

Her Name is Rachel Corrie

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[Veracity Voice and 21st Century Wire](#)

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"My Name is Rachel Corrie" is based on the writings and journals of Rachel Corrie, the 23-year-old Evergreen State College student, who traveled to the Gaza Strip in 2003 and was run over and killed by a USA MADE Caterpillar D9R armored bulldozer which was operated by Israeli Forces, on March 16th, which was just a few days before President Bush began the bombing of Baghdad.

Ariel Sharon, the Israeli prime minister at the time of Corrie's death, promised a "thorough, credible and transparent investigation" would be conducted.

An internal military inquiry cleared the two soldiers operating the bulldozer was even criticized by US officials.

Human Rights Watch noted it "fell far short of the transparency, impartiality and thoroughness required by international law".



The army report said Rachel Corrie "was struck as she stood behind a mound of earth that was created by an engineering vehicle operating in the area and she was hidden from the view of the vehicle's operator who continued with his work. Corrie was struck by dirt and a slab of concrete resulting in her death."

Tom Dale, a British activist who was 10m away when Corrie was killed, wrote an account of the incident two days later. He described how she first knelt in the path of an approaching bulldozer and then stood as it reached her. She climbed on a mound of earth and the crowd nearby shouted at the bulldozer to stop. He said the bulldozer pushed her down and drove over her.

"They pushed Rachel, first beneath the scoop, then beneath the blade, then continued till her body was beneath the cockpit. They waited over her for a few seconds, before reversing. They reversed with the blade pressed down, so it scraped over her body a second time.

Every second I believed they would stop but they never did.”



Rachel has been eulogized and demonized, celebrated and castigated. Her words and witness speak for themselves and what follows are but a few excerpts from her emails written while in the homes of strangers who became friends and family in Rafah.

In January 2003, upon leaving Olympia, Washington, Rachel wrote:

We are all born and someday we'll all die...to some degree alone. What if our aloneness isn't a tragedy? What if our aloneness is what allows us to speak the truth without being afraid? What if our aloneness is what allows us to adventure – to experience the world as a dynamic presence – as a changeable, interactive thing?

On February 7, 2003, Rachel wrote:

No amount of reading, attendance at conferences, documentary viewing and word of mouth could have prepared me for the reality of the situation here. You just can't imagine it unless you see it – and even then you are always well aware that your experience of it is not at all the reality...Nobody in my family has been shot, driving in their car, by a rocket launcher from a tower at the end of a major street in my hometown...When I leave for school or work I can be relatively certain that there will not be a heavily armed soldier waiting...at a checkpoint with the power to decide whether I can go about my business, and whether I can get home again when I'm done...I am in Rafah: a city of about 140,000 people, approximately 60% of whom are refugees – many of whom are twice or three times refugees. Today, as I walked on top of the rubble where homes once stood, Egyptian soldiers called to me from the other side of the border, 'Go! Go!' because a tank was coming. And then waving and [asking] 'What's your name?'

Something disturbing about this friendly curiosity.

It reminded me of how much, to some degree, we are all kids curious about other kids. Egyptian kids shouting at strange women wandering into the path of tanks. Palestinian kids shot from the tanks when they peak out from behind walls to see what's going on. International kids standing in front of tanks with banners. Israeli kids in the tanks anonymously – occasionally shouting and also occasionally waving – many forced to be here, many just aggressive – shooting into the houses as we wander away...There is a great deal of concern here about the "reoccupation of Gaza". Gaza is reoccupied every day to various extents but I think the fear is that the tanks will enter all the streets and remain here instead of entering some of the streets and then withdrawing after some hours or days to observe and shoot from the edges of the communities. If people aren't already thinking about the consequences of this war for the people of the entire region then I hope you will

start....

Currently, the Israeli army is building a fourteen-meter-high wall between Rafah in Palestine and the border, carving a no-mans land from the houses along the border. Six hundred and two homes have been completely bulldozed according to the Rafah Popular Refugee Committee. The number of homes that have been partially destroyed is greater. Rafah existed prior to 1948, but most of the people here are themselves or are descendants of people who were relocated here from their homes in historic Palestine—now Israel. Rafah was split in half when the Sinai returned to Egypt.

In addition to the constant presence of tanks along the border and in the western region between Rafah and settlements along the coast, there are more IDF towers here than I can count—along the horizon, at the end of streets. Some just army green metal. Others these strange spiral staircases draped in some kind of netting to make the activity within anonymous. Some hidden, just beneath the horizon of buildings. A new one went up the other day in the time it took us to do laundry and to cross town twice to hang banners.

Despite the fact that some of the areas nearest the border are the original Rafah with families who have lived on this land for at least a century, only the 1948 camps in the center of the city are Palestinian controlled areas under Oslo.

But as far as I can tell, there are few if any places that are not within the sights of some tower or another. Certainly there is no place invulnerable to Apache helicopters or to the cameras of invisible drones we hear buzzing over the city for hours at a time.

...According to the municipal water office the wells destroyed last week provided half of Rafah's water supply. Many of the communities have requested internationals to be present at night to attempt to shield houses from further demolition. After about ten p.m. it is very difficult to move at night because the Israeli army treats anyone in the streets as resistance and shoots at them. So clearly we are too few.

Many people want their voices to be heard, and I think we need to use some of our privilege as internationals to get those voices heard directly in the US, rather than through the filter of well-meaning internationals such as myself. I am just beginning to learn, from what I expect to be a very intense tutelage, about the ability of people to organize against all odds, and to resist against all odds.

People here watch the media, and they told me again today that there have been large protests in the United States and "problems for the government" in the UK. So thanks for allowing me to not feel like a complete Polyanna when I tentatively tell people here that many people in the United States do not support the policies of our government, and that we are learning from global examples how to resist.

February 20, 2003:

Now the Israeli army has actually dug up the road to Gaza, and both of the major checkpoints are closed. This means that Palestinians who want to go and register for their next quarter at university can't. People can't get to their jobs and those who are trapped on the other side can't get home; and internationals, who have a meeting tomorrow in the West Bank, won't make it. We could probably make it through if we made serious use of our international white person privilege, but that would also mean some risk of arrest and

deportation, even though none of us has done anything illegal.

The Gaza Strip is divided in thirds now. There is some talk about the “reoccupation of Gaza”, but I seriously doubt this will happen, because I think it would be a geopolitically stupid move for Israel right now. I think the more likely thing is an increase in smaller below-the-international-outcry-radar incursions and possibly the oft-hinted “population transfer”.

...A move to reoccupy Gaza would generate a much larger outcry than Sharon’s assassination-during-peace-negotiations/land grab strategy, which is working very well now to create settlements all over, slowly but surely eliminating any meaningful possibility for Palestinian self-determination. Know that I have a lot of very nice Palestinians looking after me...

February 27, 2003:

...I have bad nightmares about tanks and bulldozers outside our house...Sometimes the adrenaline acts as an anesthetic for weeks and then in the evening or at night it just hits me again – a little bit of the reality of the situation. I am really scared for the people here. Yesterday, I watched a father lead his two tiny children, holding his hands, out into the sight of tanks and a sniper tower and bulldozers and Jeeps because he thought his house was going to be exploded. Jenny and I stayed in the house with several women and two small babies. It was our mistake in translation that caused him to think it was his house that was being exploded. In fact, the Israeli army was in the process of detonating an explosive in the ground nearby – one that appears to have been planted by Palestinian resistance.

This is in the area where Sunday about 150 men were rounded up and contained outside the settlement with gunfire over their heads and around them, while tanks and bulldozers destroyed 25 greenhouses – the livelihoods for 300 people. The explosive was right in front of the greenhouses – right in the point of entry for tanks that might come back again. I was terrified to think that this man felt it was less of a risk to walk out in view of the tanks with his kids than to stay in his house. I was really scared that they were all going to be shot and I tried to stand between them and the tank. This happens every day, but just this father walking out with his two little kids just looking very sad, just happened to get my attention more at this particular moment, probably because I felt it was our translation problems that made him leave.

I thought a lot about what you said on the phone about Palestinian violence not helping the situation. Sixty thousand workers from Rafah worked in Israel two years ago. Now only 600 can go to Israel for jobs. Of these 600, many have moved, because the three checkpoints between here and Ashkelon (the closest city in Israel) make what used to be a 40-minute drive, now a 12-hour or impassible journey. In addition, what Rafah identified in 1999 as sources of economic growth are all completely destroyed – the Gaza international airport (runways demolished, totally closed); the border for trade with Egypt (now with a giant Israeli sniper tower in the middle of the crossing); access to the ocean (completely cut off in the last two years by a checkpoint and the Gush Katif settlement). The count of homes destroyed in Rafah since the beginning of this intifada is up around 600, by and large people with no connection to the resistance but who happen to live along the border.....about non-violent resistance.

When that explosive detonated yesterday it broke all the windows in the family’s house. I was in the process of being served tea and playing with the two small babies. I’m having a

hard time right now. Just feel sick to my stomach a lot from being doted on all the time, very sweetly, by people who are facing doom. I know that from the United States, it all sounds like hyperbole. Honestly, a lot of the time the sheer kindness of the people here, coupled with the overwhelming evidence of the willful destruction of their lives, makes it seem unreal to me. I really can't believe that something like this can happen in the world without a bigger outcry about it.

It really hurts me, again, like it has hurt me in the past, to witness how awful we can allow the world to be...you actually do go and do your own research. But it makes me worry about the job I'm doing. All of the situation that I tried to enumerate above – and a lot of other things – constitutes a somewhat gradual – often hidden, but nevertheless massive – removal and destruction of the ability of a particular group of people to survive. This is what I am seeing here. The assassinations, rocket attacks and shooting of children are atrocities – but in focusing on them I'm terrified of missing their context.

The vast majority of people here – even if they had the economic means to escape, even if they actually wanted to give up resisting on their land and just leave (which appears to be maybe the less nefarious of Sharon's possible goals), can't leave...they can't even get into Israel to apply for visas, and because their destination countries won't let them in (both our country and Arab countries).

...when all means of survival is cut off in a pen (Gaza) which people can't get out of, I think that qualifies as genocide. Even if they could get out, I think it would still qualify as genocide. Maybe you could look up the definition of genocide according to international law...

When I come back from Palestine, I probably will have nightmares and constantly feel guilty for not being here, but I can channel that into more work. Coming here is one of the better things I've ever done. So when I sound crazy, or if the Israeli military should break with their racist tendency not to injure white people, please pin the reason squarely on the fact that I am in the midst of a genocide which I am also indirectly supporting, and for which my government is largely responsible.

February 28, 2003:

...I spent a lot of time writing about the disappointment of discovering, somewhat first-hand, the degree of evil of which we are still capable. I should at least mention that I am also discovering a degree of strength and of basic ability for humans to remain human in the direst of circumstances – which I also haven't seen before. I think the word is dignity. I wish you could meet these people. Maybe, hopefully, someday you will...

I think I could see a Palestinian state or a democratic Israeli-Palestinian state within my lifetime. I think freedom for Palestine could be an incredible source of hope to people struggling all over the world. I think it could also be an incredible inspiration to Arab people in the Middle East, who are struggling under undemocratic regimes which the US supports.

I look forward to increasing numbers of middle-class privileged people like you and me becoming aware of the structures that support our privilege and beginning to support the work of those who aren't privileged to dismantle those structures.

I look forward to more moments like February 15 when civil society wakes up en masse and issues massive and resonant evidence of its conscience, its unwillingness to be repressed,

and it's compassion for the suffering of others.

I look forward to more teachers emerging like Matt Grant and Barbara Weaver and Dale Knuth who teach critical thinking to kids in the United States.

I look forward to the international resistance that's occurring now fertilizing analysis on all kinds of issues, with dialogue between diverse groups of people.

I look forward to all of us who are new at this developing better skills for working in democratic structures and healing our own racism and classism and sexism and heterosexism and ageism and ableism and becoming more effective.

In fifth grade, at the age of ten, Rachel Corrie wrote her heart out and stated it at a Press Conference on World Hunger in 1990:

I'm here for other children.

I'm here because I care.

I'm here because children everywhere are suffering and because forty thousand people die each day from hunger.

I'm here because those people are mostly children.

We have got to understand that the poor are all around us and we are ignoring them.

We have got to understand that these deaths are preventable.

We have got to understand that people in third world countries think and care and smile and cry just like us.

We have got to understand that they dream our dreams and we dream theirs.

We have got to understand that they are us. We are them.

My dream is to stop hunger by the year 2000.

My dream is to give the poor a chance.

My dream is to save the 40,000 people who die each day.

My dream can and will come true if we all look into the future and see the light that shines there.

If we ignore hunger, that light will go out.

If we all help and work together, it will grow and burn free with the potential of tomorrow.

1. <http://rachelcorriefoundation.org/site/about-rachel-corrie/rachels-emails-from-palestine/>

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