

May 24, 2016

Salaam Aleikum.

The Rachel Corrie Ramadan Football Tournament in Gaza is an inspiration to us in Rachel's hometown of Olympia, Washington. Through this project, we have an opportunity to join you in celebrating the remarkable spirit of the athletes who play the game, of the organizers who have the vision, and of the supporters who come to cheer on their favorite teams. Together, we make this event happen. Each year, around Ramadan, we become a community connected across the miles by our respect and love for each other and by the knowledge that we can work as a team to make the world a better place.

In Skype conversations with the tournament organizers, we hear their new ideas and feel their enthusiasm, and we leave smiling and encouraged. When we see the energy and skill of the players, and the fun that all in the viewing stands are having during the tournament, we smile again. You light up our lives! You remind us of the remarkable spirit of Gaza that we have come to know these past thirteen years since Rachel brought us to you.

When we hear how young people learn about Rachel through the tournament and how she continues to be remembered and honored, it reminds us of the special kindness she experienced in Gaza when she was there in 2003. We remember how you cared for her then and how you have kept her spirit alive for all these years. This is comforting and touching, and we are grateful for all you do in her memory and in support of us.

Rachel played football (soccer) here in the U.S. on a young girls' team. She loved the game, and we had a good time watching her play with others. So it feels appropriate that she would be remembered through this sport. We appreciate the vision of the Rachel Corrie Ramadan Tournament founders who believed that Gaza could benefit from a sports tournament that puts politics aside and brings people together.

When we visited Gaza in 2003, we heard from a young boy at the Children's Parliament in Rafah. He said to us that when he first saw Rachel, he told his friends not to talk to her, because she was an American. But then, she began to play football with the kids, and that changed his mind. "Then," he said, "she died for people in Gaza." We will always remember this boy's face and his message about how an American stranger became a friend.

Sport can unite people. Around the world, in nearly every country, the young and the old appreciate football. The tournament founders helped us understand that this was an event people in Gaza wanted, and we feel privileged to be able to help in a small way to make it happen.

In other small ways, we do what we can to end the Israeli occupation and siege. The Rachel Corrie Ramadan Football Tournament is something you in Gaza do for each other, in spite of the occupation. Thank you for the opportunity you give us each year to join all in Gaza in creating this tournament and this piece of nurturing resistance.

Play on!

From Cindy and Craig Corrie and the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice