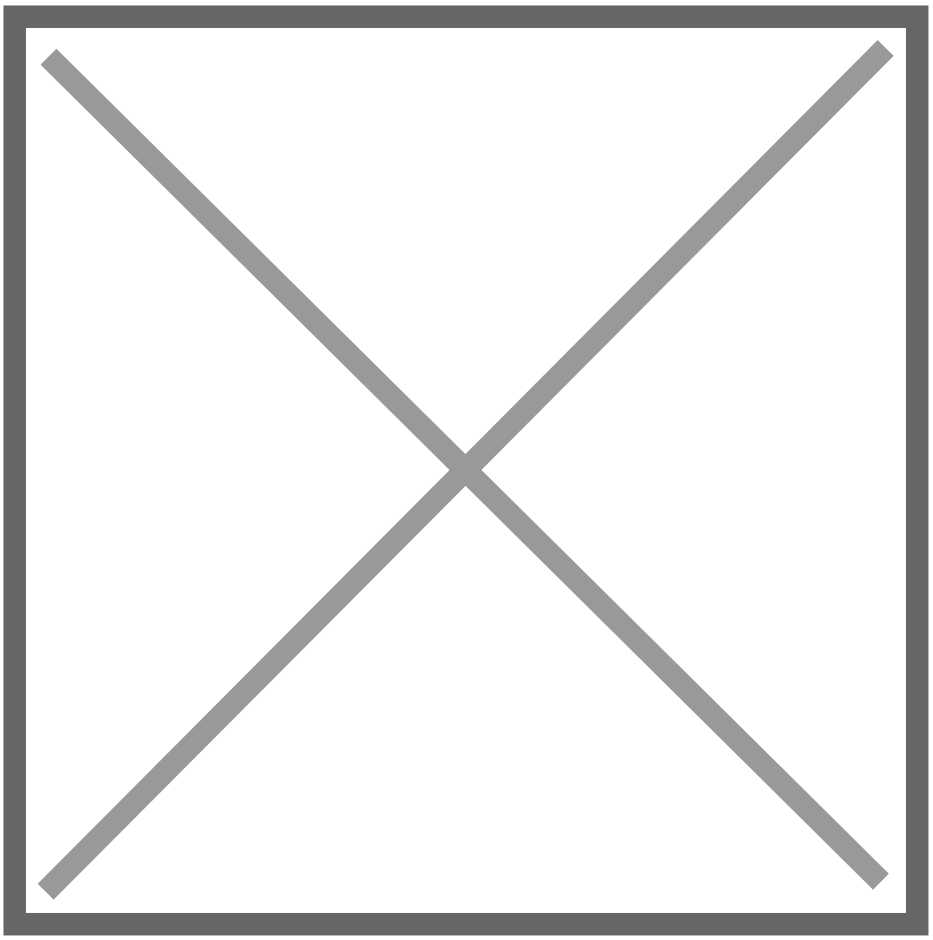
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Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, strongly criticized the U.S.-led Board of Peace, an international body chaired by President Donald Trump to oversee the governance and reconstruction of Gaza.

At a Feb. 6 event at the Roman parish of San Francesco a Ripa Grande, Pizzaballa was asked by moderator Maria Gianniti, Rome correspondent for the Italian news channel RAI, about his thoughts on the Board of Peace.

"What do I think of the Board of Peace? I think it is a colonialist operation: others deciding for the Palestinians," Pizzaballa said, according to a report by Italian newspaper Il Sole 24 Ore.

The cardinal also commented on the invitation extended to the Vatican to join the international body and its $1 billion price tag for a permanent seat on the board.



Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, gestures as he speaks with journalists during a news conference in Jerusalem Dec. 22, 2025, at the end of his pastoral visit to the Holy Land. (OSV News/Debbie Hill)

"I would answer very candidly," he added. "They asked us to enter. I've never had a billion (dollars), but above all, this is not the Church's task: It is the sacraments, the dignity of the person."

In an interview with OSV News Feb. 16, Issa Kassissieh, the Palestinian ambassador to the Holy See, said the cardinal has seen firsthand "the destruction, the miseries and the disastrous situation" in Gaza, which is "part of the future Palestinian state."

"Cardinal Pizzaballa wanted to make a point that any initiative cannot fly without the engagement of the Palestinian people themselves and their representatives," Kassissieh said.

"He's trying to make a point that to succeed and not to fail, as every time, from the very beginning, to put the right foundation for a constructive and credible process."

"In the end, I believe that he meant to say that you cannot have the wedding without the groom. That is the main point of his message," he told OSV News.

The board, which was formally announced by the White House Jan. 16, will serve as an oversight mechanism for the second phase of the Trump administration's "Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict."

While more than 25 countries have joined, traditional U.S. allies, including France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Poland and Italy, have declined to join.

Among the concerns raised was that the board could undermine the United Nations, as well as the fact that Gaza is not mentioned in the body's charter.

Kassissieh told OSV News that Pizzaballa spoke "out of a moral responsibility toward his community and his people," and that it should be taken as a "credible message" that seeks to ensure that "we don't go in the wrong direction."

He also noted that the cardinal sought to defend all people in the region, as evidenced by his offer to take the place of hostages taken by Hamas during its Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

"He put himself in a difficult situation and has been working with the Holy See, day and night, to have a ceasefire. And now, with the American administration's efforts, we have a kind of fragile ceasefire. The cardinal wanted to make sure that we have a real ceasefire going toward the second stage of the Trump plan," he said.

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Regarding the Palestinian government's stance on the Board of Peace, Kassissieh said Palestine accepted U.N. Security Council Resolution 2803, which formally endorsed the establishment of the Board of Peace and its plan for peace in Gaza.

Nevertheless, he continued, the government is engaged with different parties "to make sure that the Trump plan goes in the right direction."

"The issue here is to ensure the ceasefire; we see every day a violation of the ceasefire," Kassissieh said.

In January, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, confirmed the Vatican's invitation to join the Board of Peace and said Pope Leo XIV was evaluating it.

"We too have received this invitation: The pope has received the invitation, and we are considering what to do; we are looking into it," Parolin told journalists Jan. 21.

Parolin said the invitation to join the board "requires some time to answer" and that the request "will not be to participate financially" because "we are not in a position to do so."

The Holy See, "obviously, finds itself in a different situation than other countries, so there will be a different consideration," the cardinal said.

To date, the Vatican has made no statement on whether it will join the board.

Kassissieh expressed his hope that the Holy See would have the "spiritual initiative" to support efforts "toward de-escalating the situation, and to embark on a credible reconciliation process."

While it is uncertain if the Vatican will join the U.S.-led board, Kassissieh said that consultations with the Holy See "are ongoing."

"I hope that in the coming days, there will be more consultations with our leadership to find out, to agree together and to hear our voice with regard to the Board of Peace," he told OSV News.

"I know that the Holy See is also in consultation with many European countries and others."

"I believe that the Holy See should also hear the voice of the local Church, and here, I mean the voice of Cardinal Pizzaballa and the Heads of Churches in the Holy Land," Kassissieh added.