

Rachel Corrie and Furkan Dogan: Murdered American Heroes

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“You [Israel] killed 19-year-old Furkan Dogan brutally. Which faith, which holy book can be an excuse for killing him? ... The sixth commandment says, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Did you not understand? I’ll say again. I say in English, ‘You shall not kill.’ Did you still not understand? So I’ll say to you in your own language. I say in Hebrew, ‘Lo Tirtzakh.’” – Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, 4 June 2010

In the past seven years, two Americans were unjustly, maliciously and violently killed by the Israel “Defense” Forces (IDF). Both had unwittingly given their lives for Gaza, and in the aftermath of their murders, their government forsook them.

Their names were oft-repeated—if not by fellow citizens, then by citizens of the world—as events surrounding Israel’s horrific assault on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla were discussed. These two young and brave individuals were Rachel Corrie and Furkan Dogan.

Rachel Corrie

A 23-year-old hailing from Olympia, Washington, Rachel Corrie took time off from school in 2003 to travel to Palestine and work on a “sister city” project between Olympia and Rafah, Gaza. While there, she joined the peaceful protests and resistance activities of the International Solidarity Movement, a group committed to nonviolently opposing Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.

On March 16, 2003 (long before Hamas came to power), IDF soldiers were bulldozing homes in the Rafah refugee camp along Gaza’s border with Egypt. Wearing a bright orange fluorescent jacket with megaphone in hand, Corrie courageously placed herself well in front of an armored bulldozer in order to prevent a home’s destruction. The driver did not stop and she was crushed to death.

Although he claimed to have not seen her, eyewitnesses said there was nothing to obstruct the driver’s vision of Corrie, especially in her brightly-colored jacket and location. The Israeli government deemed Corrie’s death “accidental.”

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights collected [sworn affidavits](#) of those present the day Corrie was killed. As expected, they directly contradict the government's version of events. As one detailed (abridged):

"Around 4:45pm, one bulldozer, serial number 949623, began to work near the house of Dr. Sameir Massery, a physician who is a friend of ours, and in whose house Rachel and other activists often stayed. I was elevated about 2 meters above the ground, and had a clear view of the action happening about 20 meters away. Still wearing her fluorescent jacket, she knelt down at least 15 meters in front of the bulldozer, and began waving her arms and shouting, just as activists had successfully done dozens of times that day. The bulldozer continued driving forward and headed straight for Rachel. When it got so close that it was moving the earth beneath her, she climbed onto the pile of rubble being pushed by the bulldozer. She got so high onto it that she was in clear view of the cab of the bulldozer. Her head and upper torso were above the bulldozer's blade, and the bulldozer driver and co-operator could clearly see her. Despite this, the driver continued forward, which caused her to fall back, out of view of the diver [sic]. He continued forward, and she tried to scoot back, but was quickly pulled underneath the bulldozer. We ran towards him, and waved our arms and shouted; one activist with the megaphone. But the bulldozer driver continued forward, until Rachel was all the way underneath the central section of the bulldozer. Despite the obviousness of her position, the bulldozer began to reverse, without lifting its blade, and drug the blade over her body again. He continued to reverse until he was on the boarder strip, about 100 meters away, and left her crushed body in the sand.

"I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that the bulldozer operators saw her and knew she was there. They knew she was there over 15 meters in advance, and even when they were very close to her, they could see her briefly as she was elevated on the rubble. When she was clearly underneath the bulldozer, he should not have moved, or at least lifted the bulldozer blade. He didn't lift the blade until a couple meters after he'd drug it over her again, even though it is standard procedure to lift the blade when backing. I believe he knew she was there, intentionally drove over her, and then intentionally backed over her again."

Just days before her death, Corrie [described](#) the dreadful conditions to which Gazans were subjected.

In a fitting tribute, the Irish-flagged relief ship *Rachel Corrie* set sail for Gaza to deliver 1,000 tons of medical supplies and reconstruction materials just after the attack on the *Mavi Marmara*. The Israeli navy, in seizing the vessel, refused to address it by name. It seems Rachel Corrie, even in death, remains *persona non grata*.

Furkan Dogan



Furkan Dogan was a 19-year-old young man who had just finished high school and hoped to one day become a doctor. He held dual United States and Turkish citizenship. He was one of nine killed when Israeli commandos stormed the *Mavi Marmara* on May 31 as it attempted to transport 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid to Gaza along with five other ships in the Freedom Flotilla.

The unarmed Dogan was, in a word, summarily executed.

Autopsy revealed he was shot five times at close range; once in the chest and four times in the head. The Israeli narrative, just as in Corrie's murder, was inconsistent with eyewitness testimony. There were no reports Dogan had resisted, fought or attacked the boarding commandos.

The lack of outrage from President Obama, his administration, or the U.S. Congress (with the exception of Rep. Dennis Kucinich) is both striking and appalling. Is the life a legal U.S. citizen murdered aboard a relief vessel in international waters by an elite military unit of a foreign country, not worthy of indignation? Was it his foreign-sounding name, that he was Muslim, or that he lived in Turkey the reason for the absence of even muted outcry?

Some may say that Corrie and Dogan were idealists who just got "caught up" in situations beyond their control or understanding.

They were not idealists, they were *realists*. They operated under simple, practical, honest principles: people's homes should not be demolished by an occupying power; a besieged population has a fundamental right not to be denied food, medicine, clean water or shelter; collective punishment is inhumane and illegal.

Rachel Corrie and Furkan Dogan are American heroes. They were killed upholding human dignity, and their deaths were not in vain.

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