

Political Party Manifesto General Elections 2018

Internet and digital spaces in Pakistan are increasingly becoming the site of social and political conversations that have the potential to impact mainstream discourse. The Party intends to advocate for rights to privacy, freedom of expression and right to information and for it to become a part of the larger discourse on issues pertaining to the said rights by supporting civil society. It will strive to promote ethical values of transparency, legitimacy, accountability and concepts of fairness associated with the collection and handling of data within any organization, both private and public bodies.

1. **Online Freedom of Expression:** Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees the right to free speech, which is internationally recognised to include both offline and online speech. In Pakistan, however, online freedom of expression has been curtailed through various policies and legislation. The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 (PECA) gives broad powers to the government and has vague language in its speech-restrictive provisions. It also carries harsh and disproportionate punishments for offences. PECA has granted broad powers to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to remove content, which can affect political speech of women Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), activists critiquing laws relating to gender and marginalized groups reclaiming spaces online. The content is often blocked online, without due process or transparency. The Party strives to establish a free and open internet, where internet content is not censored on vague grounds, and where political speech thrives.
2. **Right to Privacy in Digital Spaces:** The Party is committed to upholding Article 14 of the constitution, which provides the right to dignity and privacy to all citizens. Given the huge amount of data at the government's disposal, including personal information as part of the NADRA database, the government has a huge responsibility to protect this data as its guardians. The Party commits to bringing robust Data Protection laws to the national forefront considering that Pakistan has not enacted any data privacy laws and neither are there any policies in place that govern the fate of the data citizens held by government bodies, ISPs, telecommunication companies, private service delivery companies and mobile applications.
3. **Equitable Access to Digital Spaces:** Access to the internet and digital technologies is rapidly becoming a fundamental right. Digital access however is divided along lines of class, geographical location and gender. There is a considerable gender divide, where Pakistani men are twice as likely to own a mobile device than a Pakistani woman. We must ensure that ICTs are accessible all across Pakistan at affordable rates, and barriers

for women are removed. The Party recognises that increased access will not come at the cost of net neutrality and commitment to principles of internet freedom. Furthermore, parts of Pakistan, most notably FATA, have been experiencing internet shutdowns on the basis of national security. The Party commits to ensuring that political expression and right to access to ICTs is not curtailed on the basis of national security. The Party will call for the restoration of internet services in FATA and parts of Balochistan and the end of ad hoc censorship and blocking of content which is done in the name of blasphemous, pornographic or anti-state content.

4. **Addressing Online Harassment:** The Party is committed to making online spaces more inclusive and safe for all. In order to make that victims of online harassment have the correct tools at their disposal. The FIA, the designated agency for combating cyber crime, only has six offices in urban centers of Pakistan, making it impossible for many victims of online harassment to travel long distances to lodge a complaint. More FIA offices need to be setup to cater to more citizens and ensure accessibility. Gender sensitization training of the FIA staff to deal with cases of online harassment and violence against women cases.

Ultimately all these calls and endeavours are a part of Party's agenda on digital rights and security and the party vows to take up these intended measures, to the best of its ability, as it is in the best interests of the country and its people. However, internet access should not come at the cost of principles of net neutrality and user privacy.