

Hill Briefing: Israeli Settlements, Bethlehem & the Village of Wadi Foquin

**Tuesday, November 14, 2017
10:30 am to 12 pm EST
SVC 209-08, U.S. Capitol Visitor Center**

While violence often dominates media coverage from Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, there are opportunities for U.S. policy to play a constructive role in reducing violence, addressing human rights concerns, and working toward a durable resolution to the conflict. Mayors from Bethlehem and the West Bank village of Wadi Foquin will describe both the impact of Israeli settlement expansion and opportunities for Congress to intervene.

Bethlehem, the heart of the Holy Land, and Wadi Foquin, a small Palestinian village, offer two examples of how the accelerating expansion of Israeli settlements impacts Palestinian daily life throughout the West Bank. Due to the close proximity of settlements, access to jobs, schools, healthcare facilities, and agricultural fields is severely restricted for Palestinians living in both of these West Bank communities. Recently, Israel's government showed its support of settlement expansion when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended the groundbreaking ceremony for new housing units in the settlement of Betar Illit. Betar Illit is one of two settlements that border Wadi Foquin. In Wadi Foquin, dynamiting for settlement construction has dried up many of the natural springs used for irrigation, and construction debris and raw sewage discharged from Betar Illit have contaminated fields, making them unsuitable for growing.

Christians in the U.S. have worked with Wadi Foquin for nine years through a partnership initiated by United Methodist congregations. The partnership supports community development projects that provide hope for families seeking a future for their children and youth.

Panelists:

Anton Salman, Mayor of Bethlehem

Ahmad Sokar, Mayor of Wadi Foquin

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace

Rev. Michael Yoshii, Co-Chair, Friends of Wadi Foquin

Sponsored by:

Friends of Wadi Foquin

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)

General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church

Faith Forum on Middle East Policy

RSVPs appreciated but not required. To RSVP please contact Kyle Cristofalo, CMEP's Director of Advocacy and Government Relations, at kyle@cmepe.org.