

Israeli army whitewashes its murder of US peace activist Rachel Corrie

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The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have closed their token investigation into the death of Rachel Corrie, the American peace activist murdered by an IDF bulldozer. The IDF claims it was an accident and that no step would be taken against the soldiers involved in the incident.

Rachel Corrie died in March this year during a direct-action protest against the demolition of a house in the southern Gaza strip, when a military bulldozer crushed her. Eyewitnesses, including several members in the pacifist International Solidarity Movement (ISM) of which Corrie was a member, say that she was clearly visible to the bulldozer's driver and was deliberately murdered. They took photos confirming the accuracy of their statements.

A spokesperson for Israel's army argued that Corrie was killed by earth and building rubble falling on her while she tried to climb on a pile of earth as the bulldozer continued in its demolition work. The Israeli army's investigation argued in a statement that the soldiers did not see Corrie as she was standing behind the mound of earth "and it was not possible to see her or to hear her voice". It added, "It is clear the death of Ms Corrie was not caused as a result of a direct action by the bulldozer or by its running her over."

The IDF feigned sorrow for any incident in which innocents are injured but condemned what it called "illegal and irresponsible" actions carried out by the ISM. The IDF claimed that the organisations, in which hundreds of European and American youth are involved, "contributed to the tragic and distressing results of this incident". The ISM attracts selfless young people who are prepared to act as "human-shields" in order to stop atrocities carried out by Israel's armed forces in the Occupied Territories such as the demolition of homes.

An ISM spokesman told Associated Press that the group was not surprised by the results. "We have received so many negative signals from them," Ghassan Andoni said. "Their only concern is to protect their people and not arrive at the truth."

Corrie is one of three ISM members brutally attacked by the IDF. British peace activist Tom Hurndall is officially brain dead after being shot in the head by an Israeli sniper in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah on April 4. On April 5, Brian Avery, 24, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, was shot in the face by an Israeli armoured personnel carrier from 50 metres distance while attempting to protect Palestinian children in Jenin.

The whitewash of Corrie's slaying follows a stepping up of state repression against the ISM. After Corrie's death, Israel's army ordered all foreign visitors intending to enter areas under Palestinian control or occupied by Israel to sign declarations that release Israel from any responsibility if they should be killed or injured. In a plan drafted by the IDF and the foreign and defence ministries at the beginning of May, Israel made clear its intention is to stop all foreign peace and pro-Palestinian activists from entering the country and to kick out many of those already there.

IDF troops raided the Bethlehem office of the group on May 9, detaining three people for questioning and confiscating computer disks and other equipment. Two of those detained were women whom the IDF accused of being in the country illegally, Christine Razowsky, 28 from Chicago, and an Australian woman who did not want her name released, as well as Palestinian Fida Gharib, 22, a secretary for the organisation. "The aim is to deport any foreigner who supports us," said George Rishmawi of the ISM.



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