

ISRAEL

With German Help

With only 28 minutes, the new rapid rail train is to link Tel Aviv with Jerusalem. Even though this would solve the country's biggest transportation problem, it will create a new one. The rail route will cross a total of six kilometers of the Palestinian West Bank territory, meaning that Israel will be violating international law.

European enterprises – including DB International (DBI), a subsidiary of the Deutsche Bahn – are participating as advisors, as well as in the planning and construction of the railroad line. DBI denies participating in the rapid train's planning and routing.

A report obtained by DER SPIEGEL proves the contrary: Commissioned by Israel Railways, DBI predecessor DE-Consult carried out several studies concerning the rail route, including travel time calculations, comparing the transit route through the West Bank with another route. DBI is also participating in the electrification of the rail line, says Dalit Baum from the "Women's Coalition for Peace", who prepared a report on the project. "It's impossible for DBI not to know that the route crosses occupied territory."

The Palestinian villages Beit Surik and Beit Iksa will particularly be affected. The inhabitants fear that the construction of bridges and tunnels would destroy their fields and suppose that Israel will later deny them access for "security reasons".

And there is no reason for the rail route to cross the West Bank. In a first draft, the route was planned closer to Jerusalem's suburb Mevasseret, therefore inside Israel. But the inhabitants protested against it. For the planners it was easier to change the rail route than to achieve a compromise with Israeli citizens," explains Baum.

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<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-75159738.html>