PRESS RELEASE
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Priests Against Genocide Calls on World Bank to Suspend Participation in "*Board of Peace*"
Network sends formal letter to World Bank President Ajay Banga, citing moral and mission-based concerns

Rome/Washington, DC, 24 February 2026 — Priests Against Genocide, an international network of 2,200 priests from 58 countries, together with 23 bishops, archbishops, and two cardinals, has issued a formal letter to Mr. Ajay Banga, President of the World Bank Group, urging the institution to suspend any participation in the so-called "*Board of Peace*."

In their letter, the network states that its pastoral mission obliges members to defend human dignity and speak "with urgency and moral clarity" as two million Palestinians in Gaza face what the signatories describe as an escalating humanitarian catastrophe. The group notes that the *"Board of Peace"* was convened in Washington, D.C. on 19 February 2026. It warns that involvement by an institution as influential as the World Bank risks lending legitimacy to a structure they argue lacks transparency, excludes those most affected, and undermines the ethical foundations of peacebuilding.

The letter highlights concerns raised by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, who has described the initiative as one that appears to protect the interests of major powers "without real recognition of the Palestinian people and their rights," characterizing it as a colonialist project imposed from outside. Fr. John Heagle, Chair of Priests Against Genocide – USA, underscored this point, stating: *"It is a complete contradiction to refer to this as a 'Board of Peace,' if the Palestinian people are not active, integral members. It is, after all, their lives, their dignity, their independence, and their land that are at stake here. Absent their active participation, this is simply a further phase in their genocide at the hands of colonizing nations."* Fr. Rito Maresca, founder of the network, added: "*As pastors and community leaders, we cannot stand by and watch as the first live genocide in history unfolds. Peace cannot be built by excluding the people who bear the cost of war*."

Priests Against Genocide argues that participation in the *"Board of Peace"* contradicts the World Bank's core mandate to promote reconstruction, reduce poverty, support stability, and advance inclusive growth. They maintain that any engagement must be grounded in transparency, accountability, and the meaningful participation of affected communities - standards they say are not being met.

"The World Bank's credibility is global," the signatories write. "When it aligns - directly or indirectly - with structures perceived as excluding Palestinians, it risks normalizing practices that contradict human rights and the ethical commitments of development."

In its letter to President Banga, Priests Against Genocide calls for:

- **Suspension of participation** in the so-called *"Board of Peace"*
- **A public reaffirmation** of commitments to protect populations at risk where development and conflict intersect
- **Direct engagement** with civil society, faith leaders, and affected communities to ensure partnerships uphold the highest ethical standards and the sanctity of human life

The network concludes that its appeal is rooted in moral responsibility: "Silence in the face of injustice would be a betrayal of our pastoral mission."

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