

October 17, 2026

His Excellency
Dr. Yechiel (Michael) Leiter
Ambassador of Israel to the United States
Embassy of Israel
3514 International Dr NW
Washington, DC 20008
United States of America

Sent via email

Re: American photojournalist Heidi Levine beaten by Israeli settlers in West Bank

Your excellency,

I am writing from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a New York-based nonprofit organization that promotes and protects freedom of the press globally, in response to a growing number of attacks on journalists in the West Bank. The Israeli government must take swift action to ensure accountability for these attacks and to prevent any future assaults on journalists.

The most recent attack was on Friday, October 16, when Washington Post photographer Heidi Levine was violently [assaulted](#) by masked Israeli settlers while covering the olive harvest in the Palestinian village of Abu Falah in the occupied West Bank. The settlers stole her passport, phone, wallet, and equipment.

Levine, who is an American citizen, [was wearing](#) a protective vest clearly marked PRESS on front and back when she was shoved to the ground and kicked repeatedly by the settlers.

The Washington Post reports that Levine “was treated at hospitals in Ramallah and Israel for lacerations across her body and a broken rib, and will need surgery on one hand after a finger was ripped open, exposing bone.”

Speaking to CPJ from her hospital bed, Levine said that she was “attacked by a gang of masked settlers.” “They pushed me to the ground and they were kicking me for, I think at least 10 minutes,” she added, noting that she had identified herself to the assailants as an American journalist. “Hopefully nothing is broken, but I will need stitches in my hand, stitches on my back.”

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Committee to Protect Journalists

The brutal beating of Levine is part of a disturbing pattern of violence and harassment by Israeli armed forces and settlers targeting journalists. The perpetrators of these attacks have little reason to fear consequences, given the lack of accountability that follows. This culture of impunity emboldens those who attack journalists.

In September, CPJ [documented](#) an intensification of settler attacks against journalists in the West Bank. In 2026 alone, CPJ has reviewed at least 16 incidents involving at least 35 local and international journalists, including physical attacks, harassment, obstruction and intimidation of members of the press. Israeli settlers [attacked](#) Agence France-Presse (AFP) photographer Jaafar Ashtiyeh on October 6, beating him with the butts of their rifles while Israeli soldiers watched without intervening. AFP said Ashtiyeh “suffered bruises to his head and torso and was taken by ambulance to a hospital.” On October 8, Portuguese correspondent Ricardo Esteves Ribeiro was [arrested](#) in Rantis, northwest of Ramallah, and deported the following day. Two days later, near Ramallah, Israeli troops fired rubber bullets during clashes involving settlers, [striking](#) Palestinian photojournalist Issam al-Rimawi. Al-Rimawi told CPJ that he was wearing an identifiable PRESS vest when he was struck.

The Israeli government has an obligation to swiftly, thoroughly, and impartially investigate all attacks against journalists, including identifying perpetrators and holding them fully accountable under criminal law. Such investigations should examine the actions of any Israeli’s military or police, including any failures to intervene or provide adequate protection to journalists.

The Israeli government should commit to a clear timeline for investigating these cases and provide public updates on their progress. It should also cease [undermining](#) or dismissing such attacks, and recognize that such rhetoric contributes to an enabling environment for future attacks against journalists.

I thank you for your urgent attention to these vital issues.

Sincerely,

Jodie Ginsberg
Chief Executive Officer, Committee to Protect Journalists