

RACHEL CORRIE

Memory is not Enough



Paulos Ioannou

The measure of a man is what he does with power.

Plato

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Preamble

April 10, 1979 - March 16, 2003

On the 16th of March, 2003 in Rafah, occupied Gaza, 23-year-old American human rights worker Rachel Corrie from Olympia, Washington was crushed to death by an Israeli military Caterpillar D9R armoured bulldozer, manufactured in the United States. As a volunteer with the International Solidarity Movement Rachel was protesting and trying to prevent the destruction of Palestinian homes by the Israeli Defence force.

IN HER OWN WORDS

HER EMAILS



“I have bad nightmares about tanks and bulldozers outside our home and you and me inside’.

"This has to stop. I think it is a good idea for us all to drop everything and devote our lives to making this stop".

“This is not at all what I asked for when I came into this world. This is not at all what the people here asked when they came into this world. This is not the world you and Dad wanted me to come into when you decided to have me”

"I spent a lot of time writing about the disappointment of discovering, somewhat first-hand, the degree of evil of which we are still capable. I should at least mention that I am also discovering a degree of strength and of basic ability for humans to remain human in the direst of circumstances - which I also haven't seen before. I think the word is dignity. I wish you could meet these people. Maybe, hopefully, someday you will".

“I feel like I'm witnessing the systematic destruction of a people's ability to survive....

Sometimes I sit down to dinner with people and I realize there is a massive military machine surrounding us, trying to kill the people I'm having dinner with”

“I look forward to seeing more and more people willing to resist the direction the world is moving in, a direction where our personal experiences are irrelevant, that we are defective, that our communities are not important, that we are powerless, that our future is determined, and that the highest level of humanity is expressed through what we choose to buy at the mall.”

“Then that explosive detonated yesterday it broke all the windows in the family’s house. I was in the process of being served tea and playing with the two small babies. I’m having a hard time right now. Just feel sick to my stomach a lot from being doted on all the time, very sweetly, by people who are facing doom. I now that from the United States, it all sounds like hyperbole. Honestly, a lot of the time the sheer kindness of the people here, coupled with the overwhelming evidence of the wilful destruction of their lives, makes it seem unreal to me. I really can’t believe that something like this can happen in the world without a bigger outcry about it. It really hurts me, again, like it has hurt me in the past, to witness how awful we can allow the world to be”.

Her Mother

Why are people so afraid of Rachel’s words? Cindy Corrie

“You will never do anything in this world without courage. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor.”

Aristotle



Photo: Joe Carr

Man - a being in search of meaning.
Plato



She will not be washed in pure water

She will not be anointed with the sacredness of olive oil

She will be dressed in the garment of the dead
For all to witness and wail
No resurrection no life into the distant days

Will the mother find rest
Will her heart be at ease
And weeps her fill of weeping
Bewail her.

Anonymous



Memory is not enough

At his best, man is the noblest of all animals; separated from law and justice he is the worst.

Aristotle

ODE TO RACHEL
A DEDICATION

I

Hear me o muses, grand me the words
and the strength of conviction
to sing of the seething rage pervading an ancient land,
to describe in poetic license what needs to be said.
To sing of a golden chrysalis that perished
in the tapestry of history and the labyrinth
of wheels within wheels, hidden truths and shadow purposes.
To describe who she was, what she was, what's befallen her
and the shining beacon that she has become,
that is if a poem told as a story is true of a life
lost in bloody dust and the twisted trees grown on the land.

Her name is Rachel Corrie her death a memory
of discordant voices in the before and after.

A girl in the immortal sun, lovely as the gentle wind,
a fresh breeze of charity and warmth, and a smile,
delicate as the rose by the stream of water,
the full flowering that was not to be.

A fleck of light she was, a shining momentary loveliness,
a bloom on a stern ground, strong as her beliefs,
steadfast as her spirit, a passionate excellence.

In her eyes, the flame of a fierce song to be sung
in the name of what's right, a large lovely dream.

A note of music she was, cut short in the agony
of tomorrow's hope, in her smile the universal.

II

She was summoned from far away by a distant
wailing, as if by a siren call she could not resist,
heard over and over in her questing heart,
the forerunner of things to come as in ancient days.

The voices called to her over turbulent oceans,
over burning cities and streets in the thrall of war.
The voices called to her carrying the wailing
of desperation in the exercise of force
and because she lived in those times
she carried all the conscience of her world on her back.

She sailed across unknown seas,
not to the place of flowery meadows,
nor to the tranquility of the ocean's melody,
nor to the Eden of peace of the heart,
but to a desperate land bisected by the dichotomy
of unequal visions and desires
and to the tragic fate bestowed on her.

She sailed across unknown seas,
a stranger in a strange land,
holding the air of innocence in her breath,
holding the light in her eyes,
holding the hope in her hands,
to become a bittersweet living memory of a bright light
in the minds of those who can still remember,
in the minds of those who are still standing up
to the corruption of power oxidizing the lands everywhere.

III

The flower child metamorphosed in the years
of adulthood to become the conscience
of a world lost in the abyss of murky waters
and immovable mountains of indifference
for dignity and the right of hope in sorrow
over the human condition in a parcel of land
forgotten by god and man, imprisoned
in hands of atrocity and death,
where desires and truth wear many masks.

A voice of righteous passion between the two faces
of ancient brothers that cannot and will not rise
beyond and above self-erected
walls drawn upon their chests
in self immolation beating the drums of war.

Her legacy, a life, a cross to be worn,
so that the light can stand proud
on the precipice against the night
of those of flesh of salt and pepper.

Mother earth help us understand man
his desires and his deeds.
Mother earth help us remember
this and all other innocent deaths
here and everywhere above
the black clouds hiding the sun
from your sacred face.

Kyrie eleison.

IV

Consumed by the all-pervasive mystery of rightness,
armoured in compassion and rage,
in sand and dune, she opened her heart,
in streets under siege she opened her heart,
in bulldozed houses she opened her heart,
in broken water wells she opened her heart,
in demolished greenhouses she opened her heart,
the giving bestowing cyclamens and roses,
of unparalleled beauty and love,
planted in her in another age, in another land,
barely holding steady to the primeval soil.

She was drunk in the spirit of rightness,
intoxicated by the aroma of justice,
her soul prescribed in cursive script.
A statue of Liberty standing up in the light,
defying the dark shadows lurking north and south,
defying the decay holding firm on defiant souls,
the inevitability of things to come.

The many times she kept awake
dreaming of protecting another house,
holding back another orphan landscape,
holding back the dust blinding the eye,
holding back the darkness of the night to come,
doted on and cherished by people facing doom,
eating the meagre offerings of her host,
entertaining the children of tomorrow,
loving them with the ferocity of mother,
but knowing the terrifying truth

that these children of displacement
will breathe the war on their nostrils
outside the door, in the mean streets of resistance,
the stone throwers of today,
the suicide killers and warriors of tomorrow's retributions.
The same fate as all others before them,
the same fate as all others after them.

Kyrie eleison

V

Captive to a language and deeds
she could not grapple with, grown up in a place
where the everyday is as sweet as apple pie,
and the walk to the mall a pleasure to savour,
asking the eternal question of why it is, why it is,
marvelling in the deepness of her psyche
at the capacity of humans for cruelty and love,
compassion and hate, walking hand in hand,
as if only opposites can co-exist under the firmament
mirroring the myth of the duality of godhead.
There, where no swallows can be seen flying to herald
the spring to summer and where hope is
as elusive as water in the desert
life goes on as had always gone on,
limping and blind in cruelty and love.

In the nights, she dreamt of hands of love
caressing the budding breasts,
resurrecting the eternal sensation of the female
body, the aura of woman in full bloom
and in the day a defender of people and houses,
a monitor of the foul deeds committed by man,
a shield between the occupied and the occupier,
the tank and the stone,

the bulldozer and destruction,
the guns and the banners,
the hate and the hate,
the anguish and the anguish
and the pain, the pain, the pain,
the I, the you and they, the power and the resistance
feeling the weight of injustice swelling the rage in her heart.

Kyrie eleison

VI

She stood up, clad in thorns of apprehension,
face to face, eye to eye, with the machine,
the instrument of domination,
carrying the will of those who could.
Her only weapon, her only defence,
the fluorescent jacket of recognition,
don on by all defenceless human shields
and a megaphone of sorrowful voice.
Her blond hair flying in the glorious sunshine,
her offering just crumbs of resistance,
ignored, belittle and unseen,
there where the tomorrow will be as today.

Erect and defiant she stood the brave girl of the wide eyes
and the heart of gold in love and rage,
Athena, Artemis, Persephone, Inanna,
beautiful and radiant, the girl and the bulldozer,
the bulldozer, the sand and the secrets of death and destiny,
knocked down, crushed in the blades,
ran over and ran over, dirt piled over the body,
as if trying to hide the horrific deed,
to confirm once more the fate of the idealists
in the shadowy hands of power and hubris.

Her crushed body left in the agony of the sand
in the plains of Gaza to contemplate the human condition
without ceremony,
without ritual,
without compassion,
without mercy,
without remorse.

A suspension,
a sensation,
a reality
of nothingness,
dissolution.
The crystal silence upon the land.

Kyrie eleison

VII

She still held to life, seeping, trickling away
from her crushed bones, unhindered,
the great giving that will take her
all the way to the arms of Charon.
For her no coin is needed
to be carried away in Styx and Acheron
for this is a young life
perished at the height of loveliness.

The hand outstretched rides the horizon.
You think she was still trying to thwart the destruction,
as if the youthful breath was still hers to command,
as if the youthful aspirations were still hers to command,
as if she still had the strength, a challenge
to those ruthless enough not wanting

to know the darkness of the dust they release to heaven,
not wanting to know why the light is diminished.

The distorted body, the shuddering final gasp,
the eyes of glass peering out at a world
forever vanquished.
the last sunset,
the last rage,
the last tears,
the last smile,
the last memory of the desolate land,
the terrifying clarity of the end of things,
a girl going among the shadows before her time,
the message of the enchanting song
coming to its inevitable conclusion.

Kyrie eleison

VII

One so young should have never anticipated death,
even in a dream with eyes shut,
the nightmare in the darkness of night,
the lethal reality in the light of day.
So, it is and so it will be in all the lands where young
idealists live the nightmare of power and corruption
unto the epiphany of the ocean's serenity
Gautama, Gandhi, Mandela and the whiteness
of the dove perching on the olive tree.

A girl reeling under the blades
her mangled body a testament of defiance
and cruelty.
Let the world see,
let the world measure the meaning of justice,

the price of intransigence,
the weight of geopolitical machinations,
perpetrated against this innocence,
perpetrated against all innocents.
Let the world weigh the deeds of man,
let the world weigh the price of peace,
for she died no longer waiting
like a coward for the knock on the door,
for the midnight raids and the screams of death in the night.

Kyrie eleison.

IX

The youth's ideals silenced in the forever land
of barren longings from the past,
and the obstinacy of the now,
without a mother's hand to ease the pain,
without a mother's hand to stave off the nightmares,
without a mother's kiss to lessen the agony of dying,
without a mother's words of love
to send along the road of no return.

Her blood will not purify the land
nor will it save the innocent mothers and children
cowering in fear and foreboding,
listening to the terrifying noise of the bulldozer
inching closer and closer, like a curse,
like an unfathomable nightmare,
from the deepest perversion of the psych,
at the walls of each house destined
to be demolished with them inside,
for fear cuts deeper than the knife at the back.

Her broken body will not deliver us

to the sight of god for the lessons of other
broken bodies everywhere have not been learned,
the brutality of human hand celebrated undiminished.

Her death will not help us
comprehend the movement of the sun,
the changing seasons or the nature of god,
the meaning of truth and justice,
the search for identity,
and the winter in the land of nowhere,
where shadows build fortified settlements
on confiscated parcels of land,
the great redeeming, to fulfil the prophecies
that no longer hold firm on the land in this new age,
the mythos of god's will that had taken a life of its own.

Kyrie eleison

X

The army of occupation waiting, impregnable,
in every street and alley holding the people
hostage in their own land, in Gaza,
where the occupied fire rockets on other innocents
and suicide killers explode in the enemy's streets
of everyday life in the name of their god,
inviting retaliation measured in the excess of might,
the spiral that never ends.

Abyss calls to abyss and there is no libation
in the here and now and the days to come
to ease the thirst and no heavenly rain shall fall
for tomorrow's growth, no fruit bearing trees
will sprout to heal the rot corroding the unclean lips.

Love and compassion cannot survive
The entropy of the knife
For love is not a sorrow
To be remembered.

The desert without end is calling
the beautiful and the arid and its name is chaos.
In the depth of chaos, no jubilant songs are heard.

The absence of god cheered
where the vultures attack with eyes open
to greedily finish what started with the birth of man.

There is no god to save a life,
there is no god to ease the pain,
there is no god to lay his hands in mercy,
there is no god to light a new path,
it's all left up to man.

Kyrie eleison.

XI

Girl of the passionate heart hers was not the soft meadow
of romance and poetry, she was not out gathering flowers
for a white wedding, nor roses for the ardour of sensuality.

No, this is not a wedding; no wedding bells will be heard,
no rice will be thrown at her blissful parade of white.
She is not going to wear something old, something new,
something borrowed and something blue,
the perfect wedding gown.
No earthly perfumes will embrace the body,
the sweet scent of youth, the fragrance of beauty,
deserted the body, only death remains

like the land and decay, the rot of final dissolution,
without memory of springs pasts and springs to come.

She will never again shield another house from destruction,
she will never again protect the innocents and defenceless,
she will no longer be able to stand up to the foul air
bloodying the stairs to heaven.

Her face will not anger in sorrow over another death,
her face will not anger in sorrow over another demolition,
her face will not light up to the glow of wonder ever again.
she will not be enchanted by the serenity of the mountains,
the lushness of the valleys, the song of the waves,
the kiss under a waning moon, the arms in the embrace
of the music of tranquility, the passionate dance
to Benatar's music and the roaring poetry of Pablo Neruda.

She will not dance under the rays of the glorious sun,
the sun is no longer hers to dance with.

No children will grow up with her to teach them
the difference between compassion and hate,
the difference between right and wrong,
the difference between the stone and the soil,
between water and ice, the two faces of oneness.

Kyrie eleison

XII

She will not be touched by the look of Eros,
the height of fervour that holds the heart in the eyes.
She will never feel the electricity of passion
coursing through her veins by the hands of a lover,
nor feel the blood of burning her lips and her breasts.
She will never grow up to old age
to relieve heroic memories of the invincible younger years,

her lover now is Hades and her husband.

For her there will be no resurrection
giving us the sweetness of spring
and no blessings of spring awakenings will
pour forth to welcome her back to the living.

No stones thrown, no protests and no wailing
will ease the journey.
No sweet music, no amount of love, will snatch her
back from the hands of Hades
the dark god of death and vengeance
for what he snares is his forever and ever.

The innocent anger silenced forever.
The stillness of death echoing,
in every street and rooftop,
in the land of distorted dreams
of uncompromising positions
the wrong that will not die,
the wrong that becomes memory,
the wrong that becomes history,
the inside screams of rage,
the destroyer of the soul.

This permanence is forever
for the atrocity of the past that was
and the bright future that will never be.

The circle is now closed for a new one to begin
in the exigencies of life, fate and destiny.

Kyrie eleison.

XIII

This is not what she expected of the world
when she expelled the first cry of life,
when she first opened her eyes to the firmament.
This is not what she expected growing up
in the arms of loving parents.
This is not what she expected when she first opened
her eyes to the sweet trembling of first love.
This is not what she expected of the world.
She did not grow up in the dollhouse of love for this,
she did not grow up in the house of caring for this.

This has to stop she raged in the dying light,
her anguished cry reverberating
in every letter and every thought,
in every step and every path she walked.
This has to stop she raged in compassion and grief
but those who stood between
the right and wrong breathing the unshakeable
belief in the rightness of their cause have no ears
and the eyes are hermetically shut.

Kyrie eleison

XIV

Look deep into her eyes what do you see?
not the beautiful happiness of indifference
but the hard as iron sorrow that eats away
the laughter of the awakening spring.

Look into her eyes what do you see?
what rages reside in the irises
for the wrongs that cannot be righted,
you flesh of water and earth?

Look deep into her eyes what do you see?
What lovely journeys can you take
in exotic lands of light and dignity?
only the earth knows this,
only the footsteps on the sand know this.

She speaks to us from the underworld
to lament and weep over humanity's descent to the abyss
for she took the measure of man and found it wanting.

Kyrie eleison.

XV

The last kiss in the coffin on frozen lips, stone and flesh
and no smooth wind to caress the tresses,
no golden rays to bath the body.

No cascades of melody will accompany the coffin
only silent faces, the grief of wounded heart,
buried in the silence of the anger, a companion
of the years that were and to come.

The cry for justice is not heard
but what is justice in the eyes of man?
justice does not exist for it has not been created,
justice is an illusion of rightness but not of truth
for truth has no place in arrogant hearts hot as fire.

Cover her body with the shroud of honour and wreaths of love
dress her in the white of innocence
kneel to the face of dignity, anoint her
with the perfumed oils of integrity of heart,
wash her body in Jordan's holy waters.

Let her rest,
let her sleep among roses and carnations,
as is becoming the one who stood up,
the one who took the measure of what was right
and collapsed painfully to uncaring blades.
Her spirit soars over mountains
of sorrow and fields of secrets,
as is today and yesterday
and time before and the time after
and in all time as far and as long
cruelty would reign over every horizon.

Bury her to the calm earth of snow
in the gentle ground of Olympia
for all to see, the enemy and the friend,
the birds of hope and the birds of doom.

Kyrie eleison

XVI

Weep o people of the world but not for her
but the innocence that has given up body and soul
and the invincible dreams of youth.

Weep o people but not for her for she became
a thousand winds so that the message of hope
can be spread to all the lands of sorrow and strife,
to sustain every heart that yearns for freedom.

Lament if you must but not for her
but for the mother who lost the flower of her milk
to the forces of iron and steel.

Lament if you must but not for her
but for her companions of the peaceful dreams
the ones who are still standing up
in every war worn torn country,
in every torture chamber, in every prison
and the ones who are to be born in every future.

Lament if you must but not for her eyes
for the sorrow in them is not for her
because now she knows
that the olive tree cannot be found
and the dove will never reach the ark.

Bless this body, this song that ended in a pile of dirt in Rafah.

Kyrie eleison

XVII

Those who committed the deed,
those who crushed the delicate chrysalis of hope
that refused to bend to the will of evil wind,
are still alive in the land of the living,
as they will always be alive and well
in every forgetful and remembered place,
all over of this and the other dark places on earth.

The stillness of silence echoing in deaf ears
in the language of consent and impunity.
A seal has been set on the mouth of the world
for the crime is arrested in their minds.
They are afraid to even say her name,
they are afraid to say how she died,
they are afraid to offend the offender.

The fate of the innocents is the same always
at the cemeteries, no exceptions, no second guessing,
among cries and fists pointed to heaven.

The heavens keep their silence
for there are no answers to be given
for deeds in the hands of man.

No sympathy, no peace
only the stench of death dancing without a voice
in the excellence of the pain,
the fragility of the human body.

The children will still play on the roads
she loved to walk unsuspecting
at the fate that touched her without knowing
the killing bulldozer was made by their fathers,
fathers in complicity in the silence of acceptance.

Kyrie eleison

XVIII

Those who die, die forever for death
is a constant companion holding hands with life,
the beginning and the end,
the cycle of unending separations.
Only memory is left but memory does not exact justice
memory does not exact rightness,
memory does not exact truth
only rage in the storm of echoing silence
and the passion of steadfast remembrance.

History does not punish.
History can teach us about murder
but it cannot save us from murder.
History can teach us about torture
but it cannot save us from torture.
History will judge but what of it
if the lesson is not heeded?
History becomes an echo of what was
of how it happened, the notation of a crime
in two lines for the eyes
of the stranger for this and the other deaths.

Kyrie eleison

XIX

It is true and there is no other truth
that this death, as all others before her,
and those who have and would come after her,
will not alter the path of the enmity of the ancient
brothers in words and deeds.
It will not bring an iota of change to bitter hearts.
No transformation will take place
in the rigidity of broken heavens
for the path has been carved
into ancient consciousness
and the longings of disparate visions
for such deaths are countless
of solitudes without the flame of light
to show them the other path
to the valley of smiling summers
and springs of crystal waters.

What do you do when the light refuses to unveil itself?
What do you do when the night engulfs the heart?
What do you do when history's lesson
is failing in hearts of crimson desires
of souls of acid and vinegar?

Kyrie eleison

XX

She fled to other realms
where strife does not follow every awakening
and the trees grow unhindered by human brutality.
A sacrifice, the last act in the measure
of rightness, an oblation to the light,
for us in the now and in the future.

She fled flying on wings of sorrow
She was beautiful,
She was lovely,
She was a dream and a vision.

How do you honour this death? How do you honour
the countless deaths of the innocents
of yesteryear and the ones to come,
in all the lands washed by the ocean,
in all the lands under the shadow of the mountains,
in all the lands where men celebrate death and hope?

The light that she lit soars
weaving in tears and elation
above the waters, shining bright,
for she became another symbol to guide us

joining the pantheon of all those who never
gave up the fight to a life without persecution,
of all those who will never give up the fight
for freedom and dignity for all.
a sign of our times
and a message of unending hope,
resistance and tragedy.

Kyrie eleison

XXI

Renew her memory over and over
in every burning and sweet land
to remember her as she were,
a passionate radiance,
a light, a love and a smile.
a voice heard above the darkness,
a sorrowful trumpet calling
for a new awakening in the halls of man
like the voice of another innocent young victim
of human atrocity in another place and time
in the yesteryears of utter cruelty.

She is here among us,
as she will always be here among us
walking with us pointing the road to be taken.

We drink of her essence.
we continue her life,
we carry her within us as all the other heroic dead
in the battle against those walking in the night.
There is no time for comfort this she taught us

no time for indifference, no time for apathy,
no time for the pleasures of relaxation
over a nice hot cup of coffee by the shore.

We carry her with us from one battle to the next,
from one death to the next, one step at a time.

We call her name
in front of the line and we step forward unafraid.
We are not afraid.

This is another thing we learned
not to be afraid.

To look into the mirror and not be afraid,
to hear the siren song and not be afraid,
to walk the streets and not be afraid,
to take a stand and not be afraid.

To remember that after the wars and the battles
after the murders and the killings,
after the rivers of blood, the time will come
to the final satiation and the entropy
dwelling in human hearts will be abated
and the birds of spring will fly in feathery wings
unafraid singing the songs of elations
to the new awakening.

Kyrie eleison

Amen.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

Four of the seven other International Solidarity Movement members present have written down their recollections of the incident: Tom Dale (US), Greg Schnabel (UK), Richard Purssell (UK), and Joe Smith (US). Courtesy of the International Solidarity Movement.

The following are passages from their statements made on Rachel's death or bit later than March 16, 2003

TOM DALE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

The bulldozer drove toward Rachel slowly, gathering earth in its scoop as it went. She knelt there; she did not move. The bulldozer reached her and she began to stand up, climbing onto the mound of earth. She appeared to be looking into the cockpit. The bulldozer continued to push Rachel, so she slipped down the mound of earth, turning as she went. Her faced showed she was panicking and it was clear she was in danger of being overwhelmed.

The bulldozer had a clear line across open ground while it drove towards her, relatively slowly, 20 or 30 metres or so, and even the estimation of the bulldozer's line of sight... would clearly suggest that during that time the bulldozer driver must have seen Rachel,"

All the activists were screaming at the bulldozer to stop and gesturing to the crew about Rachel's presence. We were in clear view as Rachel had been, they continued. They pushed Rachel, first beneath the scoop, then beneath the blade, then continued till her body was beneath the cockpit. They waited over her for a few seconds, before reversing. They reversed with the blade pressed down, so it scraped over her body a second time. Every second I believed they would stop but they never did.

GREG SCHNABEL EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Rachel was standing in front of this home. As the bulldozer approached, she stood her ground. Rachel was wearing an orange fluorescent jacket. She was clearly visible to the bulldozer driver as well as to the soldiers in the tank. The bulldozer began to push up the ground from beneath her feet. The pile of earth was mounding up and she tried her best to stay on top of it. As the ground continued to move Rachel went down on her knees. The bulldozer continued to move forward. Rachel began to become buried beneath the dirt. Still it did not stop. Finally, Rachel was beneath the bulldozer. The bulldozer did not even pick up its blade. It

ran over her completely and continued to advance. It stopped when she was completely underneath the body of the bulldozer. It then moved backwards over her body. It moved clear of her and backed away.

RICHARD PURSSELL EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

We were all shouting, screaming and gesturing by this stage. The earth was totally pushed over her, engulfing her. She was lost to my sight. I noticed that the driver had not lifted the blade. The machine rolled straight over her and continued for a little way. It then reversed over her and retreated about twenty metres. Rachel was left in its tracks, bleeding from her mouth and twisted.

The tank came over to where she was briefly and then retreated to the border fence with the two bulldozers. At no point did any member of the Israeli forces enquire as to Rachel's well-being or offer any assistance.

Eventually we were able to call an ambulance and one arrived shortly. Rachel was taken to hospital in Rafah, where I heard she had died.

JOE SMITH EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

I do believe it was intentional. I saw it, and I know he saw her, I know he did, and I know he knew she was still under the bulldozer when it backed up without raising its blade. I don't know if he wanted to kill her, or if he was just focused on doing his work and didn't care if he killed her or not, I don't know which is scarier. I don't feel like telling the whole detailed story right now.

He clearly saw her, and continued to drive until she was forced onto the top of the dirt he was pushing, elevating her so much that she was at eye level with the bulldozer's cab, he could see right into her eyes. He continued forward, pulling her underneath the dirt, and out of his vision. He continued forward, crushing her underneath the weight of the blade. He continued forward, until she was well underneath the bulldozer. It was then quite clear that she was nowhere but underneath him, but he proceeded to back up, without lifting the blade, crushing her again.

The Judgment

In 2005, Corrie's parents brought a civil claim for negligence against the Israeli ministry of defense and against the state of Israel. They had accused Israel of intentionally and unlawfully killing their 23-year-old daughter. The civil case was launched after a military investigation had cleared the army of wrongdoing.

The Israeli army concluded that the death was an accident, and that the driver of the bulldozer could not see Corrie due to limited visibility from his cab.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, B” Tselem and Yesh Din criticized the military investigation.

The trial started in March 2010.

The Israeli court rejected their suit in August 28 2012 and upheld the results of the 2003 military investigation.

In his judgment Judge Oded Gershon said that while Corrie's death was a "regrettable accident” but in summary Judge Oded Gershon concluded that:

- 1) She chose to put herself in danger
- 2) The state was not responsible because she was accidentally killed in the framework of a war operation
- 3) that a country’s armed forces cannot be held liable for civil damages and physical or economic harm to civilians in an area defined as a war zone.
- 4) The army had not been involved in demolishing houses, just clearing an area of places from which IDF had been attacked.
- 5) repeated the IDF's claim that the driver of the bulldozer had not seen Rachel.
- 6) Israel's investigation was appropriate and had no mistakes.

According to the Israeli human rights organization B”Tselem, from 2000-04 the Israeli military demolished around 1,700 homes in Rafah, leaving about 17,000 people homeless.

The ruling was met with criticism by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and by other activists.

Hussein Abu Hussein, the lawyer representing Corrie's parents, in a statement issued in response to the verdict explained:

"While not surprising, this verdict is yet another example of where impunity has prevailed over accountability and fairness. Rachel Corrie was killed while non-violently protesting home demolitions and injustice in Gaza, and today, this court has given its stamp of approval to flawed and illegal practices that failed to protect civilian life. In this regard, the verdict blames the victim based on distorted facts and it could have been written directly by the state attorneys."

In essence the court's decision was that essentially this was war and these things happen in war and you can't hold the Israeli government or military liable.

An appeal against this ruling was heard on May 21, 2014. On February 14, 2015, the Supreme Court of Israel rejected the appeal

HUMAN RIGHTS

UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

“This is a sad outcome, above all for the Corrie family that had initiated the case back in 2005, but also for the rule of law and the hope that an Israeli court would place limits on the violence of the state, particularly in relation to innocents and unarmed civilians in an occupied territory”

“the verdict continues the pattern of impunity for Israeli military violations against civilians and human rights defenders...” Amnesty International

“The idea that there can be no fault for killing civilians in a combat operation flatly contradicts Israel’s international legal obligations to spare civilians from harm during armed conflict, and to credibly investigate and punish violations by its forces.” Human Rights Watch

This ruling has disturbing implications beyond the Corrie family’s case, as it sends a message that Israeli forces have immunity even for deaths caused by alleged negligence,”

“The ruling is a stark reminder that in some areas Israeli jurisprudence has veered completely off the track of international law.” Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director

“Israel has claimed that it is not responsible for the death of a civilian in armed conflict. However, this flatly ignores international law, which stipulates that Israel is under an obligation to take all measures to ensure that no civilians will be harmed during hostilities, and must at all times distinguish between military targets and civilians.” Al-Haq

