

To:  
The Chairman  
Senate of Pakistan

August 13, 2015

Dear Sir,

We would like to bring to your attention towards the government's proposed cybercrime bill titled The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Bill 2015 This is currently pending before the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecom.

The bill when tabled drew immense criticism from industry civil society and media groups as well as from members of opposition across parties Industry digital and human rights groups and journalist associations collectively under the umbrella of the Joint Action Committee JAC expressed their reservations in writing to the National Assembly's Standing Committee on IT Telecom and submitted a request for a public hearing on the bill While the public hearing request was not granted selected invitations were issued to some members of the Joint Action Committee

On May 22 2015 in light of reservations expressed regarding the government's proposed draft of the bill raised by members of the JAC at a meeting of the NA Standing Committee on IT Chairman Capt retd Safdar constituted a subcommittee so that the bill may be reviewed and reservations addressed Further the legal team of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecom MoITT was instructed to hold a meeting with members of JAC who attended the meeting Contact details for all the groups and their representatives were submitted the same day at the Parliament House to the IT committee secretary However to date we have received no formal notification for any meeting to discuss the bill not by the Ministry and neither the subcommittee

On August 3 and 4 members of the JAC initiated meetings with the legal team of MoITT and the Federal Investigation Agency FIA On August 5 it was through a television show that we learned a meeting of the NA's standing committee on IT had been called for the next day to finalize the bill Members of opposition on the committee hardly received a day's notice for the meeting and recorded their protest at the meeting held on August 6 The committee meeting on August 6 chaired by Major Tahir Iqbal concluded there would be one more meeting before the bill is finalized

Despite submitting a legal redraft which the committee had asked the JAC to do and a request for meeting on August 11 we have received no notification for a meeting Instead a subcommittee meeting was scheduled once again at a day's notice for August 13 to discuss the bill And once again industry and rights groups as well as journalist associations have been excluded from the process

We request that all concerned groups and citizens be given at least one opportunity to express their reservations and proposed changes to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Bill 2015 The Joint Action Committee's proposed amendments in legal language as solicited are attached We would appreciate if a hearing can be called to discuss this so we can explain our reservations and recommended revisions before the respected members of parliament of both the upper and lower house

Signed: Joint Action Committee

Bolo Bhi  
Bytes For All (B4A)  
Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)  
Freedom Network (FN)  
Internet Service Providers Association of Pakistan (ISPAK)  
Institute for Research Advocacy Development (IRAADA)  
Media Matters for Democracy (MMFD)  
Reporters Without Borders (RWB)  
The Environment Protection Fund (TEPF)