

To:  
Sardar Ayaz Sadiq  
Speaker,  
National Assembly of Pakistan

Dear Sir,

On May 3, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on IT invited public input on the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Bill 2015, in writing via email, within seven days. On May 7, collectively, 10 organizations under the umbrella of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) submitted consolidated comments and requested a meeting. When the NA Standing Committee on Information Technology & Telecommunications met to discuss the comments at the Parliament House on May 22, members of the JAC present were asked to provide changes in legal formulation – collectively. A legal redraft was submitted on August 12.

Though the instructions issued to Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications (MoITT) at the meeting on May 22 were to hold a meeting with members of the JAC, no meeting was ever initiated or held. Neither was any subcommittee meetings held. The meetings were supposed to allow space to have a discussion on the contents of the bill. Yet, there was only interest in a legal redraft, not dialogue or discussion. Since no invitation for a meeting was issued between May and August, the JAC initiated meetings with MoITT and FIA (Federal Investigation Agency) in August. The aim was to convey our point of view and try and understand their reasoning.

Despite all this, not once did the subcommittee notify members of the JAC to attend and explain their point of view at length. Instead, even after the legal redraft was submitted, closed-door meetings of a subcommittee of the NA Standing Committee on IT were held to discuss our proposed legal redraft. The media, too, was barred from attending these proceedings. And our meeting requests were met with no response. Moreover, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on IT approved the bill for a second time on September 17, 2015, without even laying the revised draft before members of the committee. The revised draft also does not cater to the reservations expressed.

Members of the Senate have already expressed their reservations regarding the drafting process and content of this bill. Even if passed by the National Assembly, it is likely to be blocked in the Senate. Instead of that happening, **we request that the bill be fixed at the National Assembly level with input from non-governmental stakeholders in an open and transparent manner. We request that a review committee with equal representation from members of opposition be constituted who together with civil society and industry representatives, can address the concerns raised and ensure the bill is in line with constitutional parameters**

Signed: