

The Italian Coalition "Stop That Train" Meets with Pizzarotti: Withdraw from the Israeli Project for the A1 Railway

In Italy, "Stop That Train" launches a campaign calling on Pizzarotti & C. SpA to withdraw from the construction of the Israeli high-speed railway crossing the occupied Palestinian territories. The German Ministry of Transport defines the project as "potentially in violation of international law."

The Italian Coalition "Stop That Train" recently met with Pizzarotti & C. SpA, a private company from Parma involved in the construction of a new Israeli railway that would allow Israeli commuters to travel from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv in just 28 minutes. In particular, Pizzarotti is involved in Section C, which crosses the internationally recognized borders of Israel and penetrates the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank.

The A1 railway is the largest infrastructure project the Israeli government has undertaken in the last ten years and for 6.5 km cuts through the occupied Palestinian territories, resulting in further confiscation of land and putting at least three communities at risk, including the villages of Beit Surik and Beit Iksa.

The call to action of the Italian Coalition "Stop That Train" has already been endorsed by more than 60 national and international organizations, including Israeli, as well as local groups throughout Italy. The coalition calls on Pizzarotti to withdraw from the project, which constitutes a flagrant violation of International Law, in contravention of international norms on human rights, including the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibiting exploitation of land by an occupying power.

During the meeting with "Stop That Train," Pizzarotti representatives reiterated what had already been declared in a statement issued by the company on March 17. "Pizzarotti has never played and does not currently play a decision-making role in the planning and design of the railway" and the company is involved exclusively in the construction of a tunnel (T3) for the area "which is fully located within the boundary marked by the Green Line."

The Italian Coalition "Stop That Train" maintains that regardless of Pizzarotti's involvement or not in the design of the A1 line, the company has an obligation to verify that projects in which it is involved are in accordance with human rights and international law. This is particularly true in areas of conflict such as Israel and Palestine.

The Israeli feminist organization, the Coalition of Women for Peace (CWP), which authored a 28-page dossier on the project, stresses that Pizzarotti, through a joint venture with the Israeli Shapir Civil and Marine Engineering, "signed a contract to construct the entire T3 tunnel. Nowhere in the contract signed by Pizzarotti does it state that the company is not involved or not responsible for the section of the tunnel that is located in the West Bank. ... Stating, as Pizzarotti does, that it is not responsible for the eastern portal of the tunnel and that it will not carry out the excavation of the section that crosses the West Bank is, therefore, simply a way of evading the issues and an attempt to dodge its responsibilities."

The project also includes involvement of DB International, a company fully owned by the German government, which has a contract with the Israeli

Railways to provide engineering expertise for the electrification of the rail line. In a letter dated March 14, 2011, the German Minister of Transport defined the project for the A1 railway as "problematic for foreign policy and potentially in violation of international law", indicating that DB International has confirmed in writing that it will cease all activities in the project.

The Italian Coalition "Stop That Train" is committed to continue the campaign with determination, calling on Pizzarotti to withdraw from the project. A new web site for the campaign was recently launched (www.stophattrain.org) and on April 9 a demonstration will be held at Pizzarotti headquarters in Parma. In addition, actions similar to those used against Veolia, a French company forced to announce its withdrawal from the light rail construction project in occupied East Jerusalem, are currently being planned.

[per le liste]

To endorse the campaign: fermarequeltreno@gmail.com

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