

# Summer 2016 Newsletter

## 2016 Rachel Corrie Ramadan Football Tournament Scores a Huge Success!

By: Kareem Nasser, Mustafa Jaber, and Yousef M. Aljamal



For the ninth year in a row, Palestinians in the city of Rafah, Gaza, organized a football tournament in memory of Rachel Corrie, the 23-year-old American peace activist who was killed in Rafah in 2003 while trying to protect Palestinian homes from Israeli demolition. The tournament began on June 15<sup>th</sup> and consisted of 32 teams from across the Gaza Strip.

In the end, the Kabsy football team was crowned this year's champion, defeating their last opponents by a score of 3-0. Sami Da'our had two goals for Kabsy while Mahmoud Nerib added the third. Nerib was awarded the top scorer for the tournament.

"This is a very important event which draws hundreds of people every year. People come here to play football and to remember Rachel Corrie who was killed while trying to protect our houses from demolition," said Kareem Nasser, the coordinator of the tournament.

In addition to a large group of community leaders and sports staff and trainers, many notable sports and political figures attended the closing ceremony. Palestinian MP Ashraf Jumaa, Kareem el Attar, the Head of Rafah Services Club, and Najah Ayyash, the Director of the Women's Program Center, were some of the esteemed guests who attended the celebration.

In his speech, MP Ashraf Jumaa expressed Rafah's pride for organizing this tournament annually to honor the memory of the American solidarity activist. He emphasized the message of Rachel's solidarity work, adding that the Palestinian people in Rafah will never forget that she sacrificed her life for their sake.

Jehad Abujazar, 27, whose family lives in Rafah's Yibna neighborhood that was partially demolished during the time Rachel lost her life, asserted the importance of the tournament: "The symbolism of the tournament is why I attend it – it keeps the memory of Rachel alive in the hearts of the people of Gaza, especially in Rafah, where she gave her life to protect our houses from demolition."

**"THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TOURNAMENT IS WHY I ATTEND IT — IT KEEPS THE MEMORY OF RACHEL ALIVE IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE OF GAZA, ESPECIALLY RAFAH, WHERE SHE GAVE HER LIFE TO PROTECT OUR HOUSES FROM DEMOLITION."**

— JEHAD ABUJAZAR

The tournament also seeks to strengthen the right of return to villages and towns which were ethnically cleansed in 1948. As tournament co-organizer Adnan Abu Al Sa'ud noted, "Teams [in the tournament] are named after Palestinian towns occupied in 1948 [as a way] to remind people of the right of return."

This winter, more athletes will take the field for the second half of the Rachel Corrie Gaza Sport Initiative in the Tournament for Athletes with Disabilities. Hundreds of men and women will take part in football, table tennis, basketball tournaments, and a wheelchair marathon, providing a sport forum to showcase the skills of athletes who are deaf, amputees, paraplegic, or have suffered from polio.

For more information about past tournaments, our partners in Gaza, photos, and video, visit [gazalife.org](http://gazalife.org).

## The Exiled Palestinians Arrive in the Pacific Northwest

By: Denver Hatcher  
RCF Board Member

For two months, 86-year old Mariam Fathallah and her young companion Amena Ashkar travelled throughout North America as part of a speaking tour entitled, "The Exiled Palestinians: Stateless Palestinians from the Camps in Lebanon." Traveling during the months of April and May, Mariam, Amena, and their videographer Samir made their way to the Fircrest United Methodist Church in Tacoma, WA, to speak with the community about Mariam's experience as a survivor of the 1948 Nakba. While in the Pacific Northwest, they also spoke and answered questions at St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle, WA. Both events were sponsored by the Rachel Corrie Foundation and Jewish Voice for Peace - Tacoma.

Mariam Fathallah has raised multiple generations in the Ein el-Helweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon, holding onto her own memories of Palestine in hopes that generations after her will one day return to the land she loved so well. Traveling with Amena as a companion and translator showcased the undying passion for their homeland that has been passed down generationally. Mariam shared that her refugee camp, located just outside of Beirut, was set up to mimic Palestine's geography. This is one of her favorite things about the camp.

The Palestinian struggle has an attached air of trauma and sadness, and not without reason, but this was not the sentiment of Mariam's account. While Mariam's stories of the Nakba, which happened when she was just 18, are filled with woe, she retells them with a tone of remembrance and hope. To be accompanied by Amena was a testament to the longstanding desire for return amongst youth and elders alike; the right of return is not



Mariam Fathallah (left) and Amena Ashkar

being forgotten. Amena has never had the chance to see her Palestinian homeland, having been born into a refugee camp in Lebanon and living there her whole life. Mariam, on the other hand, recalls her beloved Palestinian village, al-Zeeb, lovingly and vividly, but has not been allowed to return since being forced out in 1948.

Audiences across the North American tour were invited to sit, listen to Mariam and Amena's accounts, ask questions, and participate in garnering a fuller understanding of their lives, history, and hopes for the future of the place that is their home.

From California to Montreal, Mariam and Amena generously shared these accounts with thousands of people. Along the way they were met with tremendous compassion and eagerness to learn more about a subject heavily ousted from the mainstream narrative in the US. When asked about the greatest highlight, Amena was quick to answer that her quest for the best ice cream in America was her favorite memory. While it seems only Philadelphia can claim the title for best ice cream, each city they visited was certainly bettered for the chance to hear their stories.

## Ilan Pappé Delivers First Annual Rachel Corrie Memorial Lecture

By: Cindy Corrie  
RCF President

Over the years, our annual Peace Works event has taken many forms, including conferences, theater presentations, readings from *A People's History of the United States*, and Shuruq: The Olympia Arab Festival.

This year, Peace Works took the form of the inaugural Rachel Corrie Memorial Lecture. On May 5, 2016, at The Evergreen State College (TESC), world-renowned historian and activist Ilan Pappé presented a talk entitled, "Why is Palestine Still the Issue?"

Pappé contextualized the importance of Palestine within a global struggle against the legacies and current manifestations of settler colonialism, as well as destruction caused by the neoliberal political-economic doctrine. He noted that "the success of [the Palestinian] struggle will be crucial and important to the remaining struggles of native and indigenous people all around the world" and that "Palestine is still the issue because it is the place where settler colonialism still operates on a daily basis like it used to operate...one hundred, two hundred, and three hundred years ago."

The event, which drew several hundred people to the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center, was co-sponsored by a robust list of organizations and individuals, including six academic programs from TESC, the Rebuilding Alliance, Al-Shabaka, Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights, the Portland and Tacoma chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace, the Tree of Life Educational Fund, and more.

The full video of the lecture is available through our website.



## OUR WORK STARTS WITH YOUR HELP

On behalf of the board of directors, staff, interns, and volunteers at the Rachel Corrie Foundation, we extend a huge **“thank you”** to our network of supporters across the globe. Our programs, projects, events, advocacy, and policy work are only possible because of your generous support.

As the summer winds down, we are reminded of all that we have left to accomplish this year and into 2017. **Please consider a contribution to the Rachel Corrie Foundation so that we can sustain this imperative work.**

A **donation envelope** has been included in this summer newsletter. You can also visit our website at [rachelcorriefoundation.org](http://rachelcorriefoundation.org) and use the **“Donate!”** button at the top of the homepage to donate electronically.

We look forward to working with all of you in the coming months and years as we push forward in the pursuit for justice, equity, and peace around the world.

**Thank you!**

### A Note on Our Contributors:

RCF remains committed to **supporting the work of youth** around the globe. In this newsletter, we feature **young writers from Gaza and the United States**, including organizers of the Rachel Corrie Ramadan Football Tournament, a member of the RCF Board of Directors, and the recipient of the 2016 Rachel Corrie Memorial Scholarship.

## Thoughts on the State of the BDS Movement



**By: Dakota Rakestraw**

*Recipient of the 2016 Rachel Corrie Memorial Scholarship*

Even a cursory review of the current debate surrounding Israel's occupation of Palestine and the accompanying Palestinian resistance will include discussion about the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. BDS has become a way for individuals, corporations, and organizations to take a stance against the mistreatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza at the hands of the state of Israel.

BDS is the response to a call issued by Palestinian civil society in 2005. The goals of BDS are ending Israeli occupation and colonization of all Arab lands; dismantling the separation wall; recognition of the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194. In order to achieve these goals, practitioners of the movement follow three steps as stated in the movement's name. The first is to boycott companies, institutions, and products that benefit from the mistreatment of Palestinians. The second is to divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The last is to sanction Israel by means of governmental pressure, to discontinue their current mistreatment

of Palestinians. These three steps combined with other international support aim to successfully draw attention to Israel's actions and to stop them.

Consequently, the movement has received serious backlash as a result of the complicated political entanglements between Israel and, primarily, the United States. While critics have challenged the movement's goals and objectives, there has also been pressure from legislative bodies to undermine them. Recently, the UK government has banned public boycotts of Israel, claiming that such boycotts undermine “community cohesion” and “international security.” Within the U.S., attempts to criminalize BDS have received fierce criticism as violations of free speech rights. Regardless, legislative bodies across the country keen on preventing BDS have sought to impose legislation that would essentially blacklist those who practice it, by compiling lists, making them public and penalizing companies that choose to support BDS. Consequently, those featured on the lists suffer, and are pressured to withdraw support for the movement if they want to continue unhindered.

Successes for the BDS movement have continued despite such intense backlash. On the BDS Movement's website ([bdsmovement.net](http://bdsmovement.net)) is a list of victories that include Israeli product boycotts, institutional academic boycotts of Israeli universities, and musicians and athletes refusing to play or compete within or against the nation, as part of the cultural boycott. Most importantly, however, is the changing perception of Israel, which many now see as a country that operates in direct contrast to universal human rights. For the BDS movement, this change in perception is most crucial, as it bolsters BDS participation and ultimately forces Israel to discontinue ongoing violations of Palestinian rights. BDS is not the only answer, but for those of us in the international community, it is certainly a place to start.

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PHOTO BY LAMEES ABU RAHMAH IN BIL'IN, PALESTINE

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## Don't Forget to Join Us this Fall

The Olympia Center | October 8, 2016  
11am - 5pm



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