

# D.C. Volunteer Finds No Peace On West Bank

## Palestinian Students' Escort Attacked

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A District resident working with a Christian organization in the Israeli-occupied West Bank is recuperating from injuries she received after being attacked as she escorted Palestinian schoolchildren past an Israeli settlement.

Kim Lamberty, 44, said that she and another American, Christopher Brown of San Francisco, were attacked Sept. 30 south of Hebron by five masked men who were armed with a chain and bat. Lamberty suffered a broken arm and bruised knee, and Brown was hospitalized for several days with cracked ribs and a punctured lung. Lamberty said the men also stole her passport, cell phone and cash.



Kim Lamberty in Jerusalem, where she has been recovering from an attack she suffered as she escorted Palestinian children past a Jewish settlement. (Ilan Mizrahi For The Washington Post)

The five children ran away during the attack and were not injured.

Lamberty and Brown, 39, are volunteers with the Chicago-based Christian Peacemakers Team, an organization that sends workers trained in nonviolent intervention into war zones. Palestinians had asked the group to provide escorts for children who walk to school on a dirt path between the Israeli settlement of Ma'on and a settlement outpost called Ma'on Ranch. An outpost is a temporary camp, usually consisting of trailers, that is erected by settlers seeking to expand their presence in the occupied territories.

In a telephone interview from Jerusalem, Lamberty said the five assailants came running out of the trees lining the path. She said they tripped her and "were beating me while I was on ground."

Afterward, "I saw the group go back through the grove of trees and into Ma'on Ranch," Lamberty wrote in an account of the incident that she provided to the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem.

She also wrote that a security guard from the Ma'on settlement told her later that the pair had been attacked "because we had upset the balance of power between the settlement and Palestinians."

"At no time did the police search the trees to find these guys," she said in the interview. "It did not happen."

Charles F. Hunter, public affairs spokesman for the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem, said: "We obviously are very concerned about this attack on American citizens. We would hope there would be a thorough investigation into it and that those responsible would be dealt with appropriately . . . and that there would not be a repetition of such incidents." "Israel's law enforcement authorities view this incident with utmost severity," said David Siegel, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington. They "are conducting a full and intensive investigation. We are doing everything we can to get to the bottom of this case and prosecute those responsible."

Robert Pelletreau, co-director of Search for Common Ground in the Middle East, said in an phone interview from Jerusalem that the incident reflected "an atmosphere now where there's quite a lot of violence and quite a lot of uncertainty" in the absence of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Mark Frey, administrative coordinator at Christian Peacemakers Team, said that the organization's volunteers, who began working with Palestinians in June 1995, had been threatened in person and in written messages but that the attack on Lamberty and Brown "is the most severe assault we've experienced."

Lamberty, who has a master's degree in theology from Washington Theological Union, has been working in the West Bank since August. She was director of social concerns ministry at St. John the Baptist Church in Silver Spring for eight years. Her husband, Paul Magno, is director of outreach to the poor at St. Aloysius Catholic Church in Northwest Washington.

Lamberty said she decided to join the peace teams because "after 9/11 . . . I started to feel like we were facing a situation where many in the Muslim world really hate the United States, and it seemed to me a lot of that was because of what was happening in Palestine." Lamberty said she plans to finish her original three-month commitment, returning home in mid- November.

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