

# Defamation Bill Protested

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**The**  **Moscow Times**

KIEV — Ukrainian journalists have protested outside the nation's parliament against a bill they fear will be used to muzzle the media, holding up empty posters to highlight their concerns about censorship.

The bill, backed by President Viktor Yanukovich's party, calls for toughened punishment for defamation, including prison terms of up to five years.

International watchdogs have criticized the measure as a government attempt to silence independent journalism.

Several leading Ukrainian newspapers and magazines have protested in recent days by publishing editions with blank covers.

More than 100 journalists took part in Monday's rally.

The legislature is set to consider the bill in a final reading next week, even though its author had sought to rescind it.

*(AP)*

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