

Hello, everyone! I am heartened to see all of you here today!

In 2003, my daughter Rachel Corrie answered a call for internationals to come to the Occupied West Bank and Gaza to stand with Palestinians engaged in nonviolent resistance to the Israeli occupation. She wrote, *“I’ve had this underlying need to go to a place and meet people who are on the other end of the portion of my tax money that goes to fund the U.S. and other militaries.”* Rachel slept at wells in Gaza to protect them from Israeli military demolition. She documented destruction of Palestinian olive orchards, gardens, and greenhouses and harassment of Palestinians at checkpoints. She danced with the children in Gaza, practiced her Arabic with them and helped them with their English homework. As the Israeli military carried out mass home demolitions that rights organizations determined were happening without military necessity, Rachel and other internationals tried to provide some protection for Palestinian civilians whose homes were threatened. On March 16, 2003, Rachel stood to prevent the demolition of the Nasrallah family’s home. She was killed at around 5 pm that day when run over by a U.S. made and funded militarized Caterpillar bulldozer operated by two soldiers in the Israeli military. Through her writing and phone calls, Rachel brought our family and others with her to Gaza. Palestinians had been invisible to us. Gently, but clearly, Rachel forced us to look at and learn about what was happening. From 2003 through 2016, Rachel’s dad and I made five trips to Gaza, and more to Israel and the West Bank as we sought accountability through the Israeli courts.

We saw how Palestinians continue to be systematically dispossessed of their land, and we visited sites from which over 750,000 Palestinians were displaced and over 500 Palestinian villages destroyed and depopulated during what Palestinians call the Nakba (the catastrophe) that occurred for them during the 1948 founding of the state of Israel. We saw how Palestine has been reduced to a few Bantustans in the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to the killing zone of the Gaza Strip. We’ve seen how we live in a moment where Palestinian resistance is demonized while Israeli aggression is justified – where kids throwing stones are called “terrorists,” while snipers targeting civilians are “normal combatants.” In the role of a witness and observer, 26-year-old UW graduate Aysenur Esgi Eygi attended her first West Bank protest on September 6, 2024, where she was shot in the head and killed by an Israeli military sniper. Aysenur’s family has yet to receive a report from the Israeli military’s investigation into her killing. They are calling for an independent U.S. investigation into the case, as yet, to no avail.

The Israeli Human and Legal Rights Organization GISHA writes that the fragile ceasefire that began in Gaza in January ended with a widespread Israeli military assault by air and sea on March 18th and that the entire population of the Gaza Strip - half of whom are children – is trapped under bombardments and siege. As of April 3rd, at least 50,523 people in Gaza have been killed in this war. Over 15,000 of the dead are children. These include 1,163 people killed since the end of the ceasefire on March 18th. Since March 2nd, Israel has blocked all entry of goods, including essential humanitarian aid, and on March 10th, it severed the electricity supply that powered a desalination plant in the center of the Strip. The Israeli organization Gisha says, “Let’s call this what it is: This is not a ‘renewal of the war,’ but slaughter. There is no justification for this cruelty. It must stop.”

Polls show that the assault on Palestine flies in the face of what the American people want and that a majority of us favor an arms embargo on Israel. In J Street polling, even a majority of Jewish Americans favor, at least, a partial arms embargo. Nevertheless, by a vote of 15 to 83, the Senate this week voted down two measures disapproving of proposed foreign military sales of certain defense articles and services to Israel.

Injustice in Palestine is coming home, too, as student activists who speak out on Palestine, such as Mahmoud Khalil and Dr. Rasha Alawieh, are being arrested.

We need to reclaim political power from elected officials and political parties who are not listening to us. Israeli journalist Gideon Levy said this week that there is no one now to stop Israel – that the United States and world have faded out and that Israel is free to go wild again over Gaza. He said, “We are in a situation of desperation.”

We must not fade out. **Local action makes a difference!** Palestine Action of South Sound formed in the weeks immediately following the painful attack upon Israel on October 7, 2023, and after an outpouring of concern for what our community saw happening to the people in Gaza in response to that attack. Since then, PASS has raised tens of thousands of dollars for relief work in Gaza, lobbied in the state legislature and in city hall on behalf of Palestinian rights, and rallied thousands in the streets. PASS members who are focusing on BDS (Boycotts, Divestment, and Sanctions) are studying Chevron’s role and complicity in the oppression of Palestinians. We can learn and do more! Today, please stop by the Palestine Action of South Sound table for information and join one of our general meetings the first Monday of each month to get involved.

Writing from Gaza in 2003, Rachel shouted through her email to me, words that now apply, as well, to the connected issues and the preservation of rights that we must collectively address – for ourselves and for everyone else in the world. Rachel wrote, “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. I don't think it's an extremist thing to do anymore. I still really want to dance around to Pat Benetar and have boyfriends and make comics for my coworkers. But I also want this to stop. Disbelief and horror is what I feel.

We hear you, Rachel!

“This has to stop.”

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Cindy Corrie for Palestine Action of South Sound

April 5, 2025, Evergreen Resistance and Hands Off Rally at the state capitol in Olympia, WA