Vatican
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Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, addresses the 81st United Nations General

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, addresses the 81st United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters in New York City Sept. 26, 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Eduardo Munoz)



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The Vatican secretary of state on Sept. 24 reiterated the Holy See's support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East and also called for limits on the fast pace of the development of artificial intelligence.

"The Holy See's position is clear: The two-state solution, based on secure and internationally recognized borders, is the only viable and equitable path toward a just and lasting peace," Cardinal Pietro Parolin told world leaders and top diplomats at high-level meetings during the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The two-state solution is a proposed peace plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by creating two separate, independent countries within the former British territory of Mandatory Palestine: Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people, and Palestine for the Palestinian people in a state based on the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel seized the latter territories from Egypt and Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been ongoing since the mid-20th century.

The Gaza Strip has a population of 2.1 million Palestinians living within a swatch of land 25 miles long and 6 miles wide along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Another 3.4 million Palestinians also live in the Israel-occupied West Bank, where 450,000 Israeli settlers have increasingly set up communities considered illegal under international law.

"The Holy See continues to uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people," Parolin said.

These inalienable rights include their right to self-determination, according to the cardinal. The Holy See also called attaining "freedom, security and dignity within an independent and sovereign state" a "legitimate aspiration."

Parolin said the 2025 resolution to end the war in the Gaza Strip, which was introduced by President Donald Trump, "to consolidate the ceasefire, promote the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza, and establish a foundation for a more stable future" was a welcome development.

But, he said, "these efforts cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader political context. Gaza must be considered in the context of the future of the Palestinian people as a whole."

He added that it would not be enough for the Palestinians to exist on humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts that have been ongoing in Gaza since fighting ignited after the Oct. 7, 2023, attack by the Palestinian militant group Hamas on southern Israel.

Israel declared war after the attack, where Hamas militants killed some 1,200 Israelis and abducted 251 hostages. At least 73,928 Palestinians have been killed and 175,030 injured in the Gaza War, according to figures reported by Gaza's Health Ministry.

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Parolin also highlighted the geographical importance of Jerusalem, the eastern half of which is within the border of the West Bank and which Palestinians wish to be the capital of Palestine. He said it is "sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims alike," and underscored the Holy See's "longstanding call for an internationally guaranteed special statute that safeguards its unique character, the holy places and the rights of the faithful of the three monotheistic religions."

"The task before us is therefore not merely to manage the consequences of conflict, but to address its root causes and create the conditions for a peace that can endure," he said.

At another high-level meeting Sept. 23, focused on AI, the cardinal stressed the importance of upholding human dignity in the face of rapid advances in the technology that has been designed to mimic human intelligence to perform tasks such as problem-solving, learning and reasoning.

"While technology's potential to spare human beings from repetitive or burdensome tasks should be acknowledged, it cannot come at the expense of the irreplaceable role of the human person," he emphasized. "This is particularly pertinent at a time when technologies are advancing in unpredictable ways, making it difficult to fully assess their long-term impact on human dignity and the common good."

He said, "Thus, for the discernment to be fruitful, it is necessary to embrace the concept of limits, which may initially seem contrary to the very idea of progress. As Pope Leo XIV insists: 'Calling for prudence, rigorous evaluation and even, at times, a slower pace in adopting AI does not mean opposing progress; instead, it is an exercise of responsible care for the human family.' "

Parolin, who arrived in the U.S. Sept. 20, was also set to deliver another address at the United Nations Sept. 26 at a high-level meeting commemorating the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

On Sept. 21, the cardinal marked the feast of St. Matthew as the principal celebrant of Mass at Church of Our Saviour in New York City, with diplomats and U.N. personnel filling the pews.

Concelebrants included Archbishop Christophe-Zakhia el-Kassis, the Holy See's new permanent observer to the United Nations in New York City.

In his homily, Parolin said St. Matthew, the tax collector turned apostle, serves as an example for all.

"He decided to follow Christ, no longer tied to his old post," he said.

Just as St. Matthew was called by Jesus Christ out of a compromised and widely despised profession to a life of witness to the Gospel, Parolin suggested those serving in public life today are called to bring their own vocations, diplomacy, government, service to their nations, into line with a higher purpose.

[Simone Orendain is an OSV News correspondent. She writes from Chicago. Contributing to this story was Steven Schwenkert of The Good Newsroom, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of New York.]