

2- on behalf of Rachel's activist friends in Olympia

As I've been in contact with a number of you recently concerning the death of Rachel Corrie it necessary to send you this letter from Olympia, Washington.

These words come from me, but I hope I can write this on behalf of Rachel's activist friend Olympia. I would like to thank everyone for your condolences, your offers of help, and your justice for Rachel and the people of Palestine. At the same time I must also apologize for c in issuing an official statement regarding her murder by the Israeli military.

As you can imagine, all of us in the Olympia community are dealing with a great loss. Rachel up in Olympia, and it seems as if everyone here knew her. If they didn't attend school with her they had a child who attended school with her.

Although she was only 23, Rachel was active in many causes, domestic and international. was a relentless organizer and leader, involved in the Evergreen Labor Center and frequently de as the "heart and soul" of the Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace.

Her primary goal in traveling to Rafah in the Gaza Strip was to establish a "sister community relationship between Olympia and Rafah, similar to the sister county relationship we currently have with Santo Tomas, Nicaragua. She had wanted to promote dialogue and understanding between her hometown and Palestine. This was her first trip to Palestine, and she had meant to stay in for three months.

She was especially interested in establishing a long-term international presence in the Gaza as most attention had previously been directed towards the West Bank. She wanted those to know that they were not forgotten.

There have been some attempts to portray her final actions as naive or reckless, but those who knew her know better. She had strong convictions of social justice, and she sought to create a better world for everyone, protecting those less privileged, in whatever capacity she felt possible. As an ISM volunteer myself, I must say that her actions on March 16 should have carried a relative risk, compared to the many other actions we ISM volunteers have faced. I can imagine several other

scenarios which would have carried a higher risk. She could not have expected the sadistic of the bulldozer operator.

The IDF and its sympathizers claim that she should not have been in a war zone. The truth was not in a war zone. She was in a Palestinian residential neighborhood and was welcomed by locals.

We must instead ask what Israeli tanks and bulldozers are doing in Palestinian residential neighborhoods.

News of what had happened to Rachel spread quickly throughout Olympia on Sunday. Friends and activists quickly prepared banners and posters remembering Rachel, in preparation of the candlelight vigil, which was held later that evening.

All day I stayed home fielding phone calls from the press, one after another. To be able to attend the vigil later that evening was the one thing that saved me, being able to share my grief with others. The vigil numbered about 700. In addition to "No Iraq War" signs, people were carrying photos of Rachel that read, "Peacemaker."

You can see photos of the vigil here:

[http://photoarchives.evergreen.edu/dcs/orders/Community-Interest/Rachel\\_Corrie\\_Memorial\\_Vigil/](http://photoarchives.evergreen.edu/dcs/orders/Community-Interest/Rachel_Corrie_Memorial_Vigil/)

Afterwards, the Olympia Film Society donated its Capitol Theater to hold a memorial for Rachel. Many

of us have since learned the extent to which the entire community of Olympia had long known Rachel.

Her involvement in many local causes and activities had fostered relationships between Rachel and

Olympians from all walks of life--progressive, conservative, mainstream, alternative, whatever. Everyone knew her.

Many people and organizations around the country have contacted us, offering condolences and offering their resources to organize actions on behalf of Rachel. Unfortunately it has been a slow process for those of us who are still in shock upon hearing of her death. She was a vital part of our community, and the void is now only more apparent.

We are in the process of working up a statement and calls to action and will issue them soon. Meanwhile we can work towards justice by highlighting Amnesty International's latest denunciation of

US-sponsored Israeli violence and recognizing the demands set by the human rights organization "Amnesty International condemns killing of Rachel Corrie"

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/2003/israel03172003.html>

For now, I can be contacted for further information at 360-956-1210. The family is for the time being unavailable to speak to directly, although I can pass on messages to them.

The loss of a single member of our community is unbearable. It is much more difficult to ir-

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loss of almost 2,000 Palestinians, each one of them a vital, irreplaceable member of the core.  
Rachel's death demonstrates how committed we must remain in our fight against the Occupation.

It is

heartening to know that so many people have shown their sympathy and compassion as we  
stand together

to end the Occupation and work for a just peace for Palestine and its people. Thank you.

Phan Nguyen