



ASIA/HOLY LAND - The Wall in the valley of Cremisan changes route, but does not stop

Beit Jala (Agenzia Fides) - The Israeli Special Appeals Committee for land seizure under emergency released its verdict on actions brought by a convent of the Salesian Sisters and many families of Palestinian farmers against the stretch separation Wall that the Israeli authorities want to build in the Valley of Cremisan. The verdict released on April 24 proposes a change in the route of the Wall, so that the convent of sisters remains accessible from the town of Beit Jala and the Palestinian territories.

The solution adopted occurs two months after the final hearing, and represents the culmination of proceedings which have been going on for seven years. The building of the separation wall according to the alternative route - which will surround three sides of the nuns' convent and will confiscate most of the convent's land - represents according to the Israeli body a reasonable compromise between security needs of Israel on one hand and freedom of religion and the right to education on the other which the legal representatives of the convent had appealed to. The Society of St. Yves - the Catholic human rights organization that had filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of the Holy Land - in a statement sent to Fides Agency sees the verdict as highly problematic and unjust as it "does not even discuss the violation of freedom of religion, the right to education as well as the economic damage caused to the Christian community in Beit Jala since its construction." According to the leaders of the Society of St. Yves, the court of appeal has ignored all the evidence of the landowners on the damage caused by the development of the Wall and also the data supplied on the environmental destruction that will ruin the valley of Cremisan. The framers of the verdict believe that an agricultural gate should be sufficient to ensure Palestinian farmers access to their agricultural land destined to remain beyond the barrier.

The Appeals Committee emphasizes the value of its binding ruling, reiterating that it does not fall within its powers to authorize any alternative solutions that would involve the dismantling of the Wall sections already built a long time ago. The Society of St. Yves, reserves the right to appeal to the High Court of Justice of the State of Israel. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 26/04/2013).