

June 24, 2026

The Hon. Anita Anand, P.C., M.P.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Anita.Anand@international.gc.ca

RE: Urgent request to meet regarding illegal settlement expansion in Beit Sahour, Bethlehem

Dear Minister Anand,

Greetings. The churches and church agencies who are signatories to this letter represent millions of Canadians deeply concerned about ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians, which has rapidly increased in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. We are writing to request a meeting with you in the coming days regarding the renewed urgent appeal issued on June 19th from the Laith Hazim Qumsiyeh, Mayor of Beit Sahour, Bethlehem regarding “Shadma Yitziv”, the new illegal settlement in [Ush Ghurab](#) that is directly displacing Palestinians in the place of Christ’s birth.

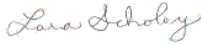
Representatives of our churches met with Global Affairs Canada staff on December 11, 2025 regarding this urgent situation. Since then, on January 19, 2026, Israeli media report on the inauguration of Shadma Yitziv illegal settlement attended by senior Israeli ministers and settlement leaders. These violations of international law cannot only be addressed by sanctions on a few bad actors; this is explicit Israeli state policy designed to make daily life for Palestinians unbearable and implemented with state support to force them off their land. Mayor Qumsiyeh says, “This new settlement is intended to strengthen territorial links between existing settlements east of Bethlehem and expand Israeli control in the area.”

Prof. Rev. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches has called for immediate action, saying: “We appeal to the Israeli authorities, responsible governments, and international institutions to act in accordance with international law, and to prevent this looming threat to the Indigenous Christian presence in the land of Christ’s birth, ministry, death, and resurrection.” UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher warns that “a decades-long deterioration is accelerating rapidly, characterized by calls from Israeli officials for Palestinian ‘voluntary migration’ and an intensification of discriminatory policies and practices.” The June 20 2026 report from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) reports that “two Palestinian herding families were displaced for a second time since the beginning of 2026 following escalating settler attacks near Birzeit, **highlighting a broader trend that has displaced over 2,200 Palestinians, including more than 1,000 children, this year.**” Human Rights Watch has already documented forced displacement of Palestinian families, describing the situation as a crime against humanity, which is now reaching the peaceful city of Beit Sahour. Amnesty International’s recent report, *“Erasing anything Palestinian: Israel’s ethnic cleansing of West Bank Bedouin and herding communities”*, exposes how the Israeli government has made formal annexation an explicit policy objective.

Canada must take immediate and decisive action to compel Israel to immediately dismantle and remove the settlements. We look forward to confirming a meeting with you in the coming days. If desired, we can arrange for Palestinian Christian partners living in Beit Sahour to join a meeting online. We thank you for your immediate attention to the threats facing Palestinians.

Sincerely,

Signed by:



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The Rev. Lara Scholey
Moderator of the General Assembly, The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Signed by:



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The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Signed by:



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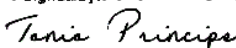
The Rev. Michael Blair
General Secretary, The United Church of Canada

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Rula Odeh
Chair, Canadian Friends of Sabeel



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Tania Principe
Executive Director, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives



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Byron Rempel-Burkholder
Mennonite Church Canada Palestine/Israel Network

Signed by:



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Sylvia Skrepichuk
Chair, Catholics for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land

Signed by:



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Rev. Diane Blanchard
Chair, United Network for Just Peace in Palestine and Israel

c.c.:

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