Security forces assault journalists covering protests

RAMALLAH, PALESTINE: The Committee to Protect Journalists has condemned attacks by Palestinian security forces on at least four journalists who were covering protests against the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah on Saturday and Sunday, according to news reports.

"Palestinian journalists have a right and a duty to document demonstrations," said CPJ executive director Joel Simon. "Authorities are responsible for ensuring that journalists can carry out their work without the threat of assault."

Muhammed Jaradat, a freelance journalist who contributes to local news websites, was beaten, arrested, and had his camera confiscated by four plainclothes security officials while covering Saturday's protest, according to news reports . The four men took Jaradat to the police station where he was beaten again with a stick in front of police officers who did nothing to stop the attack, news reports said. He sustained bruises and an injury to his left eye and was taken to a hospital for treatment, the reports said.

Saed al-Hawari, a photographer for Reuters, was beaten and choked by a plainclothes security officer on Sunday while taking pictures, according to news reports. He told the independent Palestinian Ma'an News Agency that his assailant threatened to beat him again if he continued taking pictures and that he suffered from neck pain due to the attack.

Ahmad Mesleh, a freelance photographer, was hit in the back by a plainclothes security official who attempted to confiscate and break his camera but Mesleh fought back, according to an account on Mesleh's Facebook and Twitter pages and news reports. The man then took him to a police station where he was briefly detained without charge, the same sources reported.

Plainclothes security forces also confiscated a camera Sunday from Ahmed Ouda, a photographer for the local news website Quds Media, news reports said .

A group of protesters gathered in Ramallah on Saturday and Sunday to demonstrate against an upcoming meeting between Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shoul Mofaz in Ramallah. Palestinian police broke up the demonstrators by force, beating several people, arresting dozens, and attacking journalists, according

to news reports.

This spate of attacks follows the arrest of two critical journalists and the blocking of several critical news websites by the Palestinian Authority in April, CPJ research shows.

Source: Committee to Protect Journalists

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