
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2010**Israeli Court Begins Hearing Testimonies in the
Unlawful Killing of 23 year old American Activist Rachel Corrie**

The Haifa District Court began hearing eyewitness testimonies today, March 10, 2010, in a civil lawsuit filed by Rachel Corrie's family against the State of Israel for her unlawful killing in Rafah, Gaza. Rachel Corrie, an American human rights defender from Olympia, Washington, was crushed to death on March 16, 2003 by a Caterpillar D9R bulldozer. She had been nonviolently demonstrating against Palestinian home demolitions with fellow members of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), a Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land using nonviolent, direct action methods and principles.

The court heard the testimonies of two ISM witnesses, British citizens Richard Pursell and Tom Dale. Their testimonies were frequently interrupted due to poor court-provided translation, which the presiding judge, Oded Gershon, acknowledged to be flawed. A new court translator was requested by the judge for the coming hearings.

The state attorneys spent most of their time cross-examining the eye-witnesses about the ISM and their purpose in Rafah. Pursell repeatedly affirmed that his purpose for being in Gaza was to offer nonviolent protection to Palestinian civilians whose homes were threatened with demolition by the Israeli military. Relatively little time was spent ascertaining what happened to Rachel Corrie.

"Seven years after my daughter Rachel was killed, I was finally able to hear Rachel's friends, who were with her, testify in a court of law. Despite some disheartening procedural challenges, we remain hopeful that the truth about what happened to Rachel will be revealed, and that the people responsible for her killing will be held accountable," said Cindy Corrie, Rachel's mother.

The courtroom was filled with local and international reporters, human rights observers and three representatives from the U.S. Embassy, including Consul General Andrew Parker. Last night, the Corrie family met with Parker and senior members of Vice President Joseph Biden's staff in Jerusalem. Antony Blinken, the Deputy Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor to the Vice President, reconfirmed the long-standing U.S. Government position that there has not been a thorough, credible, and transparent investigation into Rachel's case. They reiterated the U.S. Government's endorsement of pursuing justice for Rachel through the Israeli court system. Embassy staff will continue to attend the trial.

"I continue to be humbled by the steadfast dedication to nonviolent support for all of our human rights demonstrated by Rachel's friends, not just seven years ago in Rafah, but again today in Haifa," said Craig Corrie, Rachel's father.

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