

# sderot train station

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# a kilometer away from gaza strip an hour from tel aviv

Sderot was established in 1951 as a settlement for immigrants from Iran and Kurdistan on the ruins of the abandoned Arab Village Najed. Its name derives from the eucalyptus trees planted by the unemployed inhabitants in order to keep them busy. Over the years, immigrants from Romania, and especially from Morocco, increased the population, until it doubled at the end of the 80s with immigrants from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. In 1998, the small town was declared a City, and recognition of the Sapir college as an accredited higher education institution brought young and education-demanding inhabitants to the city, contributing to its cultural life. However, since 2000, during the second Intifada, the city, located only a kilometer from the Gaza Strip, began to absorb missiles on a daily basis, thus becoming the soft belly of Israel, and the justification for all the retaliation operations that have taken place ever since. Inaugurated a year ago, the new train station brought about a conceptual upheaval, marking the country's intention to bring the center nearer to the periphery.

The new Sderot Railway station is the first on the Ashkelon-Beersheba line in the Western Negev. As railways often do, it will shorten the distance from the center, thus helping to resolve unemployment problems on the periphery on one hand, while solving a shortage of residences in the center. Beyond being a social solution, the structure is a new prototype of public building in the country and, possibly, the world, as it is rocket proof.

In the absence of prior models and tested regulations, this fact required a different kind of architectural and engineering creativity. The main question was how to create a place that gives a sense of security and comfort, while concealing the engineering properties of a bunker or sealed shelter.

This design challenge gave rise to the concept of a structure emerging defiantly from the ground like a pre-historic, armor-clad lizard, from which design language was inferred. In this frame, white concrete tiles, creating a layer of wrinkle-like scales, conceal the thick concrete walls, leading to the lit entrance hall through which the train passes. While the protected walls face west towards the source of the threat, light is introduced from the East through a glazed metal framework.

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