

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2023

Barbara Leaf
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Department of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Leaf,

We write to you regarding the Palestinian village of Wadi Foquin located in the Bethlehem District of the West Bank. The residents of Wadi Foquin face the potential loss of land and economic suffering due to the policy decisions and actions of the Government of Israel. These include: a road construction project opposed by Wadi Foquin residents; contamination of agricultural land with untreated urban effluent runoff from nearby Israeli communities; and demolitions and land seizures of residents' property.

A number of House Members, led by Congresswoman Lee, previously wrote to the State Department regarding these issues in October of 2021 following demolitions that took place in June of that year. A few days after that letter was sent, demolition orders were received by five farmers for properties including homes, water cisterns, compost facilities, and storage buildings in different areas of the village.

Since that letter Israeli authorities have taken a number of further actions against the village. On March 22, 2022 a bulldozer uprooted 30 olive trees belonging to an agricultural family. On May 17, 2022, new confiscation orders were issued claiming land for the State of Israel on 50 dunams or approximately 12 acres in Wadi Foquin. On December 21, 2022, Israeli bulldozers uprooted trees, crops, as well as demolished agricultural facilities on 15 acres belonging to one farm family in the north border of the village. On December 28, 2022, land seizure orders were issued for 84 dunams of land which runs along the route of the proposed road towards the village of Al-Jaba'a to the south of Wadi Foquin. This land has been designated for the construction of a military road along the same corridor.

The implementation of these land seizure orders, following a series of actions by the Israeli government over the past 18 months, would lead to the seizure and demolition of properties in Wadi Foquin, and essentially reduce the footprint of usable land while squeezing the village from the east and west.

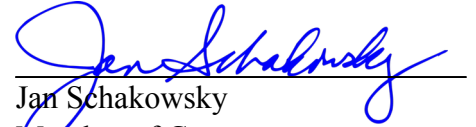
Further, these actions demonstrate lack of respect for the property and dignity of the people of Wadi Foquin, impede the potential to maintain peaceful relations, and threaten the very existence of the village. Finally, these actions are antithetical to U.S. policy, which regards the expansion of settlements and their infrastructure as a significant obstacle to securing a two-state solution.

We urge the State Department to strongly communicate our concerns to the Israeli government and call for an immediate halt to all demolitions and property seizures in Wadi Foquin, including halting any planning or construction on proposed Highway 3742, military roads, and sewage infrastructure. We are aware that State Department personnel in Jerusalem are in touch with village leadership and we encourage their continued engagement in reporting concerns from the ground to your office.

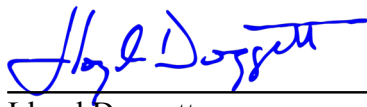
Sincerely,



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



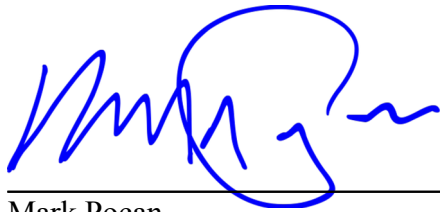
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



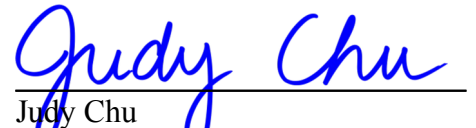
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



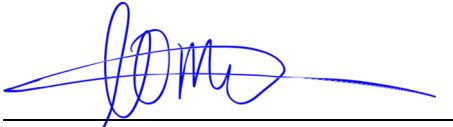
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



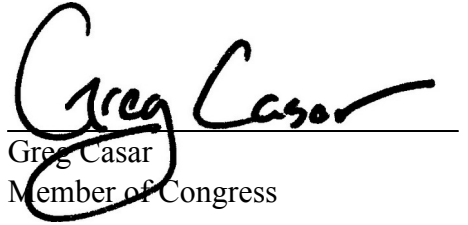
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress