



US Campaign to
End the Israeli Occupation

"We aim to change those US policies that both sustain Israel's 40-year occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, and deny equal rights for all."

Dear US Campaign Member:

The international situation on Iraq and continued seize against all of Gaza presents us with some unprecedented challenges. We are confronted with the five years of military action and occupation of Iraq. In less than a week, Israel has killed at least 20 Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Israel occupied the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem in 1967. The United States occupied Iraq in 2003. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, both the Palestinian and Iraqi peoples are "protected" populations. Yet for 40 years, Israel has engaged in practices that are grave breaches of international law. These include extra-judicial assassinations, torture, extended curfews and other forms of collective punishment, house demolitions and the destruction of agricultural land and civilian property, expulsions, and illegal imprisonment. Since November 2003 the US has imported into Iraq many of the repressive measures that have failed to bring "security" to Israel and have turned the West Bank and Gaza Strip into a tinderbox. Increasingly, the two occupations are coming to resemble each other, as the occupiers actively collaborate to put down indigenous resistance.

In this context, the US Campaign needs to speak out; taking a position that seeks to avoid further human suffering and human rights violations has greater merit than remaining silent. In this context, the US Campaign is providing a resource to all member groups to help mobilize against the war in Iraq, to honor Rachel Corrie and to bring attention to the deteriorating situation in Gaza.

The theme of the vigils will be *Solidarity and Sorrow*. This is a symbolic statement of participants' commitment to stand in solidarity with Iraqis by pledging to defend their human rights during the continued military intervention and occupation, while reflecting in sorrow for the violations of the preceding decades in Occupied Palestine, now magnified by the mass human rights abuses and violations in Gaza. The US Campaign is hoping to mobilize hundreds of groups across the nation to take part in the vigil action. This guide is meant to help you become an organizer of the vigils and ensure that the vigil your group hosts is a success.

Included in this organizing guide are sections that address hosting the vigil, media guidelines, dos and don'ts at the vigil, ideas for quick advertising and, finally, an important report out card for groups to complete so that we can access how to better support your work. If you have any questions regarding the vigil or the US Campaign's work, please contact us at organize@endtheoccupation.org or call 202.332.0994.

In solidarity and struggle,

US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

Hosting the Vigil

Introduction: Vigils are unique and powerful actions for activists to utilize when advocating a message. They provide a setting that facilitates and encourages reflection on a message and are often inviting for many individuals who do not necessarily feel comfortable at traditional demonstrations. It is also an excellent way to ensure that decentralized actions take place all over the country. It is in this spirit that US Campaign groups from across the nation will be preparing to host vigils within the anniversary of the war in Iraq, death of Rachel Corrie and month long siege against Gaza. Groups will stand in "solidarity and sorrow," pledging to help defend the human rights of the Iraqi and Palestinian people and reflecting in sorrow for the violations of the preceding decades, now magnified by the mass human rights abuses associated with war.

Outline of the Vigil Action: While groups are encouraged to fashion their vigils the way they want so as to be unique, groups are asked, if possible, to include the following elements during their vigil to create a sense of cohesion among all groups that are participating. The vigils are a time for activists to gather and pledge to stand in solidarity with all those who are disproportionately impacted by the war by defending their human rights, and to reflect in sorrow for the violations of the preceding decades, now magnified by and mass human rights abuses associated with war and to honor the memory and legacy of Rachel Corrie.

Pledge to the People of Iraq and Palestine: This pledge should be read out loud at the vigil by an appointed person, persons, or by everyone in the group. It is included in the packet and can be morphed to fit your group's needs as long as the basic message remains the same (the pledge can be found separately later in this guide).

Read excerpts from Rachel Corrie's diary. Go to <http://www.rachelcorriefoundation.org>

Speak out: At events such as vigils, it is important to allow participants to voice their own concerns and fears regarding the dual occupations. Be sure to invite people to do this at a time that is deemed appropriate.

Those attending the vigil are encouraged to form a circle that will symbolically represent the interconnectedness of all human beings and the human rights we all possess.

Groups are also encouraged to make signs using the suggested slogans in this guide or creating your own that are in the same spirit as those that are suggested. These will help inform those passing by the vigil what the group is doing. Additionally groups should consider creating handbills to offer to people who pass by, informing them on how they can take action to protect the human rights of those people in Iraq who are caught in the midst of the conflict.

It is up to each group to decide how long their vigil will last. Typically they last around an hour.

The Setting: Groups are encouraged to host the vigils in visible public spaces. This could be at a busy intersection where there is heavy pedestrian traffic, on the edge of a city park or, if you are a student group, the outdoor quad area of the school you attend. Be sure to check with the proper authorities to see if any permits are needed to host events wherever you decide to have the vigil.

Invite Human Rights Allies: US Campaign member groups who choose to organize a vigil are encouraged to reach out to other human rights and social justice organizations by inviting them to attend the vigil. If there is other solidarity or peace in justice groups in your area, consider hosting one large vigil with them as opposed to several small

vigils.

Ideas for Quick Mobilization: You should be ready to mobilize people quickly for a vigil on either **March 16**—Rachel Corrie anniversary or **March 19**—anniversary of the war in Iraq. Advertising to other human rights allies is something that can be done in advance and is encouraged. Making phone calls and sending out emails to individuals and list-serves are all good tactics. Some ideas for quick mobilization are listed below:

- Submit a letter to the editor of your local newspaper for publication, raising concerns about the human rights violations towards Iraqi civilians associated with war and encouraging people to attend the vigil (be sure to include the time and location of the vigil).
- Have people in your group and other volunteers put up flyers advertising the vigil.
- Make handbills and place them on cars or hand them to people on the street.
- *Send out a press release to all local media once you determine a date; some may announce the vigil in advance in addition to covering the vigil themselves.*
- If you are a student, make announcements in your classes about the vigil.
- Ask organizations that you have identified as human rights allies to advertise the vigil to their members (these may be peace and justice organizations, religious establishments, civic groups, etc.).

Getting Media Attention for Your Vigil

Given the anniversary, local media might be looking for a local angle to cover. It is important to invite the media to your vigil and be ready to help them frame the story. Included in the media portion of this guide is a sample press release that you can use as a model for the one you send media in your area.

When working with the media it is important to remember these three items:

- **Keep it simple.** Whether it's a telephone call, a media advisory or an event, always try to focus on the basic US Campaign messages. *Repeat what you want to see in the paper rather than improvising under pressure.*
- **Localize.** Local media, including print, television and radio look for a local angle – stress to them that you represent a member group of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation while pointing out that you are part of a national organization with over 250 member groups.
- **Contact.** Keep a record of contacts you make at local newspapers, radio and television stations and note any journalists who seem particularly interested in Palestine issues – you will want to contact them at a later date when you are holding events.

The media work of local and student groups is of enormous value to the organization - it generates support for campaigns, attracts new members, and helps bring human rights issues to the attention of people who may not hear them otherwise. This will be especially important with regards to Iraq, as the focus of media attention may not be on the plight of civilians. If you have any questions, please contact the US Campaign.

Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: *name here*

number here

date here

AREA ACTIVISTS HOLD VIGIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST RACHEL CORRIE, THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ AND GAZA

As Five year Commemoration Starts, 'Solidarity and Sorrow'

(*City, State*) – On [*date of vigil*], **GROUP NAME** activists will hold a candlelight vigil to voice their solidarity with the people of Iraq and Gaza and to commemorate the tragic death of human rights activist Rachel Corrie.

"For decades, the people of Palestine and Iraq have endured the most devastating of human rights violations. Their lives have been ravaged by conflict, a brutally oppressive occupation and severe economic sanctions," said [*group spokesperson's name and title*]. "We reflect with great sorrow that their hardships are now being magnified by the continued use of military force and demand that the international community, particularly the United States, endeavor to protect the lives of all civilians during this continued conflict."

Since March 2003, the US has imported into Iraq many of the military measures that have brought poverty, repression, death and destruction to Palestinians, and failed to bring security to Israel. As members of the largest US based coalition working to change US policy towards the Israeli-Palestine conflict, [*home town here*] activists are working to make sure the people of Iraq and Palestine are not forgotten.

VIGIL DETAILS:

WHO: [*List notable individuals, other groups and key activists*]

WHAT: Candlelight vigil pledging solidarity with Iraqis and Palestinians suffering increased human rights violations as a result of the current war and siege against Gaza.

WHERE: [*location*]

WHEN: [*date and time, including end time of vigil*]

Guidelines and Messages for Public Events

These guidelines are intended to advise US Campaign member groups regarding participation in public events on Iraq and Rachel Corrie commemoration activities. It is especially important that, while representing or speaking for the US Campaign, members remain mindful of what we say regarding the occupation in Iraq and Palestine. More detailed information is available; however, these are the main messages to stress.

- US Campaign is urging the Israeli government to abide by the United Nations Charter, International law and the Geneva Conventions. Unilateral and preemptive action by the US or Israel or any other government undermines the international legal framework.
- The US Campaign and member groups will speak out before, during and after any military action, pressing for full observance of international law, protection of civilians, and respect for human rights.
- The civilian populations of Iraq and Palestine are at great risk. The US Campaign therefore joins with other organizations like United for Peace and Justice in pressing for a solution that takes every possible step to minimize human rights violations and the dual occupations.

Dos, Don'ts and Suggested Slogans for the Vigil

Do Say:

- End the Dual Occupation
- End the Siege Now!
- Honor Rachel Corrie, End the Occupation Now
- Human rights must be paramount in all deliberations
- The US and Israel must abide by International Law
- Our concerns include civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure needed to sustain civilian life, refugees, increased repression

Don't Say:

- Anything that guesses at the motives of the US or Israel
- Anything that distracts from the main concerns
- Anything you're unsure about

Suggested Slogans. These not intended to be definitive, so feel free to create your own that are in the same spirit as the slogans below.

- Don't Violate Human Rights in Iraq
- Protect Human Rights in Iraq and Palestine
- Stop Home Demolitions Now!
- Caterpillar out of Palestine
- Remember Rachel Corrie
- Remember the Children of Iraq
- Occupation in Palestine: How man more children will die?
- War in Iraq: How many more children will die?

Pledge for the People of Iraq and Palestine

Tonight (or today) we hold this vigil of "solidarity and sorrow" for the people of Iraq, Gaza and to commemorate the tragic murder of activist, Rachel Corrie. We do this to reaffirm our commitment to universal human rights and to stand in solidarity with all those who face the destructive impact of war and occupation. We pledge to press all involved to act in accordance with the international laws and standards they are bound to uphold, in war and in peace.

Two decades of conflict, a brutally oppressive regime, and the imposition of harsh and indiscriminate economic sanctions have jeopardized and violated the most fundamental human rights of Iraqi civilians. We reflect in sorrow for these violations, now magnified by the military intervention. We demand that the international community, and in particular, the parties to the conflict, endeavor to protect the lives of civilians, and we demand that the human rights of the Iraqi people and Palestinian people never again be subjected to abuse and neglect.

Report Out for Solidarity and Sorrow Vigil

Upon completion of your vigil please take a few moments to complete the below report out. This is very important for the US Campaign since we want to have a sense of how many groups and individuals participated and how we can make improvements if we have an action like this in the future. You can return this report out card by post, fax, or email. Many thanks in advance for any input you can provide.

Please return this form to the attention of Suha Dabbouseh

Email- organize@endtheoccupation.org _____

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Group to which you belong: _____

Date the vigil was held: _____

Number of people who attended the vigil (a rough estimate is fine): _____

Did other groups or organization help you organize the vigil? If yes, who?

What did you find most helpful about the vigil guide? How would you have made the vigil guide different?

Did any media cover the vigil you hosted? If yes, who?

Are you interested in helping to organize other similar events? If yes, be sure to include all your contact information above.