

Letters on Rachel Corrie, US student murdered by Israeli military

21 March 2003

The following is a selection of letters on Rachel Corrie, the American college student who was crushed to death by an Israeli military bulldozer March 16 while trying to stop the destruction of a Palestinian home in Gaza.

An eyewitness account of the memorial service for Rachel in Gaza

Comrades,

I forward for the attention of your readers a description of the memorial held for Rachel Corrie the day after her brutal murder by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The memorial was organized by her fellow Internationals and was joined by the local Palestinian people, including the pharmacist whose home Rachel and her comrades have been defending. It was written by my friend R who is in the Occupied Territories with the International Solidarity Movement.

Fraternally,

H

London

[19 March 2003]

Note: R refers to the IDF more correctly as the IOF, O=Occupation

Bringing the killing machine to the memorial ...

So, we phone the IOF spokesperson. We tell him that a group of about 30 Internationals, including journalists, will be coming to the spot where Rachel Corrie died, to lay flowers in her memory. We tell him that we will not be wearing high-visibility vests, and request that he makes the soldiers at the border strip aware.

We walk down to the impoverished camp, the wind is blowing and the fine sand clings to our clothes and gets in our eyes. On the way kids start following us. The pharmacist whose house has been under threat for so long leads us to the spot, and we begin to lay the flowers, one by one. Palm leaves are placed on the

mound, along with some of the martyr posters that the people of Rafah have had printed.

A tank roars up, looks at us, reverses and backs up to us, when it is near the crowd of mourners, the switch is flicked and smoke pours out over us. No contact, no warning, we stand there, engulfed in thick carbon monoxide.

The Internationals group walk over to the fence. We can see Egypt on the other side. A banner is attached to the fence, and flowers are laid there too. One of the activists invites Palestinians to join us on the “no man’s land” that was out of bounds, even before the Intifada. Hesitantly some go, and then more and more. An activist starts walking up to the tank as it menaces over the group assembled there. He is holding one of the posters, with a picture of Rachel. The tank begins to back away, the crowd follows it.

In the distance we see vehicle lights, they are approaching. First comes an APC, it rumbles past, apparently oblivious to this increasingly large crowd gathered on the Israeli imposed “no man’s land” in Occupied Gaza. Next comes a bulldozer, with a scoop, a few try and stop it, it swerves round them, apparently it has “good visibility” and its windows are “large enough”. It too rumbles past, although as it passes me, a door flies open and one of the soldiers inside has to cling onto a handle for dear life. “Cowboys”, I mutter to myself. Suddenly an angry roar erupts from the group. Bulldozer 94 has arrived. They have the audacity to send the very bulldozer that murdered Rachel Corrie, to her memorial.

T, an activist who was at the scene when Rachel died, is determined to stop it. He stands in front and it keeps advancing. When it is almost on top of him, it swerves and misses him. The argument about “poor visibility” and “small windows” seems pretty crappy. They can clearly see him. Several times he runs around it, gets in

front and stands there. Each time it misses him.

Finally it makes off. Now the tank tries to intimidate the crowd. Tear gas, sound bomb, tear gas, sound bomb, carbon monoxide. The group gets together and sits down. There is an excited buzz. It is unprecedented. Palestinians are on no man's land, everybody is ignoring the crowd control devices thrown out of the heavily armoured tank. At one point, a soldier's hand can be seen gesturing, telling us "f— you"!

Activists approach the tank, climb up and place posters of Rachel on it. It backs off, warning shots are fired, I can see the barrel is pointing in the air, and no one is in danger. It moves off to the side and sits there for a while. The crowd remains seated, and then decides to head back away from the border, into the camp. As they start to move, it comes to life again, more smoke, more tear gas.

Eventually everyone is off the strip of bulldozed land. We go into the house for tea, and shake our heads. Even at the memorial, they are still up for bullying and provocation.

I leave with a few others. The tank is sitting there, watching us.

It looks as if it is sulking.

R

18 March 2003

In reading about the possibility that persons at the highest levels of responsibility sanctioned the killing of an aid worker—in this case Rachel Corrie—I am reminded of the intermediation of Adolf Hitler in the case of Mildred Fish Harnack. The Wisconsin native, a professor of literature in Berlin and wife of Arvid Harnack, was caught up in the Red Orchestra sweep. Her role in the spy ring was comparatively small, and the German court sentenced her to six months in prison. Hitler, declaring that "He who comes even only in the shadow of treason, has forfeited his life," and determined to make an example of her, sent her case to the Reich War Tribunal which sentenced her to death. Harnack was beheaded on February 6, 1943 at Plotzensee Prison. In my view it is not out of the question that powerful people make examples of people and that Rachel Corrie was such.

AB

Dhaka, Bangladesh

19 March 2003

Bush himself gave the green light to the Israeli

authorities to kill Rachel Corrie when he warned that Americans and other foreign nationals serving as "human shields" in Iraq would not be spared by American forces there.

SM

17 March 2003

Dear Mr. Michaels:

Thank you and the WSWS for your articles on this horrific murder, committed in broad daylight and in front of witnesses. I have seen the other photographs, which you did not include, of the aftermath. These shocking pictures will remain with me.

This morning came another shock and feeling of revulsion when I read a letter to the editor in the *New York Times* in which a reader stated: "...it should be remembered that she [Corrie] went to Gaza to be a 'human shield' for *people who are committing ... atrocities against Israeli civilians*," and "If she had not been defending *terrorists* ... she would not have been run over" (emphasis added). How, I wonder, was the doctor whose house Corrie was defending committing atrocities? How in the name of reason can anyone claim that these ordinary Palestinians, whose houses and property are being stolen and destroyed by the Israeli regime, and whose citizens are being murdered on a daily basis—how can anyone call these people terrorists? Has everyone gone mad? Are we to believe that the victims are the perpetrators? One may as well say that since we all die one day, we have committed a criminal act because we persisted in breathing!

CZ

San Francisco

19 March 2003



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