



[The Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\) Opens a Probe into the Killing of Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh](#)

In May of this year, renowned Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was killed by gunfire while covering a news story for Al Jazeera at the Jenin refugee camp in the illegally-occupied West Bank. At the time, Israel attempted to place blame for her death on Palestinian gunmen, but impartial evidence and accounts from observers debunked that regrettable claim. Furthermore, human rights groups from across the world, as well as several prominent U.S. legislators, demanded that the U.S. government launch their own investigation into the events, citing Israel's egregious track record regarding criminal investigations into their own soldiers' activities. Ahmad Abuznaid of the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights was among those who denounced Israel's ability to investigate, saying that to allow only an Israeli investigation is to simply let the crime go unpunished. U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen, who has penned two letters and passed an amendment through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee over this issue, has also called Israel's ability to hold its soldiers accountable into question. There is considerable evidence to back claims about the lack of legitimacy of Israeli investigations, including the case of American citizen Omar Assad, who was arbitrarily detained by Israeli forces and suffered a stress-induced heart attack back in January. Now, earlier this week, the U.S. Department of Justice has announced that the FBI will be conducting an investigation into the killing of Abu Akleh.

The decision comes in the wake of months of outrage on the part of Palestinians and human rights activists, and continued investigations from the UN, the New York Times, and other news outlets, which have consistently found that not only was Abu Akleh shot by an Israeli soldier, but may have been intentionally shot as well. According to a June statement from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani, journalists who were with Abu Akleh at the time of her death submit that they took every caution to convey themselves as a non-threat. They took a side street to avoid areas of gunfire, were wearing their blue jackets that denoted them as media members, and made sure that they were visible to Israeli forces. The group also reported the gunfire as "several single, seemingly well-aimed bullets," and, as alluded to above, there were seemingly no armed combatants in their vicinity. Bruce Fein, a constitutional lawyer who used to work in the Justice Department, is under the impression that the U.S.'s decision to investigate must be a result of credible evidence suggesting that the killing was intentional, and moreover, that perhaps the assassin also has American citizenship.

Abu Akleh's family, Senator Van Hollen, and Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib have all applauded the decision, but Van Hollen wrote in a tweet that the fight is far from over. Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz has announced that Israel not only refuses to participate in the investigation, but will not allow it. Analysts, long-serving U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy, and others have pointed out that the U.S. has more than enough leverage on Israel to force their cooperation, considering the four billion dollars in aid that the United States gives Israel annually. The question, then, is whether the U.S. is willing to confront its longtime ally that it has rarely stood up to in the past.