

Activists Commemorating Rachel Corrie's Death Attacked in West Bank

Two Palestinians arrested as tear gas, live bullets fly during olive tree planting to mark Rachel Corrie's death

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Palestinian activists plant olive trees for the 12th anniversary of Rachel Corrie's death (MEE/Ahmad Al-Bazz)

Two Palestinians were arrested by Israeli troops on Sunday during clashes at an event in a West Bank village to mark the 12th anniversary of the death of US activist Rachel Corrie.

One of those arrested had lost consciousness during an olive tree-planting protest on Sunday in Qariyut, near Nablus.

The activity marked 12 years since the death of Rachel Corrie, a US citizen activist who was crushed to death by an Israeli military bulldozer on 16 March 2003 in Rafah, Gaza Strip, as she tried to block the demolition of a Palestinian home.

The activists chose the village of Qariyut to plant olive trees to support their protest against the blocking of the main road connecting the village to Road 60, which leads to two main cities in the West Bank, Nablus and Ramallah.

The participants planted about 40 olive trees in the threatened lands of Qariyut, which is surrounded by many Israeli settlements and outposts.

Photographs of Corrie were hung on the newly planted trees, alongside pictures of other international activists killed or injured while involved in solidarity action in Palestine. These included Vittorio Arrigoni, an Italian activist who was kidnapped and killed in the Gaza Strip in April 2011; British activist Thomas Hurndall, shot and killed by an Israeli sniper in January 2004; and Tristan Anderson, a US citizen who was critically injured in March 2009 after being shot in the head with a high-velocity tear gas grenade by Israeli Border Police following a protest against the separation wall in the West Bank village of Ni'ilin.

Several Israeli military jeeps came to the area and clashed with Palestinian youths during the tree-planting event. Palestinians threw stones at the soldiers while soldiers fired tear gas.

A group of Israeli soldiers managed to surround the Palestinians after they came through the village, firing live bullets in the air in order to repress the activity. They attempted to arrest many Palestinians but some women from the village were able to prevent some of the arrests. The Israeli soldiers arrested one Palestinian who fell unconscious while running away.

Villagers and activists tried to convince soldiers to release him and demanded a Palestinian ambulance, but the soldiers refused. They also prevented Palestinian medics from treating him on the spot.

“I know, you are trying to mislead us. You will be arrested,” the Israeli soldiers shouted toward the unconscious Palestinian, who they then removed on a stretcher, dropping him twice before taking him away in a military jeep. Another Palestinian was arrested during the event.

The closing of the main road a year ago has forced the villagers to take a much longer route back to the village, adding 20 kilometres to the journey. The road has been closed many times in recent years, according to residents.

The residents of Qariyut organise regular protests and demonstrations to oppose the isolation of the village.

In February 2015, the Supreme Court of Israel dismissed the appeal by the family of Rachel Corrie. At the time the family declared in a press release: “Our family is disappointed but not surprised. We had hoped for a different outcome, though we have come to see through this experience how deeply all of Israel’s institutions are implicated in the impunity enjoyed by the Israeli military.”

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