

URGENT CALL TO IMPLEMENT THE ICJ ADVISORY OPINION ON THE WALL IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

Jerusalem (9 November 2006)

9 November commemorates the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and today, the 22 undersigned international aid organizations express their alarm at the continuing construction of the Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory and the misery it is causing the Palestinian people. We call for the UN member states to make effective the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion of 9 July 2004 that calls for Israel to cease construction and to dismantle those sections of the Wall which are located in the West Bank.

Begun in June 2002 the Separation Wall is projected to be more than 703 kilometers long, twice as long as the 1967 borders of the West Bank, and over 4 times longer than the Berlin Wall. The Wall is in parts an eight-meter-high cement structure - over twice the height of the Berlin Wall: in other areas it is an electrified metal fence with trenches, patrol roads, razor wire and motion sensors on each side. The Wall cuts deep into the West Bank and through the middle of towns and neighborhoods, dividing families from each other. The Wall prevents Palestinian farmers from accessing their land, students from accessing their schools, and the sick, elderly, and expectant mothers are cut off from essential health services.

As international aid agencies working directly with Palestinian communities, we have witnessed first-hand how the Wall is causing irreparable damage to the economy and living standards of Palestinians in the West Bank, and begun what is feared to be irreversible trends to the social fabric of the West Bank. More than 500,000 Palestinians live within a one kilometer strip of the Wall - 20% of the total population of the West Bank. Of them, 60,500 Palestinians, including approximately 34,000 children, will reside between the Wall and the 1967 internationally-recognized West Bank border with Israel – an area now called the "Seam Zone" and an area that is entirely cut off from the rest of the West Bank.

We remind the UN Member States that the ICJ opinion advised that "all states are under an obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem . . . , not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction . . . ", and "to ensure compliance by Israel with international law embodied in [the Fourth Geneva] Convention."

We also call on the international community to work, as a matter of urgency, towards a UN monitoring system to register damages arising from the construction of the Wall, as instructed by the UN General Assembly to the Secretary General (ES-10/15 of 10 July 2004), and to locate it in the OPT. We also request the members of the Quartet and all governments to make special reference to the ICJ advisory opinion in their statements on this issue, and to integrate the conclusions of this advisory opinion into any negotiation process.

ACSUR Las Segovias

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz (ACPP)

Campaign for the Children of Palestine (CCP)

Christian Aid

Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (C.I.S.P)

Gruppo di Volontariato Civile (GVC)

Handicap International

Italian Consortium of Solidarity (ICS)

Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)

Medecine du Monde international network

Oxfam International

Premiere Urgence

PTM-mundubat

Save the Children Sweden

Save the Children UK

Solidaridad Internacional

Solidarité Socialiste – Belgium

Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC)

The Palestine Solidarity Association in Sweden

UCODEP - Jerusalem Office

World Vision Jerusalem

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The following are relevant paragraphs from the ICJ Advisory Opinion:

The construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated régime, are contrary to international law (paragraph 163);

Israel is under an obligation to terminate its breaches of international law; it is under an obligation to cease forthwith the works of construction of the wall being built in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, to dismantle forthwith the structure therein situated, and to repeal or render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto, in accordance with paragraph 151 of this Opinion (paragraph 163);

Israel is under an obligation to make reparation for all damage caused by the construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem (paragraph 163);

Along with Israeli settlements in the OPT, it consolidates a de facto annexation of Israeli settlements and natural resources located in the OPT, "entailing alterations of demographic composition of these

territories" and "severely impeding the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination" (paragraphs 121, 122, 133);

"In addition, however, in the view of the Court, since a significant number of Palestinians have already been compelled by the construction of the wall and its associated régime to depart from certain areas, a process that will continue as more of the wall is built, that construction, coupled with the establishment of the Israeli settlements mentioned in paragraph 120 above, is tending to alter the demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory." (paragraph 133);

"That construction, along with measures taken previously, thus severely impedes the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination, and is therefore a breach of Israel's obligation to respect that right." (paragraph 121).