

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/tunisia-two-female-journalists-covering-05-01-2012,41633.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Tunisia

Renewed violence

Two female journalists covering protest assaulted by police

5 January 2012

Two female journalists, **Sana Farhat** of the French-language daily *Le Temps* and **Maha Ouelhezi** who works for the news website *Web Manager Center*, were assaulted by law enforcement officers in plain clothes yesterday as they covered a demonstration by university teachers outside the ministry of higher education in Tunis.

Farhat's press card and camera were seized by officers who wiped the video she was shooting in the entrance hall as police were preparing to disperse the protesters.

She was grabbed by the hair and dragged along the ground after she demanded the return of her equipment. Farhat told Reporters Without Borders that she intended to lodge a complaint.

Ouelhezi's camera was also seized by an officer who smashed it on the ground.

Teachers from Manouba University in Tunis were demonstrating to demand the resumption of classes. The university has been effectively paralysed for more than a month by Salafist-inspired protesters who claim the right of female students to attend classes and sit exams wearing the niqab veil, contrary to Tunisian law.

"The attitude of law enforcement officers is reminiscent of the old methods used during the Ben Ali era," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Despite the excuses made by their leaders, police officers must understand that they are not above the law.

"Continued police violence is particularly worrying on the eve of the first anniversary of the revolution. We ask Tunisia's new authorities to investigate this incident and punish those responsible. They must take appropriate action to ensure such things do not happen again."

On two occasions – 27 November and 3 December – **Hassan Soussou**, head of the news website *Tunisie Numérique*, has highlighted violence committed by law enforcement officers against its journalists. However, the site did not lodge a complaint, interpreting the reasons given by the interior ministry as "encouraging".
