

BEYOND SYMBOLIC MEASURES

EXPANDING CANADA'S SANCTIONS
ON ISRAELI SETTLER VIOLENCE

Independent Jewish Voices
Just Peace Advocates
Miles Howe, Ph.D



Beyond Symbolic Measures: Expanding Canada's Sanctions on Israeli Settler Violence

Independent Jewish Voices Canada
Just Peace Advocates
Miles Howe, Ph.D

October 15, 2024

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Pillars of the Settler Movement	5
Israeli Cabinet Ministers	5
Government and Para-Governmental Bodies	6
Settler Charities	8
Conclusion	8
Appendix: Current Canadian Sanctions Related to Extremist Settler Violence	9

Executive Summary

The situation in the Israeli-occupied West Bank has deteriorated dramatically since October 7, 2023, with armed settler gangs operating with impunity, supported by the Israeli military and police. The Israeli military itself has also stepped up attacks, including the use of bomber jets in the West Bank for the first time since the Second Intifada. This violence has resulted in hundreds of deaths, the expulsion of numerous Palestinian communities, escalating fears and increasing land confiscation, alongside the establishment of new illegal settlements.

In response, several Western countries, including Canada, have imposed targeted sanctions on select extremist settlers and groups. However, these measures have been criticized as inadequate, focusing primarily on low-level actors rather than addressing the systemic support from the Israeli government and military, along with other actors, for these violent actions. Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) and Just Peace Advocates (JPA) argue that Canada must expand its sanctions to include high-ranking Israeli officials and organizations that enable settler violence and support settlement expansion.

Key figures and organizations recommended for immediate Canadian sanctions regarding settler violence include:

- **Betzalel Smotrich** (Minister of Finance): An extremist leader advocating for the annexation of Palestinian territories.
- **Itamar Ben Gvir** (Minister of National Security): Responsible for police actions against settlers and facilitating their access to military-grade weapons.
- **Orit Strook** (Minister of Settlements): Oversees the development of settlements and outposts in Palestinian areas.
- **Settlement Division of the World Zionist Organization**: A key body for promoting settlement activities and planning in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- **Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (Jewish National Fund)**: A crucial player in the settlement movement, involved in acquiring land and financing projects that support settlements.
- **Regional and Local Councils**: Governing bodies, such as Mateh Binyamin, Shomron, and Gush Etzion, that promote and facilitate settlement activities and support for violent settlers.
- **Regavim**: Co-founded by Smotrich, this organization engages in legal and public relations campaigns to support home demolitions and land confiscations from Palestinians.
- **Hashomer Judea and Samaria (Hashomer Yosh)**: Operates militia forces in and around settlements and has already been sanctioned by the United States for its activities.

Recent sanctions from Canada have targeted 15 individuals and 7 entities involved in settler violence, marking progress but failing to address the deeper systemic issues fueling this violence. IJV and JPA emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach to sanctions that confront the root causes of human rights violations and call for accountability at the highest levels of the Israeli government.

Introduction

Armed gangs of vigilante settlers operating under the auspices of the army and police roam freely in broad daylight, invade, loot, and burn residential communities. Dozens of shepherding communities expelled from their homes. Large swaths of territory *de facto* no-go zones. Roads cleared of their vehicles.

This is the horrific state of the Israeli-occupied West Bank for Palestinians post October 7, 2023.

Hundreds of Palestinians have been murdered during this period, most of them by the Israeli military and by settlers armed with military weapons supplied to them in abundance. Amidst the fog of genocide and regional conflict, the Israeli military has stepped up attacks, including the recent use of bomber jets in the West Bank for the first time since the Second Intifada. Thousands more have been injured. Millions live in fear of settlers and army violence with no way to predict where, when and under what circumstances it will erupt. Dozens of new outposts and illegal settlements have meanwhile been established on Palestinian land, reaching a magnitude not seen in decades.¹

In response to this upsurge in violence and land theft, several mainly Western countries², including Canada, have imposed sanctions on a handful of individual extremist settlers and settler groups. These sanctions have thus far targeted relatively low-level actors involved in vigilante violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank. This has presumably been a way for Canada, and other Western nations, to apply a minimum amount of pressure on Israel while avoiding taking on the Israeli government and military directly, including in association with its genocidal campaign in the Gaza Strip.

The position of this paper's co-author organizations, Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) and Just Peace Advocates (JPA), is that Canada must immediately impose sanctions against the Israeli government and military at the highest levels for crimes against humanity, including genocide, apartheid and persecution, as well as war crimes associated with its occupation and settlement enterprise. Both organizations are also actively involved in demanding an immediate two-way Canadian arms embargo on Israel.

IJV and JPA nevertheless welcome Canada's recent sanctions regarding settler violence as a small, albeit grossly insufficient, step in the right direction. To have a genuine impact, however, **Canada's sanctions must be expanded to target not only a handful of individual extremist settlers and settler groups, but more importantly, the entities that enable them and provide them with their financial and operational backbone.** These include governmental or para-governmental organizations, charities, and key Israeli cabinet ministers; namely:

1. **Betzalel Smotrich**, Minister of Finance and Minister in the Defence Ministry
2. **Itamar Ben Gvir**, Minister of National Security

¹ Associated Press (March 7, 2023), "Israel Superchargers West Bank Settlement Expansion", Politico, <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/07/03/israel-turbocharges-west-bank-settlement-expansion-00166584>

² The United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia and the European Union have also imposed sanctions on individuals and entities in relation to settler violence.

BEYOND SYMBOLIC MEASURES

3. **Orit Strook**, Minister of Settlements and National Missions
4. **The Settlement Division of the World Zionist Organization**
5. **Regional Councils in the oPt**
6. **The Jewish National Fund/Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael**
7. **Regavim**
8. **Hashomer Yosh**

Pillars of the Settler Movement

On September 18, 2024, Canada imposed its third round of sanctions against individuals and organizations involved in extremist Israeli settler violence. Stated reasons behind the sanctions include: “participating in or facilitating acts of harassment and violence, including attacks on humanitarian convoys, dispossession of property and displacement of Palestinian communities.”

In total, the Canadian government has by now imposed sanctions against 15 Israeli individuals and 7 entities under the *Special Economic Measures Act* for their roles in settler violence. For a breakdown of these sanctions, including brief descriptions, see Appendix 1 below.

As noted above, sanctions by Canada and other countries have thus far focussed primarily on relatively low-level actors, with the notable exception of Amana, which only Canada has sanctioned so far. This approach ignores that extremist settler violence of the sort being carried out by the now listed individuals and groups, is supported, facilitated and encouraged by the Israeli government, notably by notorious cabinet members Bezelel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir. It is also resourced by a network of entities that receive millions of dollars in funding from the Israeli government³ and from around the world, including from Canada by organizations such as Mizrachi Canada⁴.

It is therefore critical that further sanctions target the driving forces behind the land takeovers and the use of settler violence to that end. Both in Canada and globally, sanctions must be taken against the following organizations and officials that constitute the financial and operational backbone of the wider settlement movement:

Israeli Cabinet Ministers

1. **Betzalel Smotrich, Israeli Minister of Finance**
Smotrich is a longtime extremist settler leader, who now occupies one of highest ranking posts in the Israeli cabinet on behalf of his Religious Zionism party. His most significant action is his pursuit of the program to annex the entirety of the oPt into the broader Israeli state. Regarding what he calls “the Arabs of the Land of Israel”, Smotrich offers

³ Hagar Shezaf and Hilo Glazer (October 11, 2024), “Investigation: Netanyahu's Government Not Only Permits Jewish Terror in the West Bank, but Also Finances It”, Haaretz <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-10-11/ty-article-magazine/.highlight/israel-not-only-permits-jewish-terror-in-the-west-bank-but-also-finances-it/00000192-7780-d2b4-afbe-ff99a3220000>

⁴ Independent Jewish Voices and Just Peace Advocates (April 12, 2024), ““Canadian charities funding war crimes in Israel,’ say advocacy groups; demand action”, <https://www.ijvcanada.org/canadian-charities-funding-war-crimes-in-israel-say-advocacy-groups-demand-action/>

BEYOND SYMBOLIC MEASURES

three options: those that accept that there will be no Palestinian State and pledge loyalty to the Jewish State in all of the "Land of Israel" will be allowed to remain (those in the oPt without citizenship); those who do not accept Smotrich's internationally illegal ultimatum will be "encouraged to emigrate"; and those who resist will be killed.

Smotrich achieved part of his program at the end of May, 2024, when most of the civilian powers of the Civil Administration were transferred from the Army to him as adjunct Minister in the Ministry of Defense. This act entails a *de jure* annexation of Area C, and violates the Fourth Geneva Convention, which Canada has agreed applies to the oPt..

2. **Itamar Ben Gvir, Israeli Minister of National Security**

Itamar Ben Gvir is another extremist settler who finds himself in one of the most powerful positions in Israel. The leader of the far-right Jewish Power party, Ben Gvir has been convicted at least eight times for crimes including incitement to racism, and was even exempted from military duty when he was 18 on account of his extremist politics. Fast-forward three decades, Ben Gvir is now the minister responsible for the Israeli police and has notably been responsible for handing out assault weapons without criteria to violent settlers.⁵ He has also continued and deepened the Israeli Police's non-enforcement against settler violence, including against individuals who have been sanctioned.

3. **Orit Strook, Israeli Minister of Settlements and National Missions**

A member representing Smotrich's Religious Zionism party, Orit Strook is responsible for the support and development of the outposts, both directly and through the Settlement Division of the WZO, which falls under her direction and policy.⁶ She is a resident of the extremist Avraham Avinu settlement, situated in the heart of Hebron, the most populous Palestinian city in the West Bank after Jerusalem.

Government and Para-Governmental Bodies

1. **The Settlement Division of the World Zionist Organization**

The Settlement Division (SD) may well be the most important organ for the Israeli settler movement. The SD is nominally a part of the WZO and as such not legally a part of the government of Israel. Its status was legally defined through an Israeli law from 2015, which was initiated by Bezalel Smotrich.

The purpose of this enactment was to create a legal black box, which enabled the Israeli government to carry out settlement operations without being bound by international or Israeli law or public oversight.

The operations of the SD for the settlements include: regional and settlement planning; the planning and development of infrastructure including water and electricity; building public structures; protective infrastructure for settlements; purchasing equipment; economic planning and assistance; support for businesses and community activities.

⁵ Eyal, Lurie-Pardes, DAWN (November 3 2023), "Ben Gvir is Arming Thousands of Israelis and Playing with Fire" <https://dawnmena.org/ben-gvir-is-arming-thousands-of-israelis-and-playing-with-fire/>

⁶ Ministry of Settlement and National Missions (August 8, 2023), Minister's Policy and Work Plans, <https://www.gov.il/he/pages/workplans> (in Hebrew)

BEYOND SYMBOLIC MEASURES

Most importantly the SD is granted land by the Civil Administration, which it operates and allocates to the settlements, for example to the outposts and herding farms that are the spearhead of settler violence.

2. **The Israeli Regional Councils and Local Councils in the oPt**

- a. Regional Councils : Mateh Binyamin, Shomron (Samaria), Jordan Valley, Gush Etzion and Har Hebron
- b. Local Councils such as Kedumim, Efrat and Kiryat Arba

These are the Israeli municipalities in the West Bank. As such they maintain and promote the settlements, and also act as a base of support and guiding hand for violent settler activity, including by purchasing and distributing assault rifles to residents. Despite being governmental entities, these councils are often the recipients of large sums of foreign funding from around the world. For example, the Shomron (Samaria) Regional Council claims to have raised millions of shekels for weapons “from New York, Miami, Canada and Paris” for the purchase of weapons and munitions.⁷

3. **Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael – The Jewish National Fund**

On August 10, 2024, the CRA revoked the charitable status of the Jewish National Fund of Canada. This was an important step that will serve to limit the flow of tax-deductible Canadian funds to JNF Canada’s parent organization, Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (KKL), a key player in the settlement movement and financier of violent settler groups.

KKL's defines itself as the operational arm of Zionism, dedicated to "redeeming" land for the "Jewish People", with no distinction made between Israel and the oPt. KKL aims to accomplish this goal in the following ways:

- a. **Real Estate Purchases:** Via fully-owned subsidiaries, Himanuta (Israel and East Jerusalem) and Himanuta Jerusalem (West Bank), KKL works to evict Palestinians from their homes and acquire Palestinian land in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, for Jewish settlement.
- b. **Projects in and around settlements:** KKL has invested hundreds of millions of shekels in projects in and around the settlements such as promenades between settlements, water collection infrastructure for agricultural irrigation, clearing land for settlers' agriculture, playgrounds and parks, museums, lookout points, security roads (for settlers) and other infrastructure.
- c. **Partnerships:** Under the cover of partnerships with so-called social, environmental or educational organizations, the KKL finances the activities of violent settler activities, some of which have been the target of sanctions in Canada, the UK, the US and the EU, including Moshe’s Farm.⁸
- d. **Forestry:** Aside from Canada Park, on which it regularly spends a fair amount on upkeep and reconstruction projects, KKL maintains several other forests in the

⁷ Arutz Sheva (October 12, 2023), “Samaria purchases hundreds of rifles for civilians”, <https://web.archive.org/web/20240628163746/https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/378368>

⁸ Hagar Sheifaz (October 1, 2023), “JNF Funds Projects for At-risk Youth in Illegal West Bank Outposts”, Ha’aretz, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-01/ty-article/.premium/jnf-funds-projects-for-at-risk-youth-in-illegal-west-bank-outposts/0000018a-e7b1-d12f-afbf-e7f50b8b0000>

oPt . KKL forests have long been used to cover up destroyed and depopulated villages, push Bedouin herders off their lands, and appropriate lands for Israeli use.

Settler Charities

1. **Regavim**, co-founded by Betzelel Smotrich, engages in legal, regulatory and public relations campaigns to support the Israeli government in ordering and carrying out demolitions of Palestinian and Bedouin homes, roads, and even villages in Israel and the oPt, and declares so on its website and annual reports.⁹ These actions have been declared illegal under the Rome Statute.¹⁰
2. **Hashomer Judea and Samaria** (Hashomer Yosh) operates militia forces on and around farms in Jewish settlements in the oPt¹¹. Hashomer Yosh has already been sanctioned by the United States.

Conclusion

The violence and dispossession inflicted upon Palestinians by Israeli settlers, with the backing of the Israeli government and military, constitute clear violations of international law. While Canada's recent sanctions on a few extremist settlers represent a step forward, they fall far short of addressing the root causes of this systemic oppression. To effect genuine change, Canada must expand its sanctions to target the financial, governmental, and operational structures that sustain the settler movement. Only by holding these key actors accountable can Canada contribute to ending settler violence and achieving justice for Palestinians.

⁹ Regavim, "About us", <https://www.regavim.org/about-us/>

¹⁰ International Criminal Court (October 17, 2018), "Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, regarding the Situation in Palestine", <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-prosecutor-international-criminal-court-fatou-bensouda-regarding-situation-palestine>

¹¹ Benny Tucker (July 6, 2017), "Hashomer Yosh: Presence deters thieves", Arutz Sheva, <https://www.inn.co.il/news/349966> (in Hebrew)

Appendix: Current Canadian Sanctions Related to Extremist Settler Violence

Amana

By far the most important entity on the list is Amana. Canada is the first country to impose sanctions on the Amana movement, the central settlement arm of the settler movement. Amana works in conjunction with the Settlement Division of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), and has built many of the settlements and outposts. At the head of "Amana" is Ze'ev Hever, one of the heads of the settlement movement, who is considered close to the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The organization operates a commercial construction company, "Bar Buildings Amana", and its overarching goal is the settlement of a million settlers in the West Bank.

Daniella Weiss

One of the founders of Gush Emunim, Weiss heads the "Nachala" movement, which works to establish illegal outposts. The Nachala movement isn't an officially registered charity, instead it fundraises through other charities, such as Se'u Tziona Nes v'degel, **which have been historical recipients of Canadian charitable donations**. Weiss was, among other things, behind the establishment of the Evyatar outpost. She has also been active in lobbying for the return of the Israeli settlements in Gaza (and even calling for creating Israeli settlements in Southern Lebanon).

Bentzi Gopstein and Lehava

Both have been active in violence against non-Jews, both inside the Green Line and the oPt. Gopstein advises Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir on issues concerning the police, the commissioner and police superintendents.

The Hilltop Youth

A group of extreme settlers from the outposts who terrorize the Palestinians. This includes most of the sanctioned individuals on the list:

- **Einan Tanjil**, who was sentenced to do half a year of community service and pay compensation after he attacked a left-wing activist in the West Bank;
- **Elisha Yered**, the former spokesperson of Member of Knesset (MK) Limor Son Har Melekh of the Jewish Power party, who was arrested last year on suspicion of murder in the village of Burka;
- **Noam Federman**, a Hebron-based former leader of the extremist and now defunct Kach party who has trained settler groups to commit violence against Palestinians, and his brother **Ely Federman**, who has been involved in many violent clashes with shepherds in the south of Mount Hebron, and his father N;
- **Meir Ettinger** (the grandson of former Kach leader Meir Kahana), previously considered one of the hilltop youth leaders;
- **Shalom Zicherman**, who was accused in 2022 in the attack of leftwing activists.

BEYOND SYMBOLIC MEASURES

- **Neria Ben Pazi**, who has been accused of brutally attacking and torturing Bedouin Palestinians and ultimately depopulating two Bedouin communities near Ramallah.
- **Eden Levi**, who has established herding outposts aimed at driving out Palestinians and has been allegedly involved in multiple violent attacks on Palestinians, including sexual assault and at least one murder.

The Shepherding Farms: Moshe's Farm and Zvi's Farm

Moshe Sharvit, **Zvi Bar Yosef**, and *their respective farms* have been personally and separately sanctioned by Canada. The shepherding farms in general use extreme violence, using their herds to invade and take over Palestinian lands.

Blocker of Humanitarian Aid

Shlomo (Yehezkel Hai) Sarid is the leader of Tsav 9, a far-right group formed by families Israeli hostages taken by Hamas on October 7, which has worked to stop humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip by blockading roads, damaging trucks and cargo, and assaulting aid truck drivers and Israeli soldiers.

The Fundraising Groups

Shlom Asiraich and the **Mount Hebron Fund** ran online fundraisers for extremists settlers, David Chai Chasdai and Yinon Levi respectively, both sanctioned by the US State Department in February 2024.