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Hon. Stéphane Dion
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Global Affairs Canada

February 26, 2016

Dear Minister Dion,

I am writing to you with regard to the planned and partially-completed demolition of Bedouin village Ein ar Rashash in Nablus, in the West Bank. I have received many letters from Canadians concerned about the demolition and the well-being of the Bedouin residents of the village.

Recently, the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) raised its concerns about the planned demolition of Ein ar Rashash and forced displacement of its 112 residents, over half of them children. The residents of Ein ar Rashash are concerned that the planned demolition of their long-time home will make way for settlements.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) notes that

Forced displacement has a series of immediate and longer-term physical, socio-economic and psycho-social impacts on Palestinian families. It deprives them of their home and land – often their main asset – and frequently results in disruption to livelihoods, a reduced standard of living and limited access to basic services. The impact on children can be particularly devastating. (OCHA Occupied Palestinian Territory website)

Minister, I recently wrote to you about land appropriations in the Jordan Valley. As you know, as recently underlined by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, settlements constitute a violation of international law. It is a longstanding Canadian policy, as

confirmed in your statement of January 24th 2016, that settlements “are unhelpful and constitute serious obstacles to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.”

It is significant that statements from both United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon and the United States State Department also underlined the threat that settlements pose to the achievement of a durable, two-state solution in the region.

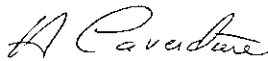
Minister, I urge you to directly raise concerns about settlements, forced displacement and demolitions with your Israeli counterpart at the earliest opportunity. It is important that Canada clearly convey that these activities are not only illegal, but also greatly hinder the possibility of a two-state solution to the conflict.

New Democrats remain committed to working with partners for peace and justice in Israel and Palestine, within a framework of respect for United Nations resolutions and international law, so that Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace and security in viable, independent states within negotiated, agreed-upon borders.

As we turn the page on a decade of Conservative foreign policy failures, Canada must now prioritize support of international efforts to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table, the only hope for securing a lasting and just peace in the region.

I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Hélène Laverdière

MP for Laurier – Sainte-Marie

NDP Critic for Foreign Affairs

CC: Christie Neufeldt, Program Coordinator, Public Witness, The United Church of Canada