

PRESS RELEASE

SUBMISSION FROM SHERPA AND ECCHR ON AN INDICTMENT OF LAFARGE FOR COMPLICITY IN CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Paris, May 15, 2018 Sherpa and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), initiators of a criminal complaint against the cement-manufacturer Lafarge filed in conjunction with 11 former employees, argue, in a Memorandum to the investigative judges, that at this stage of the proceedings, it is necessary to indict the company Lafarge for complicity in crimes against humanity.

Whilst several Lafarge executives have already been indicted for the financing of a terrorist enterprise, deliberate endangerment of people, and labor conditions incompatible with human dignity, on Wednesday May 9 SHERPA and ECCHR filed a legal note with the investigative judges highlighting the need to extend these indictments to complicity in crimes against humanity, in particular against the company Lafarge itself as a legal entity.

The organizations explain that the crimes committed by the Islamic State (IS) in northeastern Syria between 2012 and 2015 must be considered as crimes against humanity. They argue that Lafarge acted as an accomplice to these crimes by maintaining its business activities there, by neglectfully managing its employees' security, and by financing IS in various ways with up to several million euro. A new, crucial lead on how this financing took place, set out in the note on the basis of new elements, is the possible sale of cement to IS. The organizations conclude that Lafarge and its executives could not have ignored that by doing all of the above, they contributed to crimes against humanity committed by IS in Syria, in the region surrounding Lafarge's factory.

The charge of complicity for crimes against humanity is of fundamental importance as it further frames this case in the context of multinational companies' involvement in grave human rights violations, particularly in armed conflicts.

"Companies have the means to fuel armed conflicts by doing business with regimes or armed groups who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity. The fight against multinationals' impunity will necessarily imply holding them to account, in particular in countries where parent companies operate and control their subsidiaries' activities worldwide. Access to justice for thousands of victims of armed conflicts depends on it," says Sandra Cossart, SHERPA's Director.

"With a view to the future of Syria, it is crucial that all those involved in the extremely violent crimes perpetrated by all parties since 2012 be identified. Today, French justice has the means to play a critical role in the recognition of such responsibilities, including when powerful Western actors are concerned," affirmed Dr. Miriam Saage-Maas, Vice Legal Director at ECCHR.

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