



### [Trump's Gaza Board of Peace Meets Without Anyone from Gaza](#)

When the Trump administration announced the creation of its Board of Peace as a forum to chart a path forward for Gaza, the objective was clear. The board was meant to gather global leaders, humanitarian experts, and economic visionaries to propose a reconstruction framework after more than two years of conflict and devastation. However, the first substantive meetings revealed a glaring contradiction. Notably, voices from Gaza were entirely absent from the opening sessions, even though the board is nominally focused on the future of the Palestinian territory and its people.

Instead of centering on those most affected by the devastation and its repercussions in order to maximize the prospects of genuine and lasting peace, the board was set up in a highly transactional manner, requiring contributions of at least \$1 billion and welcoming political figures and business leaders in what has been justifiably criticized as a “business-like” approach and institutional structure. Analysts have pointed to how this method wrongfully treats vital humanitarian, diplomatic, and reconstruction efforts like corporate real estate projects, rather than as complex geopolitical issues which require international consensus. This “pay-to-join” membership structure has been denounced for creating a system whereby influence is bought rather than earned through diplomacy. Furthermore, the designation of U.S. President Donald Trump as permanent chairman with broad and unchecked authority turns what should be an independent global peace initiative into a personalized and transactional one which favors his allies and undermines impartial international norms. For this reason, the Board of Peace has faced scrutiny for its “colonialist” structure, intending to oversee the governance of Gaza while excluding Palestinian representation. At this week’s first Board of Peace meeting, there were no delegates from Gaza itself – whether these be civil society actors, humanitarian coordinators, or ordinary citizens who have the most stake in its future.

All of this is why major U.S. allies including France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have declined to join the Board of Peace – expressing serious concerns over its structure and the attempts to supplant and sideline established international organizations and protocols. Additionally, revered global figures and religious leaders have also declined to take part. This week, Pope Leo XIV – who leads a worldwide community of more than 1.2 billion Catholics – became one of the latest prominent individuals to reject involvement in the board. Other

notable figures known for advocating humanitarian access and human rights were also not present in the opening meeting earlier this week.

A gathering meant to organize the reconstruction of a territory where more than two million people live should call for representation from that population. Gaza remains one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with more than 70% of its residents under the age of 25. Large portions of the region's infrastructure have been severely damaged or destroyed, and millions depend on humanitarian aid for basic survival. Yet not one voice from within Gaza was heard during the opening talks. This absence raised questions about for whom the board is truly serving and who gets to define the priorities for recovery.

Many attending delegates represent countries that have strategic economic interests in the Middle East or longstanding political relationships with major Western powers. Some of these governments have been criticized by human rights organizations for their own records on civil liberties and press freedoms. The presence of such actors has fueled concern that discussions may center on investment opportunities and geopolitical alliances rather than urgent humanitarian needs.

Supporters of the board have argued that high-level engagement from global capitals is necessary to marshal the financial resources needed for reconstruction. In briefing materials, planners cited the immense scale of the task. Estimates from international aid organizations suggest that reconstruction in Gaza could require tens of billions of dollars, well beyond what local economies could generate on their own. Securing pledges from major donors is a legitimate goal for any international reconstruction effort. But without direct involvement from the people affected, the question remains whether such pledges will translate into outcomes that meet the real priorities on the ground.

Attendees appear to have been chosen based on diplomatic alignment rather than human impact. Critics worry that due to this, the board may be more about formalizing geopolitical relationships under the banner of reconstruction than about genuinely addressing the long-term needs of Palestinians in Gaza.

Even among invited guests there was ambivalence. Some Western lawmakers who have traditionally played roles in foreign aid policy expressed reservations about the board's focus and membership list. Observers noted that in a forum where moral authority and humanitarian urgency should dominate the agenda, geopolitics instead took center stage. In 2025, a global survey of public opinion found that a majority of people in both European and North American countries saw the plight of civilians in Gaza as a major humanitarian issue. That same survey also indicated skepticism about international political solutions that do not prioritize immediate relief and reconstruction led by local stakeholders.