



December 1, 2025

Dear Dr. Elias Iseed, Mayor of Beit Sahour,

Your letter of November 26, 2025, to Mr. Rifat Kassis describing the major ramifications surrounding the imminent threat of an illegal settlement established on the border of Beit Sahour behind Osh Ghurab, on Palestinian land is extremely distressing.

My visit to the city of the Shepherds' Field this past September with a delegation of other members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada was an eye-opening pilgrimage where I saw personally the violent occupation under which Palestinians suffer daily. This visit gave me an opportunity to meet with people working for justice and to see with my own eyes the crimes that are taking place. Since my return these experiences have empowered me to speak to the churches in Canada about working with Palestinians for a just and lasting peace.

Standing in the Shepherd's Field, I could see how much land had been stolen, carved up by settler roads and the ever-creeping encroachment of illegal settlements. Our group heard about the almost daily increase in the number of checkpoints erected in the Bethlehem area to restrict Palestinian movement in and around the fields where the angels brought the shepherds songs of peace on the first Christmas.

We could see how the settlements, illegal according to international law, are part of a violent and intentional plan to steal land, destroy livelihoods, and disrupt family and community life. Standing in Shepherds' fields it became even more obvious to us how settlements are a key part of the movement to secure Israeli dominance, to engage in ethnic cleansing and removing every evidence of a Palestinian presence thus preventing the reality of a Palestinian state and illegally securing the entire West Bank for the state of Israel.

In response to the alarming escalation in the number of deadly settler attacks reported weekly by OCHA, and the thousands of Palestinians already displaced in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, I am writing the Government of Canada to demand that it reaffirms its commitment to the illegality of the settlements under international law and expand its existing sanctions on settler violence in the West Bank. In that letter, I will draw upon what we saw in September in Beit Sahour and what we read in your letter. Additionally, I will ask all members of The Presbyterian Church to write letters and call their local elected officials.

Be assured not only of our prayers, but our solidarity and commitment to actions that support Palestinians under threat in their own land.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeffery Murray', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

The Rev. Jeffery Murray
Moderator of the General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church in Canada