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## Tanya Reinhart, 1944-2007

Tuesday 27 March 2007, by [CLANCY Emma](#) (Date first published: 23 March 2007).

**Tanya Reinhart, the Israeli linguistics professor and champion of Palestinian rights, died of a stroke in her sleep on March 17 in New York at the age of 63. Palestinian organisations issued a statement from Gaza on March 19, describing Reinhart as “a great indefatigable activist against the policy of the Zionist government of apartheid Israel towards us Palestinians”.**

Reinhart made major contributions to the struggle against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, through her frontline activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), in Israel and internationally; and through her sharp political analysis of the impact of Israeli policies on the Palestinian people.

Born in 1944 in what is now the State of Israel, Reinhart grew up in Haifa. She received a bachelor's degree in philosophy and Hebrew literature and a master's degree in philosophy and comparative literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Reinhart, who taught at Tel Aviv University for 20 years, was also a key supporter of an international academic boycott of Israel.

Speaking at the University of Sydney's Sydney Ideas forum on October 9, Reinhart explained that she had made the painful personal decision to leave Israel. Despite feeling an obligation “to continue the fight, together with my comrades, within Israel”, she said that following Israel's July-August war on Lebanon and Gaza, “morally, I can no longer stay in Israel. I love the country, but I cannot stay there. I'm going into exile, like Edward Said, but mine is an exile of choice.”

One of the most insightful and lucid writers on the Palestinian struggle, Reinhart provided a detailed analysis of the 1993 Oslo Accords and the impact of the subsequent “peace process” on the Palestinian struggle for self-determination in her book *Israel/Palestine: How to end the war of 1948*.

Her 2006 book, *Road Map to Nowhere* is an account of developments in Israel and the OPT since 2003, with particular emphasis on the implications of the unilateral Israeli “disengagement” from Gaza; the role of international, and particularly US, pressure on Israeli policy-making; and the continuing Israeli annexation of Palestinian land in the West Bank, which she described as “the second naqba” (catastrophe — as Palestinians refer to the dispossession of 1948).

She slammed the international economic embargo against the Hamas government, elected in January 2006, referring to it as “the starvation blockade”.

In *Road Map to Nowhere*, Reinhart argued that “with Israel turning the West Bank into a system of prisons, the most immediate question is how this process can be resisted, stopped and reversed. As Noam Chomsky has said, in many areas of the world today, the struggle is to expand, or sometimes even just to maintain the size of the prison cells.”

Despite the dismal and worsening reality of life for the Palestinians, Reinhart viewed the joint grassroots struggle of Israelis and Palestinians, which developed along the route of the apartheid wall in the West Bank since 2003, as a source of hope for the future. She praised the young Israelis who have refused to serve in the Israel Defence Force in the OPT, and those who “crossed the lines” to protect Palestinians’ olive harvests and land from the IDF, and herself participated in these joint protests.

Through all of Reinhart’s words and actions, a deep humanism can be seen — moral revulsion at the actions of the Israeli government, a determination to resist oppression, and a profound respect for the courage and dignity of the Palestinian people.

In the final pages of Road Map to Nowhere she wrote: “Armed only with the extraordinary spirit of people who have clung to their land for generation after generation, they stand in the path of one of the most brutal military machines in the world. This daily struggle is our hope.”

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\* From: International News, Green Left Weekly issue #704 28 March 2007.