

## **More freedom of Press demanded in Bahrain**

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Scores of journalists protested outside the parliament building yesterday to call for greater Press freedom and object to what they called some parliamentarians' meddling in cultural affairs.

Bahrain Journalists Association chief Isa Al Shaygi said the journalists wanted a new Press law that scraps jail terms for Press offences, and an end to a parliamentary probe into a recent cultural event.

"All of Bahrain's journalists want to express their objection and dismay at the stance taken by parliament in respect to culture and the Press," Shaygi said in a statement to the crowd of about 200 journalists and other protesters.

He said around 200 legal cases had been lodged against the island's journalists and writers in 2005 and 2006, all carrying the threat of imprisonment.

Mahmood Al Yousif, who runs a popular blog, was also at the protest. Yousif was taken to court last month by a cabinet minister for libel, but the case has yet to be tried.

"Current Press laws stifle criticism of officials, and of heinous crimes," Yousif said.