Cardinal Pizzaballa: Keep attention on the Holy Land, West Bank, and Gaza

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Three years after the October 7 attacks, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem describes a Holy Land gripped by mistrust in an interview with the Vatican's media outlets. He also expresses concern over the West Bank, where he denounces “a total absence of law,” and Gaza, where “the humanitarian situation has not improved at all.”

“In Israel, no one talks about a peace process anymore.”

Three years after October 7, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, describes a Holy Land gripped by mistrust in an interview with the Vatican's media outlets. This mistrust characterizes an increasingly fragmented Israeli society, but it is also felt among Christian communities and residents of the West Bank in the State of Palestine. As the cardinal explains, they “do not know whom to turn to or whom to appeal to. What is most worrying is the total absence of law and respect for the law.”

Then there is Gaza, where humanitarian conditions “have not improved. On the contrary, the population is increasingly worn down and exhausted.”

Divisions within Israel

Exhaustion and weariness also appear to be defining features of Israeli society. As the cardinal observes, “since 2023, there has also been considerable fragmentation within Israeli society itself. Former President Reuven Rivlin spoke of the tribes of Israel when referring to Israeli society. Today, this fragmentation is much more pronounced.”

“In Israel, people no longer talk about peace processes, nor do they believe that a two-peoples, two-state solution is possible,” the Latin Patriach continues, “There is a general sense of disorientation and perhaps also some anger toward the world. In short, people feel that they are not being heard or understood.”

The situation of Christians in the Holy Land

This atmosphere of uncertainty is also affecting Christian communities. According to data from the Rossing Center, Christians account for just 1.9% of Israel’s population. In a survey conducted by the same center, 36% of respondents said they were considering leaving Jerusalem or Israel as a whole.

The percentage is even higher among younger people. According to the Rossing Center, 48% of Christians aged 18 to 29 and 52% of those aged 30 to 44 intend to relocate.

“Christians, as I always say, are not a world apart. They experience what everyone else experiences,” Cardinal Pizzaballa stresses, noting that emigration affects Israelis, Palestinians, Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike.

“It has a greater impact on us (Christians) because we are few,” he adds. However, the underlying concerns are the same: “A lack of trust and fear about the future. For Christians, these are compounded by economic difficulties, which are also closely linked to the political situation.”

Incidents of violence against Christians

Incidents of violence and intimidation in recent years, particularly in Jerusalem, have placed an additional burden on Christian communities.

Cardinal Pizzaballa highlights how “these incidents continue, with periods of greater and lesser intensity, although they appear to have decreased in recent months. Both the media and the relevant authorities are paying greater attention.”

The situation in the West Bank

The cardinal’s concerns deepen when he turns to the West Bank, where he regularly visits Palestinian communities facing increasingly violent acts by Israeli settlers.

“The community is deeply concerned and frightened by the continued deterioration of the situation, particularly in certain areas, such as Taybeh and Aboud, as well as in the inland areas, where there are villages and agriculture remains important and essential to families’ livelihoods,” he explains.

Furthermore, “what is most worrying is this total absence of law and respect for the law,” Cardinal Pizzaballa notes. “We are in the olive harvest season, yet olives are being stolen and access to farmland is being prohibited.”

“These are circumstances that generate growing mistrust and concern among the Palestinian population, who do not know whom to turn to or whom to appeal to.”

“I plan to return to Gaza”

Turning to Gaza, the approaching winter is making conditions even more desperate for an already exhausted population, despite the ceasefire signed on October 10, 2025.

Cardinal Pizzaballa, however, has no doubts: “We certainly need to go there, and I therefore plan to return.”

He reiterates that “the humanitarian situation has not improved at all, and the actual living conditions—in tents, surrounded by sand and without adequate sanitation—have not improved. On the contrary, they have deteriorated.”

How much longer?

This begs the question that has echoed throughout the Holy Land for at least three years and that, as Father Gabriel Romanelli, the parish priest of Gaza’s Holy Family Church, said Pope Leo XIV posed to him in recent days: “How much longer?”

The Vatican's media outlets asked Cardinal Pizzaballa the same question, who replied:

“It is a question we all ask ourselves, in prayer and in every kind of interaction, whether political or religious. We must continue to insist on keeping attention focused on the situation, because this is the only way we can eventually begin serious efforts toward reconstruction and bringing this terrible situation to an end.”

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