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## Amnesty Urges Irish Company to Explain Its Role on Israeli Fence/Wall

On the eve of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) opening hearing on the construction of the fence/wall by Israel, Amnesty International has called on the Irish-based Cement Roadstone Holdings to clarify its position in relation to the construction of the fence/wall, which violates international law and contributes to grave human rights violations.

“Cement Roadstone Holdings, through its subsidiaries Mashav and Neshet, is likely to be providing the raw material for the construction of the fence/wall,” said Amnesty. “If so it would contravene the UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights (2003).”

In a letter to the company, Amnesty noted the Cement Roadstone Holdings website declares that “the Europe Materials Division of Cement Roadstone Holdings has acquired a 25% stake in the Mashav group in Israel, with a call option to acquire an additional 25% of the company. Mashav is the holding company for Neshet Cement, the sole producer of cement in Israel. From two production lines at its main facility in Ramla and a single process plant at Har Tuv, Neshet supplies cement throughout Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.” Amnesty has urged the company to declare its position on the construction of the wall.

“Cement Roadstone Holdings must explain whether it is involved in the building of this fence/wall through its subsidiaries Mashav and Neshet,” said Dr. Kathleen Cavanaugh, who teaches international law at the Irish Centre for Human Rights at NUI, Galway and is a board member of Amnesty International’s Irish Section. “We’re calling for the the Israeli authorities to immediately halt the construction of the fence/wall and related infrastructure *inside* the Occupied Territories. Sections of the fence/wall already built inside the West Bank should be dismantled,” she said.

In a declaration by the Irish Presidency on February 11 in Strasbourg on the EU's position regarding the hearing at the International Court of Justice, Irish Minister of State for European Affairs Dick Roche said Israelis must stop building this barrier. He deplored the "regrettably uncompromising" attitude of the Israeli government, and noted that the EU is opposed to the fence/wall.

On 8 December 2003 the United Nations General Assembly, exercising its power under Article 96 of the Charter of the United Nations (UN), passed a resolution requesting the ICJ to issue an Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of the construction by Israel of the fence/wall *inside*

the Occupied Territories.

The Israeli authorities claim that the fence/wall is "a defensive measure, designed to block the passage of terrorists, weapons and explosives into the State of Israel".

However, most of the fence/wall is not being built on the Green Line between Israel and the West Bank. Close to 90% of it is on Palestinian land inside the West Bank, encircling Palestinian towns and villages and cutting off communities and families from each other. It separates farmers from their land and cuts off Palestinians from their places of work, schools, health care facilities and other essential services.

"Israel's legitimate needs to secure its borders and prevent access to people who may constitute a threat to its security do not justify the building of such a fence/wall *inside* the Occupied Territories. This could be built on Israeli territory on the Green Line, where mechanisms to control entry of outsiders could also be strengthened if deemed necessary," said Amnesty International.

The building of this fence/wall inside the Occupied Territories has severe negative consequences for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. It imposes unprecedented disproportionate and discriminatory restrictions on their movements *within* the Occupied Territories and causes other violations of their fundamental rights, including the right to work, to food, to medical care, to education and to an adequate standard of living.

"Any measure Israel undertakes in the Occupied Territories in the name of security must comply with its obligations under international law," said Amnesty International.

The route of the fence/wall has been designed to encompass more than 50 Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, in which the majority of Israeli settlers live and which are illegal under international law.

Amnesty International also reiterates its call on the Palestinian armed groups to put an immediate end to their policy of killing and targeting Israeli civilians, inside Israel and in the Occupied Territories, and on the Palestinian Authority to take urgent concrete measures to prevent attacks by Palestinian armed groups on Israeli civilians.

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