



**CALIFORNIA – NEVADA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

P.O. Box 980250 / West Sacramento, California 95798 – 0250 (offices at 1276 Halyard Drive. W. Sacramento, 95691)
Tel: (916) 374 – 1500 fax: (916) 372 – 5544 web: <http://www.cnumc.org>

Warner H. Brown, Jr.
Resident Bishop

Bener Agtarap
*Conference Superintendent
for Congregational Vitality*

Greg Bergquist
*Conference Superintendent
for Leadership Development*

Linda Caldwell
*Conference Superintendent
for Mission Collaboration*

Diane Knudsen
*Treasurer and Director,
Administrative Services*

Kelly Peterson
*Director, Young People and
Camping Ministries*

Larry Hygh, Jr.
Director, Communications

September 7, 2015

Senator Diane Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The United Methodist Church is in partnership with the Palestinian village of Wadi Foquin (foo-KEEN) through partnership initiated by the Friends of Wadi Foquin, based in the California Nevada Annual Conference. The partnership has received the support of our global mission agency, the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Through partnership support, United Methodist Churches have provided financial support for community development projects in the village and have organized annual visits to the village since August 2009. Wadi Foquin is a small agricultural village with a population of 1,300. The people are strongly tied to their land. Like many small farmers around the world, their relationship to the land is an essential part of their life and identity.

On Thursday morning, June 11, a group of Israel Defense Force (IDF) soldiers entered Wadi Foquin accompanied by around 20 Israeli laborers and three pieces of earthmoving equipment. The machines proceeded to destroy approximately nine acres (34 dunams) of fruit trees belonging to one of the village farmers. When people from the village came out to protest they were met with tear gas and percussion bombs. As the farm owner screamed for the soldiers to stop and tried to protect his trees, he was beaten and thrown to the ground by the soldiers where he was forced to watch as \$35,000 worth of trees and six years of planting and tending was destroyed in less than an hour. A total of 1,300 trees belonging to three farmers were destroyed along with two water cisterns used for irrigation.

This recent action follows land confiscation orders issued in August 2014. The Israeli Civil Administration declared over 1,000 acres of private land belonging to Wadi

Foquin and neighboring Palestinian villages to be “state land.” Wadi Foquin is already squeezed between the Israeli town of Tzur Haddassa, which lies inside the state of Israel, and Betar Illit, an illegal Jewish settlement in the West Bank that currently houses around 50,000 illegal settlers. Village officials believe that their private land is being confiscated to create an industrial and commercial zone that will have them completely surrounded by the illegal settlements and the new construction. Annexation of occupied land is illegal according to international law. U.S. policy also stands in opposition to settlement development in the West Bank.

Yet our U.S. government provides \$3.1 billion in foreign aid to Israel on an annual basis. While our tax dollars are generously being given to Israel, a nation seen as an important regional ally and friend, we are either inadvertently or intentionally supporting the destruction of land and life in Wadi Foquin and their neighbors throughout the West Bank.

State Department officials have been contacted about these recent activities in Wadi Foquin and Sonam Lieberman, U.S. Consulate staff in Jerusalem, has visited the village and talked with the farmers whose trees were destroyed. We have been informed by our village partners that a report has been filed by the Jerusalem consulate with the State Department. We have also been informed that report is considered an "internal document" and not available for public viewing.

We, the members of the California-Nevada Annual Conference, feel very strongly that the Israeli government, the Israeli Civil Authority, and Israeli military need to be held accountable for the destruction of trees and illegal confiscation of land in Wadi Foquin. We request that your office take the following actions:

1. Contact the State Department to inquire about the report from the Jerusalem Consulate and urge immediate communication to the Israeli government to demand accountability for the destruction of fruit trees and illegal annexation of land.
2. Provide an accounting of \$3.1 B foreign aid to Israel to assess where our U.S. tax dollars provide direct or indirect support to these violations of land and life.
3. Initiate a process to benchmark future foreign aid to Israel until human rights violations and illegal settlement expansion is ended.

Sincerely,

Rev. Kristin L. Sachen
Conference Secretary
California Nevada Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church