

Israeli military kills US student

Sharon regime implicated in premeditated murder

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On March 16 the Israeli military murdered a 23-year-old US university student, Rachel Corrie, in the Rafah refugee camp of Gaza City. Afterwards, as local Palestinians gathered, an onlooker was killed when Israeli forces opened fire on the crowd. Elsewhere, a Palestinian youth was killed in Khan Younis.

Corrie, a member of the International Solidarity Movement, had attempted to save a Palestinian family's house targeted for demolition by placing herself in front of an advancing Israeli military bulldozer. Despite screams to stop by a number of witnesses and the victim, who wore a brightly colored jacket, the vehicle continued to advance, running over her, and then reversing over her body a second time, crushing her arms, legs and skull. Corrie died shortly afterwards in a Palestinian hospital.

"Rachel was alone in front of the house as we were trying to get them to stop," said eyewitness Greg Schnabel. "She waved for the bulldozer to stop. She fell down and the bulldozer kept going. It had completely run over her and then it reversed and ran back over her."

The Israeli government immediately rejected responsibility for the murder, shifting blame to the international protesters. "This is a regrettable accident," said Israeli Captain Jacob Dallal. "We are dealing with a group of protesters who were acting very irresponsibly, putting everyone in danger."

The killing of Corrie is murder by any definition of the word. Such criminal methods are standard fare for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in their dealings with the Palestinian population in the occupied territories. Such wanton and homicidal violence has become so routine that the daily killing of innocents goes largely unnoticed by the Western media. Far more than the officially reported 2,200 Palestinians have been killed

in the course of the current Intifada.

Corrie's murder marks the first time that an international activist has been targeted. Until Sunday, the IDF had avoided such killings for fear of inflaming international public opinion. The International Solidarity Movement counts on this fear, and its activists often attempt to defend Palestinian homes and lives by placing themselves between the IDF and their would-be victims. Corrie's killing therefore points to the complicity of high-ranking members of the Israeli army and state—including Prime Minister Ariel Sharon—not just the actions of one soldier.

With Corrie's murder, Israel has served notice to international protesters that their presence will not slow the IDF's offensive. Using the impending US slaughter in Iraq as cover, Sharon hopes to accelerate the attacks, with the complete destruction of Palestine as the ultimate goal. The murder of Rachel Corrie is intended to intimidate others like her and force them out of the occupied territories. The Israeli military does not want witnesses to the violence it is preparing to unleash.

The killing throws into stark relief Sharon's contempt for international public opinion and law. He is confident that the Bush administration will sanction any atrocity, including the murder of US citizens who solidarize themselves with the Palestinians.

Washington has given its client state Israel the go-ahead for the latest incursions into Gaza and the West Bank, and therefore shares responsibility for the murders committed by the IDF. High-ranking Bush administration officials such as Defense Policy Board Chairman Richard Perle, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith are closely associated with Sharon's Likud party, and have previously called for the forced removal of Palestinians. Bush's recently

unfurled “roadmap to peace” is nothing more than a cover for Israeli expansionism on the one hand and, on the other, a cynical attempt to mollify the Arab bourgeois regimes in advance of a US war on Iraq.

The twin onslaughts against Iraq and Palestine will provoke massive political opposition against imperialism in the Middle East and all over the world. Many more dedicated and sensitive youth such as Rachel Corrie will enter the fray. Their success in this struggle will require a new political program based on the independent mobilization of the international working class.



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