

Plain-clothes police repeatedly manhandle Al-Jazeera correspondent

Reporters without borders

September 28, 2007

Reporters Without Borders voiced outrage today that Lotfi Hajji, the correspondent of the Qatar-based satellite TV news station Al-Jazeera, has been manhandled by plain-clothes police four times in the past week.

“Hajji has never been allowed to work freely,” the press freedom organisation said. “After refusing to issue him with a press card and banning him from opening an Al-Jazeera bureau in Tunis, the authorities are now making frequent use of force to censor this independent journalist.”

The incidents took place on each of the four occasions between 20 and 27 September that Hajji went to the headquarters of the opposition Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) to report on a hunger strike by its secretary-general, Maya Jribi, and by Néjib Chebbi, the editor of the party’s newspaper, Al Maoukif.

He was allowed to enter the party’s office on only one of the four occasions. The other three times he was forcibly removed by the plain-clothes police stationed outside (see video).

Hajji told Reporters Without Borders that such incidents are unfortunately common in Tunisia. Jribi and Chebbi began their hunger strike on 20 September in protest against the authorities’ decision to close the premises that house the party’s headquarters.