

Israel Assassination of Rachel Corrie: BBC Admits Failings in Reporting

By [Global Research News](#)

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[Palestine News Network](#)

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On Tuesday 26th March, the BBC has admitted that a reference it made to Israeli soldiers dying on the same day US activist Rachel Corrie was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza was not 'duly accurate'. No Israeli soldiers were killed on that day, Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) said in a press release.

The claim was made by veteran BBC presenter, Martha Kearney, on BBC Radio 4's World at One programme, on the day an Israeli court ruled that Israel was not to blame for Corrie's death.

PSC has been lobbying the BBC for seven months, since the broadcast in August 2012, to extract an admission that Kearney's false claim constituted a breach of the BBC's Editorial Guidelines on Accuracy.

During a segment dealing with the court ruling on 28th August, Kearney interviewed the Israeli government spokesperson, Mark Regev, to ask for his views on the case.

In the course of the interview, she said to him: 'Clearly Rachel Corrie was one of the casualties of what happened that day – and I know Israeli soldiers died too'.

She concluded her sentence with a question: 'But has this meant there's a re-think of the policy of what was happening at that time – bulldozing Palestinian houses?'



PSC objected on the grounds that Kearney's statement was false and on the additional grounds that the presenter seemed to be implying conflict 'that day' between Corrie – an unarmed civilian protestor – and the Israeli army which had resulted in armed Israeli soldiers being killed.

The organisation, which campaigns for justice and self-determination for the Palestinian people, said this amounted to a breach of the BBC's Editorial Guidelines, in particular:

'The BBC must not knowingly and materially mislead its audiences. We should not distort known facts, present inverted material as fact or otherwise undermine our audiences' trust in our content.'

Today, the BBC Trust ruled that there had been no breach of the guidelines. In its decision, published on the BBC website, the Trust acknowledged that Kearney's question 'was poorly phrased and therefore gave a false impression'. However, the Trust added that 'there was

no evidence to support the assertion that the audience were knowingly misled.'

The Trust also said Kearney's question 'had not been duly accurate; the BBC should have apologised and this had been done at Stage One.'

In an online apology printed in September 2012, the BBC continued to defend Kearney, saying: 'Two Israeli soldiers were killed in the previous week.' However, neither of those soldiers were killed in Gaza, but died in the West Bank, and their deaths were entirely unrelated to Corrie and her actions on 16th March 2003, the day she was killed.

In the course of seven months of correspondence, the BBC repeatedly said Kearney was right to mention the non-existent deaths of Israeli soldiers 'that day' as this provided 'context for the incident' and for the 'overall situation'. When questioned on why Kearney hadn't mentioned Palestinians being killed, including Palestinian children killed on the same day Corrie was killed, the BBC said:

'The fact that other [Palestinian] deaths occurred on the same day as hers is incidental to that topic, and I therefore don't agree that the omission of that information rendered the report inaccurate or misleading.'

Amena Saleem, of Palestine Solidarity Campaign, said: 'The hypocrisy of the BBC is breathtaking. In the same breath it is saying that Kearney's fabrication of the deaths of Israeli soldiers on the day Rachel Corrie was killed provides 'context' for what happened, but to mention the deaths of Palestinians, including children, who were actually killed on that day is irrelevant.'

Saleem added: 'While the BBC has admitted that one of its star presenters was not 'duly accurate' when she claimed to know that Israeli soldiers died on the same day as Corrie, it cannot just come out and say she was wrong and shouldn't have said this at all. For seven months, the BBC has done its utmost to justify Kearney's false statement and has made itself look ridiculous in the process.'

In total, 11 complainants took the case to the BBC Trust. Saleem said she hoped this would show the BBC that it could not take its misreporting lightly. She added: 'In the week Rachel Corrie was killed, 27 Palestinians, including seven children, were killed by Israeli forces. If you listened to the World at One on 28th August 2012, you would think Rachel Corrie and some Israeli soldiers were killed in related incidents. You would be completely misinformed, and you would have no idea of the scale of the slaughter by Israel against the Palestinians. This, unfortunately, is par for the course with BBC reporting on Israel's occupation of Palestinian land.'

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