

Beit Sahour: Campaign Briefing Document

¹1. Context

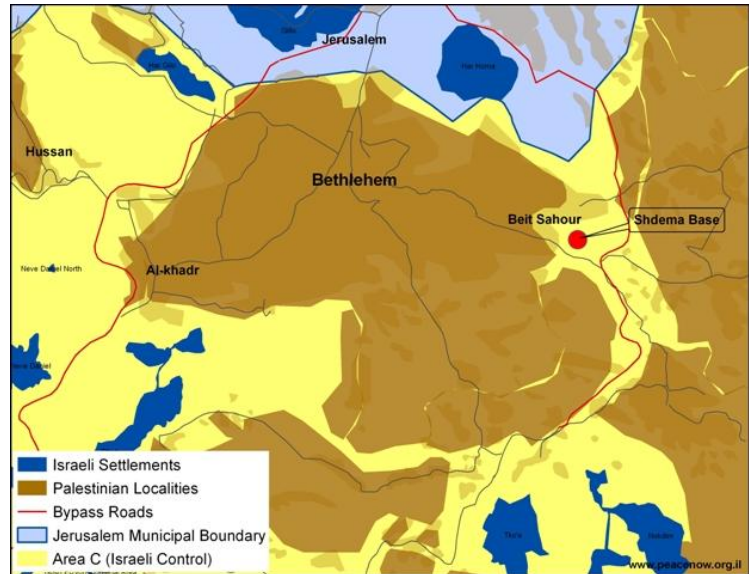
This briefing document calls upon global church communities and ecumenical networks to stand in immediate solidarity with the indigenous Palestinian Christian population of Beit Sahour, in the West Bank.

On 19 June 2026, the Mayor of Beit Sahour, Laith Hazim Qumsiyeh, issued a formal and urgent appeal to international partners regarding the imminent establishment of an illegal Israeli settlement outpost named "**Shadma Yitziv**" (also referred to as Yatziv).

This outpost is being rapidly constructed in the **Ush Ghurab** area on the eastern border of Beit Sahour—a predominantly Christian municipality located just 1 mile east of Bethlehem's historic Church of the Nativity. This area is known as the Shepherds Fields where the angels announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds.

2. The strategic threat of "Shadma Yitziv"

The Ush Ghurab site encompasses 92 dunums (approx. 23 acres) of land historically cultivated, owned, and utilized by local Palestinian residents. Following the evacuation of an Israeli military camp from the site in 2006, the local municipality invested significant communal resources to rehabilitate the area into a public space. Structural plans were underway to transform it into a recreational park and a proposed community hospital.



¹ Image by Peace Now



Instead, senior Israeli ministers and settlement leaders have officially inaugurated the illegal settlement outpost directly on this site. This development effectively chokes Beit Sahour's only remaining urban expansion and development corridor, permanently threatening the physical presence and economic sustainability of one of the oldest and largest remaining living Christian communities in the Holy Land. As well as potentially displacing many families, the area will be subject to extensive bulldozing, building and damage to the environment if the settlement plans are followed through.

3. Global Ecumenical response

Major international and ecumenical bodies, including the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Pax Christi International, have expressed grave concern. They warn that the outpost establishes an environment of fear, intensifies security risks due to increased settler attacks, and directly accelerates Christian emigration by stripping families of spatial growth, self-determination, and hope.

Statement from the World Council of Churches (WCC): "This development would further isolate Beit Sahour, accelerate the confiscation of Palestinian land, and threaten the future presence of one of the oldest and largest remaining Christian communities in the Holy Land. It is part of an all too familiar story, of illegal settlements subsequently being officially recognized by the Israeli authorities and expanded, dispossessing Palestinians of their lands and rights, deepening the illegal occupation and settler violence and harassment, and undermining the future of Palestinian communities – including Palestinian Christians – in areas controlled by Israel." — *Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the WCC*

4. Documentation & further reading

- **World Council of Churches Statement:** <https://oikoumene.org/news/wcc-expresses-great-concern-over-plans-for-another-israeli-settlement-in-west-bank>
- **Balasan Initiative for Human Rights Briefing:** <https://balasan.org/bihr-conducts-emergency-diplomatic-briefing-new-settlement-in-beit-sahour-and-escalations-across-the-bethlehem-governorate/>



- **Palestine News Network (PNN) Report 1:** <https://english.pnn.ps/news/4818>
- **Palestine News Network (PNN) Report 2:** <https://english.pnn.ps/news/48170>
- **Mayor of Beit Sahour letter (attached)**

4. Advocacy Action: Template letter to Church Leaders

As a church, our faith calls us not to remain detached in the face of structural injustice and oppression. Individuals are strongly encouraged to customise and send the template letter below to their respective Bishops, senior Clergy, Moderators, or Denominational Leaders to urge an active response.

[Name of Church Leader / Title]

[Your Name]

[Name of Church / Denomination]

[Your Address]

[Church Address]

[Your Email / Phone Number]

[Date]

Subject: Urgent Appeal for Solidarity and Action: The Threat to the Christian Community of Beit Sahour, Palestine

Dear [Name of Church Leader, e.g., Bishop, Reverend, Moderator],

I am writing to you as a member of our church community to bring to your urgent attention a critical situation threatening one of the oldest and largest remaining living Christian communities in the Holy Land.

On 19 June 2026, the Mayor of Beit Sahour, Laith Hazim Qumsiyeh, issued a formal appeal to international friends and church partners regarding the imminent establishment of an illegal Israeli settlement outpost named "Shadma Yitziv" (also referred to as Yatziv). This settlement is being rapidly constructed in the Ush Ghurab



area on the eastern border of Beit Sahour, a predominantly Christian city just 1.5 km east of Bethlehem's Nativity Church.

The Ush Ghurab site covers 92 dunums of land historically cultivated and utilised by the residents. Following the evacuation of an Israeli military camp there in 2006, the local municipality invested significant efforts to turn it into a public space featuring parks, recreational facilities, and a proposed hospital. Instead, senior Israeli ministers and settlement leaders officially inaugurated the illegal settlement outpost at the site, which directly blocks the city's only remaining development corridor.

Major international bodies, including the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Pax Christi International, have expressed grave concern over this project. They warn that it creates an atmosphere of fear, triggers severe security risks due to rising settler presence, and directly accelerates Christian emigration from the region by stripping families of hope, development, and their ancestral lands.

As a Church, our faith calls us not to remain neutral or detached in the face of such structural injustice and oppression. If we cannot stand clearly against dispossession in the very land where Christ was born, our gospel witness risks becoming disconnected from reality.

Therefore, I respectfully urge you and our wider church leadership to take immediate, concrete actions:

1. **Issue a Public Statement of Solidarity:** Join the World Council of Churches in publicly condemning the expropriation of land in Ush Ghurab and calling for the "Shadma Yitziv" settlement project to be halted immediately.
2. **Raise a Prophetic Political Voice:** Write to the Foreign Secretary, urging the UK government to uphold international law and demand accountability regarding settlement expansion in the West Bank.
3. **Amplify Palestinian Christian Voices:** Incorporate prayers and educational updates regarding the situation in Beit Sahour into our upcoming services or host a dedicated briefing using resources from UK-based organisations like Sabeel-Kairos UK or the wider Just Peace Coalition.



This area is known as the Shepherds Fields where the angels announced the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace, to the shepherds. It is now our turn to ensure that those communities living there today can remain so in peace and security.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and prayerful consideration of this urgent matter. I look forward to hearing how our church intends to respond to this plea for help.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

[Signature]

[Printed Name]