



## BUENA VISTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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June 7, 2016

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
2256 Rayburn HOB  
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman McCollum:

The Friends of Wadi Foquin is a United Methodist partnership with the village of Wadi Foquin begun in August 2009. (*see our website at [www.friendsofwadifoquin.com](http://www.friendsofwadifoquin.com)*) Wadi Foquin is a small agricultural village in the West Bank of the occupied Palestinian territories. The village supports a population of 1300, while the illegal settlement of Betar Illit now boasts a population of over 50,000 on land inside the Palestinian territories overlooking Wadi Foquin. Raw sewage from Betar Illit has damaged agricultural products over the year. In the face of this challenge, our partnership has supported community development projects in the village over the past several years including the establishment of a community center, bee hive project, women's basket weaving, and youth development. Our most recent support has been for the building of a soccer field. The vision of the soccer field is to accompany a newly built park providing recreational space for their children, youth, and families, and also children and youth from surrounding Palestinian villages—and even possibly Israeli children in a future extending equal rights to Palestinians. In August 2015, orders to stop construction on the soccer field were issued by the Israeli Civil Authority. The field is being built on land that fell under a 1,000-acre confiscation order issued to West Bank villages in 2014. Confiscated land will lead to further expansion of illegal settlements.

At our recent convening in May 2016 of the General Conference, the highest decision making body of the United Methodist Church, a resolution was passed to send a letter to President Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, the Israeli Civil Authority, and Jerusalem Consulate expressing collective concern that Israel be held accountable for the destruction of life as a result of increasing land confiscation and expansion of illegal settlements. The lives of innocent children and youth are being directly impacted by these actions.

With this in mind, Friends of Wadi Foquin would like to add our organizational endorsement to your efforts calling on President Obama to appoint a Special Envoy to look into and protect Palestinian children who suffer from the increased expansion of the illegal settlements and disproportionate violence experienced under the Israeli military occupation.

Blessings,

Rev. Michael Yoshii, Chair  
Friends of Wadi Foquin