Washington shrugs off Israeli murder of US student in Gaza

Bill Vann
18 March 2003

A US citizen, an idealistic young woman who would have graduated from college this spring, was murdered by soldiers in the Middle East Sunday. The crime was cold-blooded. Unarmed, she was killed for standing in the way of a vicious assault on human rights.

One can only imagine the uproar had soldiers in Iraq been responsible for this killing. The cable news networks would have carried continuous coverage of the event, broadcasting repeatedly the tragic images of doctors trying to revive the young woman and her friends weeping in shock and disbelief at the savagery of the military.

Such footage exists, but it received scant airtime because it wasn't taken in Iraq. The military of that nation, the target of an imminent, devastating American attack, has never killed a single American civilian. It was the military of Washington's most enthusiastic supporter of war against Iraq—Israel—that murdered Rachel Corrie. The Israeli Defense Forces killed her as she and fellow pacifists tried to stop Israeli troops from demolishing a Palestinian family's home.

The instrument of her death was a massive D-9 bulldozer, purchased from Caterpillar Inc. with part of the $3 billion that Washington annually supplies to the Israeli state to cover its military expenses. The driver saw the young woman as she stood in front of the earthmover in a bright-colored jacket yelling at him through a bullhorn. Instead of stopping, he dropped a load of debris upon her, pushed her to the ground with the bulldozer's blade and then drove the 52-ton vehicle over her body, not once, but twice.

The killing was a deliberate act of intimidation aimed at driving out foreign witnesses before Israel, acting under the cover of the impending US war in Iraq, launches a full-blown assault on Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The media's indifference to Rachel Corrie's death merely echoed that of the Bush administration. At the State Department a spokesman issued a hypocritical plea that the Sharon regime "undertake all possible measures to avoid harm to civilians," but declined to condemn the murder of the young American woman.

US admonitions about the slaughter of Palestinians—or anyone else who opposes the Israeli occupation—are routinely ignored by the Sharon regime, which knows it has been given carte blanche to carry out whatever form of military aggression or repression it sees fit. Less than two weeks before Rachel Corrie was killed, a Palestinian woman, Nuha Sweidan, nine-months pregnant, was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer smashing down a house next door in a Gaza refugee camp. Buried in the rubble of her home, she bled to death holding her 18-month-old daughter in her arms. Her unborn child also perished.

Even as Washington claims military aggression against Iraq is justified because of Baghdad's alleged failure to live up to United Nations resolutions, it ignores Israeli war crimes and that nation's flagrant transgressions of UN resolutions and international law. The Israeli regime holds the world record for violating UN measures, rejecting demands that it halt acts of repression in the occupied territories, cease the illegal expulsion of Palestinians from their land, halt Zionist settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and end its illegal 36-year occupation of Palestinian territory. Had Washington not repeatedly used its veto power in the UN Security Council to protect Israel, there would double the number of such unfulfilled resolutions.

Rachel Corrie was murdered on the eve of the US invasion of Iraq. The US president insists that the massive military force assembled in the Persian Gulf is there to "liberate" the Iraqi people from an evil

© World Socialist Web Site

dictatorship, bringing them US-sponsored democracy and freedom. The nature of this “freedom” is on display in Gaza and the West Bank, where Washington’s closest ally subjects more than three-and-a-half million people to a nightmare of death, repression, degradation and poverty.

The connection between the killings in Gaza and the coming bloodshed in Iraq is by no means abstract. The US Army has purchased a dozen of the Caterpillar vehicles that took the young American student’s life. It has sent them to Israel to be fitted out with armor. They will soon see action, crushing Iraqi soldiers and civilians alike and demolishing homes in Baghdad.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site