‘Peace Under Fire’ is a compelling book, which tells two stories; one is of the first two years of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), and the other is of the Israeli military occupation as witnessed by the thousands who have come to live, work and resist in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The book begins by describing the role of the ISM, which was founded to support Palestinian non violent resistance to Israel’s military occupation, by shining a spotlight on Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The ISM is a Palestinian led movement of both Palestinian and international activists working to raise awareness of the struggle for Palestinian freedom and an end to Israeli occupation. The ISM utilizes non-violent direct action to resist and challenge Israeli occupation forces and policies.

The authors speak of the sheer lack of respect for Palestinian human rights and human life by the Israeli government and occupation forces, and the important role played by the ISM in providing an international presence to support Palestinian non-violent resistance. Palestinian activists trying to work or protest alone face harsh punishment from Israeli forces. This has included beating, long term arrests, serious injury and even death. International activists are thus a resource for Palestinians, both in terms of their presence and witnesses to the daily humiliation and injustice of the Israeli occupation. Many forms of nonviolent resistance of the ISM are elaborated on, including:

• Escorting ambulances through checkpoints
• Confronting tanks and demolition equipment
• Participation in non-violent demonstrations
• Acting as a human shield for teachers and students in schools
• Delivering food and water to families under curfew or house arrest
• Documenting and reporting the daily life under occupation to the International media

The book is woven together from contemporary eyewitness accounts, press releases, interviews and newspaper articles. The reports appear as they were written and published.
The book has a chronological structure and the chapters are designed to cover specific themes including the founding of the ISM and the campaigns the movement has waged. Also covered are the siege and the impact of curfews and how this was defied along with the day-to-day stranglehold on freedom of movement by the imposition of checkpoints. The chapter entitled “The Largest Concentration Camp in the World” will give the reader a true appreciation of the horrors, which unfolded.

The latter part of the book focuses upon the stories of Rachel Corrie, Brian Avery and Tom Hurndall as well as attacks and crackdown on the ISM and the heroic work done by the movement to maintain a presence and continue its good work.

Rachel Corrie had joined ISM and gone to Gaza to stand in solidarity with people she had never met. Her letters back home to her family make remarkable reading as she talks about the amazing resistance put up by the Palestinians. She was murdered in Gaza by an Israeli bulldozer whilst she was protecting a Palestinian home from demolition.

Tom Hurndall was with other ISM volunteers walking through Rafah when Israeli sniper fire started. Everyone ran for safety, Tom noticed three children paralysed with fear, Tom went back for them. An Israeli sniper shot him in the head, he died at the age of 21.

‘Peace Under Fire’ makes for compelling reading and serves as reminder of the human face of the conflict. By retelling the stories of ISM activists such as Tom Hurndall and Rachel Corrie, the authors establish the need to recognise the sacrifices made by numerous international activists and press as well as Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli forces.