



SDB

*Salesians of D. Bosco
Middle East Province*

Bethlehem, August 30, 2007

Upon the beginning of the construction works for the Israeli Separation Wall in the Palestinian municipality of Beit Jala, the Salesian Province of the Middle East - which the House of Cremisan belongs to - wishes to state the following:

- The entire track of the Wall, including the section involving the property of Cremisan, has been set in complete autonomy by Israeli authorities, despite the well-known Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on July 9, 2004. The Salesian Community, victim of a one-sided decision by Israeli authorities, firmly takes a stand against the policy of unilateral separation; reaffirms its complete extraneousness to the planning of the track of the Wall and, at the same time, appeals to all competent authorities to engage for the re-establishment of international law;
- The track of the Wall runs up-hill of the Salesian House so as to encircle the Israeli settlement of Har Gilo, which is located on the hilltop, and to connect it to the municipality of Great Jerusalem, unilaterally established by Israel in 1967. It is worth noting that the House of Cremisan is inside the borders of that municipality, stuck between the settlements of Gilo and Har Gilo, therefore the hypothesis of excluding it has never been taken into consideration. The choice on the side of the Wall where to remain has never been open to the Salesians, since Israeli authorities had decided *ex-ante* the position of the House within the borders of the municipality they had themselves set;
- The section of the Wall along the border between the House of Cremisan and the Palestinian village of Al-Walajeh is being built on Salesian property, avoiding to run over the land of the village which, otherwise, would have suffered even larger damage;
- Put before the construction of the Wall, the Salesian Community has not contributed in any way to aggravate the difficult condition of the Palestinian village, nor it has favoured in any form – either direct or indirect – the requisition of lands belonging to the village itself. It is appropriate recalling that over long periods during the first and the second Intifada, the Salesian Community allowed all Palestinian vehicles to pass through their internal roads since no alternative route was available to connect the north and the south of the Occupied Territories. But since the previous routes were re-opened to Palestinian traffic, crossing the Salesian property has no longer been necessary. Therefore, the fact that the House of Cremisan remains on the side of the Wall facing Israel does not prevent the inhabitants of Al-Walajeh to directly reach the rest of the West Bank through the public road.

The heads of the Salesian Community – who have always been open to dialogue with the local Palestinians, to whom they have often provided several services of social utility – wish to renew their deepest solidarity to the village of Al-Walajeh and to the whole Palestinian population still enduring the hardships of occupation. At the same time they express their heartfelt hope that every Wall among peoples may fall, for a future of peace.

Salesian Province of the Middle East
Province Vicar Fr. Giovanni Laconi