



DRF condemns the arbitrary Youtube shutdowns in the country as ‘Unconstitutional’

7 Sept 2022: Digital Rights Foundation condemns the arbitrary Youtube shutdowns in the country by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and reiterates that these are unconstitutional blocks.

Youtube is a source of income, information, educational tool, and entertainment for many and these blocks are a direct threat to Articles 19 and 19 A of the Constitution. Pakistan already ranks ‘not free’ on the freedom of the net report index according to Freedom House, and these blocks constitute blatant state censorship for citizens of the country.

It is worrying that the PTA has implemented these blocks without any notice nor justification. This lack of transparency and arbitrary procedures should worry every citizen and political party.

The YouTube shutdowns, yesterday (September 6) and on August 21, were targeted at political speeches by former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Blocking the streaming of political speech of any party is blatant censorship. If the PTA believes that the content in speeches should not be allowed, it should make its reasons for banning public and subject to judicial review.

We would like to reiterate our stance that section 37 of PECA, which gives power to the PTA to block online content, runs afoul of human rights standards and should be repealed. Nevertheless, even section 37 does not authorize a blanket shutdown of an entire social media platform.