



PRESS RELEASE

French company Lafarge sued for Financing ISIS and Complicity in War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity in Syria

Paris, 15 November 2016 – [Sherpa](#) and the [European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights](#) (ECCHR), as well as 11 complainants who are former Syrian employees, represented by maître Marie Dosé and maître Jean-Christophe Ménard, are filing suit against cement-manufacturer Lafarge and its subsidiary Lafarge Cement Syria (LCS) for its actions in Syria. By having business relations with the terrorist group ISIS in Syria, this company may have taken part in the financing of the group, being therefore complicit in war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Miriam Saage-Maaß, Vice Legal Director at ECCHR said: “The Lafarge case highlights once again how multinationals doing business in conflict zones can directly fuel armed conflicts and contribute to grave human rights violations committed therein. Companies like Lafarge must be held accountable.”

Laëtitia Liebert, Sherpa’s Executive Director added: ‘This is the first time non-profit organizations have filed suit against a multinational corporation for financing terrorist activity and complicity in war crimes and crimes against humanity.’

LCS owns a cement factory in the north of Syria, between Raqqa and Manbij. In 2012, when the conflict escalated in the north of the country around Raqqa and Aleppo, LCS repatriated its expatriate staff, while Syrian employees kept on working in the Jalabiya plant.

During 2013, conflicts intensified and ISIS seized the north of Syria. Check points controlled by this organization multiplied on the roads surrounding the Lafarge plant.

According to the information Sherpa and ECCHR collected, LCS would have entered into **arrangements with ISIS** in order to maintain production, by **paying for passes issued by the jihadist organization** and **buying raw materials** necessary for cement production such as oil and pozzolana in areas under ISIS’s control. ‘*They (ISIS) delivered a specific document from ISIS that enabled cement trucks from Lafarge to cross their checkpoints. At the beginning in May 2014, it was a simple note from ISIS, written by hand, where they had put the stamps of the financial department of ISIS.*’ explains an employee who was working at the plant at the time.



Sherpa and ECCHR are also filing suit against the cement-manufacturer and its subsidiary for **reckless endangerment**. According to the gathered information, the French company did not set up safety measures suitable to the ongoing crisis in the area in which the plant was situated: employees kept on going to work in spite of the many dangerous checkpoints controlled by ISIS; they escaped on their own when the plant got attacked, etc.

An employee present at the plant on the day of ISIS's attack states: *'Why did Lafarge not evacuate us? Even inhabitants from the nearby village fled the day before the attack. It seems like Lafarge used us as a human shield to protect the plant. They've put us too much in danger.'*

There is no doubt that ISIS is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity every day. Exposing employees to such dangers and presumed financing of the terrorist group activities would lead the company to **be complicit in war crimes and crimes against humanity**.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for the judicial authorities to regulate the actions of multinationals through the activities of their subsidiaries and their subcontractors abroad when they are at the origin of the violation of fundamental rights. The French bill of duty of care, which would guarantee respect for human rights by regulating the activities of multinationals and on which the parliamentarians will vote on 29 November, appears more essential than ever.

We will be available for interviews on 15th November 2016 from 5 to 6 pm at William Bourdon's office: 156, rue de Rivoli - 75001 Paris, in the presence of William Bourdon, President of Sherpa, Maître Marie Dosé and Maître Jean-Christophe Ménard.

Petition: <https://www.powerfoule.org/lafarge-eng>

Press contact:

- **Sherpa**

Lisa Rieux, Communications Officer: + 33 (0)1 42 21 33 25 / +33 (0)6 60 29 59 64
lisa.rioux@asso-sherpa.org

- **ECCHR**

Anabel Bermejo, Media & Communications, +49 (0)30 6981 9797 / +49 (0)172 587 00 87
bermejo@ecchr.eu