

JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

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Israeli police arrest suspects in Washington Post journalist attack

Heidi Levine is in moderate condition with lacerations across her body, a broken rib and four broken vertebrae.



Palestinian volunteers douse an olive tree set alight along with a Palestinian-owned vehicle, reportedly by Israeli settlers, near the village of Turmus Ayya, north of the city of Ramallah, in the West Bank on Oct. 16, 2026. (Ahmad Gharabli/AFP via Getty Images)

By [Ruth Eglash](#) October 19, 2026

JERUSALEM – Israel Police arrested 10 people on Monday on suspicion of involvement in violent acts over the weekend against journalists, foreign diplomats and Palestinians in the West Bank during the annual olive harvest.

The arrests came after international condemnation of the attacks, including by U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, who is generally supportive of the current Israeli government. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted it is just a handful of individuals and not representative of Israelis who live in the West Bank settlements.

“Following reports of acts of violence over the weekend, including the suspected assault of a foreign journalist and the suspected assault of foreign diplomats, the Judea and Samaria District and the Israel Security Agency (ISA) carried out a pre-dawn arrest operation as part of the ongoing investigation,” the police said in a statement, referring to the West Bank by its biblical name.

The statement said the suspects were arrested during a special pre-dawn operation conducted by the district’s Central Investigations Unit and transferred to police stations in the area for questioning.

“Following questioning, and subject to the findings of the investigation, they will be brought before a court for a hearing,” the police statement said.

The arrests come after Heidi Levine, a veteran photojournalist for The Washington Post, was attacked on Friday while photographing Palestinians harvesting their olive trees in the West Bank, an annual event that often sees violent clashes between Palestinian farmers and Israeli settlers who have increasingly moved into the same areas.

Video footage from the scene shows a group of masked settlers surrounding and attacking Levine before ripping off her camera and other personal gear. Palestinians can also be seen throwing stones at the settlers before another journalist arrives to help Levine leave the area.

The photographer was taken to a Palestinian hospital near Ramallah and later transferred to Beilinson Hospital near Tel Aviv, which reported that she was in moderate condition with [lacerations across her body, a broken rib and four broken vertebrae](#). She also underwent surgery on her finger, the hospital said.

On Saturday, European diplomats from France, Belgium and Poland came under assault by masked settlers who forced their convoy off the road in the area of Taybeh, near Ramallah. Bernard Baudoux, a leftist mayor of Aulnoye-Aymeries, a town in northern France, was beaten, according to [witnesses who spoke to international media](#).

Data collected by Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din and published on Sunday showed some 538 alleged incidents of settler and soldier violence over the 20-day period from Sept. 27 to Oct. 16, across 181 Palestinian communities in the West Bank. Some 269 of the incidents were directly related to the olive harvest, the organization said.

Israeli right-wing legal-aid organization Honenu confirmed the arrests on Monday and said its criminal law department would be providing the suspects with “initial legal assistance.”

“At this stage, it is unclear what the detainees are suspected of,” the organization said in a statement.

The Israel Police said that “items linking the suspects to the alleged offenses were seized, and several vehicles were confiscated.”

“The law in Judea and Samaria applies to everyone, regardless of identity or affiliation. The Israel Police is committed to professional, equal, and impartial law enforcement, based on evidence and in accordance with the law,” Israel Police Commissioner Daniel Levy said in the statement.

The issue of settler violence in the West Bank falls into a gray area of law enforcement between the Israel Police and the Israeli military, the latter of which is responsible for civilian matters in parts of the territory that are not legally under Israeli sovereignty. Israel’s police force is under the authority of the National Security Ministry headed by Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right nationalist who has not made clamping down on settler violence a priority.

Levy said that the ambiguity over which agency is responsible for what must be addressed.

“At the same time, a distinction must be made between responsibility for preventing incidents in the field and responsibility for investigating and enforcing the law after they occur,” Levy said.

“We will continue to coordinate with all security agencies to strengthen security and the rule of law and ensure that anyone found to have violated the law is brought to justice,” he added.

Huckabee on Saturday called for a full investigation into the attack against Levine and for the perpetrators to be prosecuted “to the fullest extent of the law.”

“Attacking a female photographer is a despicable act of terror carried out by masked cowards. Dishonorable act of senseless violence,” he wrote on X.

[Israeli President Isaac Herzog](#) also condemned the “shocking violence” and said he had called Levine to apologize.

“I expressed my deepest sorrow to Heidi and apologized for what she went through. The despicable behavior of the perpetrators of this attack does not represent the citizens or the values of the State of Israel,” he said in a statement.

Netanyahu, who is in the midst of a closely contested election campaign to retain power, condemned violence generally, but also stated that the circumstances of the attack “remain unclear.”

“We will not allow disputed incidents to be exploited to demonize the hundreds of thousands of law-abiding Jewish residents of Judea and Samaria,” he said in a statement, using the biblical names for the West Bank.

Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Yechiel Leiter, however, stated on CNN on Friday "unambiguously and unequivocally, that gratuitous violence perpetrated by anyone, be they Jews or Arabs, is completely unacceptable."

He added, "If we have not yet reached a passing grade to bring Jewish vigilantes to justice, then we've got to do a better job. But I'm convinced that we are going to do it. I've been in government meetings. I've heard the prime minister speak emphatically about putting a stop to this."

In a statement Monday following the arrests, Defense Minister Israel Katz said that it was time for the Israeli police to handle such crimes.

"The IDF should not and cannot be engaged in civilian law enforcement. Its role is to fight Palestinian terrorism and defend the country's borders and the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria and along the seam line," he said, adding that he was preparing, in coordination with the prime minister, "a comprehensive plan to regulate civilian law enforcement activities in Judea and Samaria."

"The plan distinguishes between the IDF's authority in the field and the transfer of responsibility for carrying out civilian law enforcement in practice to the Israel Police's Judea and Samaria District," Katz said.