

One year since the murder of Rachel Corrie by Israeli military

Wall Street Journal marks anniversary with lies and slander

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March 16 marked the one-year anniversary of the killing of 23-year-old Rachel Corrie by Israeli troops outside the Palestinian city of Rafah. Corrie was run over by a bulldozer while attempting to protect a Palestinian home from demolition by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). According to several eyewitness accounts, she was in full view of the driver of the bulldozer, who deliberately ran over her body twice before leaving.

The *Wall Street Journal*, on its online opinion page, chose to mark the anniversary with two vicious attacks consisting entirely of lies and slander. The pieces are indicative of the semi-hysterical hatred of the *Journal* editors for democratic rights, their long-standing encouragement for the violent repression of all opponents of American and Israeli policy, and their contempt for basic standards of journalistic integrity.

One comment—entitled “A Tribute to Rachel Corrie: Thanks for showing us what ‘peace’ really means”—was written by Ruhama Shattan and was originally published by the *Jerusalem Post*, Israel’s main English-language paper. It was reposted by OpinionJournal.com editor James Taranto, who contributed his own thoughts in “Rachel Corrie and the Boy Bomb.”

Both pieces are cut from the same cloth, attempting to connect Corrie to terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens. In this way they seek to legitimize her murder and, by extension, the murder of any opponent of Israeli policy. As both authors are well aware, Corrie was an activist in the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), an organization that espouses nonviolent resistance to Israeli repression of the Palestinians. The ISM has nothing to do with terrorist attacks.

Shattan’s piece begins by thanking “Corrie for the explosives that flow freely from Egypt to Gaza, via the smuggling tunnels under the Gaza homes that she died defending. Perhaps it was these explosives that...have been strapped around suicide bombers to blow up city buses and restaurants in Israeli cities.” Taranto’s column begins in the same way, labeling Corrie as a “terror advocate” who “does not deserve to be lionized as a martyr for peace.”

The claim that Corrie was a “terror advocate” constitutes libel in the legal sense of the term. It is a false statement, made with disregard for the truth and designed to harm the reputation not only of Corrie, but of all opponents of Israeli policy. As both authors are aware, Corrie was not killed defending arms smuggling tunnels, but was seeking to prevent the demolition of the home of a Palestinian pharmacist and his family.

Israel is engaged in the construction of a giant wall that will partition the Palestinian territories and usurp a large part of the occupied land into Israel proper. At the time of Corrie’s death, the wall around Rafah was under construction, and Israeli bulldozers were leveling all homes within a 70-100-meter “security strip” around the wall’s intended path.

Part of the activity of the ISM is to attempt to prevent home demolition—blatantly illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention—by standing or sitting in the way of bulldozers. This is what Corrie was doing when she was killed.

Both authors state that a photo that appears to show Corrie burning a drawing of an American flag demonstrates that Corrie contributed to a “culture of hate.” They suggest that she is therefore responsible for Palestinian suicide attacks. Taranto extends the charge

to cover Rachel's parents as well, suggesting that because they met with Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat last September, they are also allied with terrorists.

Shattan goes on to make the extraordinary statement that "Corrie's peace...means not peaceful coexistence but the elimination of the state of Israel, and the death to those they [the PLO, Fatah, Hamas and Hezbollah] call 'the usurping Jews, the sons of apes and pigs.'" That is, according to Shattan, Corrie "defended with her life" a perspective that sought the mass extermination of all Jewish people living in Israel.

Shattan's piece was so slanderous that it even produced a protest from the US Embassy in Tel Aviv, which stated, "The author's disgusting abuse of the anniversary of the death of this American citizen is inexcusable."

The hysteria and frenzy of the charges leveled by Shattan and Taranto would not even be worth comment if it were not indicative of the frame of mind of a powerful section of the Israeli ruling elite and its allies in the United States. The *Jerusalem Post* and *Wall Street Journal* have been two of the most consistent advocates of the repression of the Palestinian population. The *Journal* editorial page in particular has been calling for an all-out war against the Palestinians since before the Ariel Sharon regime came to office in Israel.

The papers speak for the most right-wing sections of the Zionist establishment in Israel and their close allies in the Republican Party. They both have close ties with the administrations of Sharon and George W. Bush in the US. By perpetuating and intensifying the economic and military repression of the Palestinian population, these governments have created the conditions conducive to the growth of terrorist organizations that have carried out suicide attacks on Israeli citizens.

The killing of Rachel Corrie was bound up with a deliberate strategy on the part of the Sharon government to attack international activists seeking to defend Palestinian rights. While thousands of Palestinians have been killed over the past several years, until Corrie's murder the IDF had refrained from directing their fire on American and other foreign nationals. However, within a month of Corrie's death, three other young unarmed activists (British and American citizens) were shot at, two of them killed.

The attacks on foreign nationals were a signal by Israel that it was determined to carry out the type of violence necessary for its goal of annexation of Palestinian territories. These plans received and continue to receive the full backing of the Bush administration. The US government has refused to demand or carry out a serious investigation into the killing of one of its own citizens. One year after Corrie's death, the only examination has been one carried out by the Israeli military, which predictably led to the exoneration of those involved.

Comments such as those by Shattan and Taranto serve the purpose of paving the way for violent repression of political opposition in Israel and the United States. If Corrie can be connected to Palestinian terrorists, then it is short step to declaring, for example, that any opponents of the war in Iraq are supporters of Al Qaeda.

One year after the murder of the Rachel Corrie, these pieces should serve as a warning of the types of methods the American and Israeli ruling classes are preparing against not only the Palestinian people, but domestically as well.



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