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**Reporters Without Borders**

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**Evidence of Reporters Without Borders, an NGO with special consultative status, about  
press freedom in BAHRAIN**

**Press freedom**

Bahraini journalists are slowly becoming more critical of the authorities but the press law, which still allows imprisonment ranging from six months to five years, is an obstacle to normal working conditions. Self-censorship is still the best way to keep one's job.

**Free flow of information online**

Access to many news sites and political blogs is regularly blocked, especially before elections, as seen in the run-up to the October 2006 parliamentary poll. The government tried to step up censorship of online publications in 2005 by requiring registration of Bahraini sites with the information ministry. However this has not yet been enforced.

**Government efforts to improve the situation**

The Consultative Council (upper house of parliament) amended the press law on 28 May 2007 to decriminalise press offences and ensure that editors would no longer be prosecuted for articles they did not write themselves. The changes still have to be approved by the lower house which in 2005 rejected an earlier attempt to decriminalise press offences.

**Cooperation with NGOs**

The authorities want to work with international human rights NGOs. After the appearance of the October 2007 Reporters Without Borders worldwide press freedom index, the information

ministry contacted the organisation to propose a fact-finding mission in 2008. However, local human rights groups do not get such a hearing.

### **Recommendations**

Reporters Without Borders calls on the lower house of parliament to pass the press law amendments proposed by the upper house. These could have repercussions throughout the region.

### **Methods used**

The material in this update was gathered and checked by Reporters Without Borders, which has a worldwide network of correspondents (in 130 countries) and partner organisations (in about 20).

Journalists in some countries can be sent to prison for several years just for a word or a photo that offends. Jailing or killing a journalist eliminates a vital witness and threatens the right of each of us to be kept informed. Reporters Without Borders has been fighting day-by-day for press freedom since it was founded in 1985.

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