



Truth Matters, We Verify

INCIDENT REPORT 2025

**Prevention of Electronic
Crimes (Amendment) Act,
2025**



Fake News Watchdog

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org | **Web:** www.fakenewswatchdog.org

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025)

A Double-Edged Sword – Balancing Digital Regulation, Free
Speech, and Misinformation in Pakistan

Authors

Dr. Syed Asad Ali Shah
Prof. Syed Rehan Hasan
Muhammad Nasir Butt

Copyright Notice

© 2025 Fake News Watchdog. All Rights Reserved.

This report, "PECA 2025: A Double-Edged Sword – Balancing Digital Regulation, Free Speech, and Misinformation in Pakistan," is the intellectual property of Fake News Watchdog. Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or modification of any part of this publication without prior written permission is strictly prohibited.

Permission is granted for personal, educational, and non-commercial use, provided that proper attribution is given to Fake News Watchdog. Any commercial use, including reproduction in whole or in part for profit, requires express written consent.

For permissions and inquiries, please contact **Fake News Watchdog**

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org **Website:** www.fakenewswatchdog.org

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this report are based on independent research and analysis. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, Fake News Watchdog is not liable for any errors, omissions, or consequences arising from the use of this report.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Global Context and Comparative Analysis	1
National and International Concerns	2
Significance and Implications	3
Methodology	3
Data Collection Methods	3
Comparative Legal Framework Analysis	4
Stakeholder & Political Party Analysis	4
Recommendations Based on Best Practices	4
Limitations of the Study	5
WHAT IS PECA 2025?	5
Key Amendments and Provisions:	5
Objectives of the Act:	7
MEDIA REGULATIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES	8
Media Regulations in India	8
Key Difference between PECA 2025 and Indian Media Regulations	9
Media Regulations in the United States of America (USA)	10
PECA 2025 vs USA's Media Regulations	11
Media Regulations in United Kingdom (UK)	12
Comparison with PECA 2025	13
Key Difference:	13
Media Regulations in Turkey	14
PECA 2025 vs Turkey's Social Media & Disinformation Laws	15
Media Regulations in China	16
PECA 2025 vs China's Media Regulations	17
Key Difference:	17
Tabular Comparison of PECA 2025 with Media Regulations in India, USA, UK, Turkey, and China	18
Key Takeaways:	19
KEY CONCERNS AND DEMANDS BY THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS	20
Amnesty International's Response on PECA 2025	20
Key Concerns:	20
Amnesty International's Demands:	21
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)'s Response	22
Key Concerns:	22
Demands:	22

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)'s Response	23
Key Concerns:	23
HRCP's Demands:	24
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)'s Response	24
Key Concerns:	25
IFJ Demands:	25
Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ)'s Response	26
Key Concerns:	26
PFUJ's Demands:	27
Forum for Digital Rights and Democracy (FDRD)'s response	28
Key Concerns:	28
Demands:	29
Parliamentary Reporters Association of Pakistan (PRA)'s Response	29
RESPONSES BY MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN PAKISTAN	31
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s Response to the PECA Amendment Bill 2025	31
Key Concerns:	31
PTI's Demands:	32
Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)'s Stance on PECA Amendment Bill 2025	33
Key Points from PPP's Position:	33
Awami National Party (ANP)'s Stance on PECA 2025	34
Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan's Stance on PECA 2025	34
Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F)'s Stance on PECA 2025	35
Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM)'s Stance on PECA 2025	36
OFFICIAL RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT	36
CONCLUSION	37
The PECA 2025 Debate – Balancing Regulation and Freedom	37
The Way Forward:	38
Fake News Watchdog's Recommendations	38

Incident Report on PECA 2025

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital platforms has reshaped the way information is shared, consumed, and regulated. In response to emerging cybersecurity threats, misinformation, and online extremism, governments worldwide have introduced legislation to strengthen digital governance. In this context, Pakistan has enacted the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025), following its approval by the president. With this signing, the amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (PECA 2016) have officially become law.

The government asserts that PECA 2025 is designed to enhance Pakistan's cybercrime framework, regulate online content, and ensure digital security. However, the law has sparked intense debate, with critics arguing that it expands state control over social media, criminalizes dissent, and restricts digital freedoms. Key amendments include the establishment of the Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority (SMPRA) and the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), both of which are granted extensive powers to regulate online content, investigate cyber offenses, and enforce platform compliance. Additionally, the law introduces stricter penalties for spreading "false information" and mandates that social media platforms register with the government and adhere to regulatory guidelines. While proponents view these measures as necessary for combating fake news, cyber harassment, and digital threats, opponents warn of increased censorship, suppression of dissent, and curtailment of press freedom.

Global Context and Comparative Analysis

The introduction of PECA 2025 reflects a global trend of increasing digital regulation, but different countries have taken varied approaches to managing online spaces. Some, like the United States and the United Kingdom, have adopted moderate regulatory frameworks that focus on platform accountability while upholding free speech protections. Others, like Turkey and China, impose strict state control over digital spaces, restricting online freedoms in favor of government oversight. India, meanwhile, has implemented a middle-ground approach, requiring digital platforms to comply with government regulations while still allowing some degree of independent content moderation.

A comparative analysis of PECA 2025 with the media regulations of India, the USA, the UK, Turkey, and China reveals that Pakistan's new law mirrors the authoritarian digital control mechanisms of Turkey and China rather than the democratic

Incident Report on PECA 2025

frameworks of Western nations. Key differences emerge in areas such as platform autonomy, penalties for misinformation, censorship levels, and surveillance mechanisms. While PECA 2025 introduces strict content control and criminal penalties for misinformation, the USA protects free speech under the First Amendment¹, and the UK's Online Safety Act focuses on holding platforms accountable rather than imposing direct state censorship². In contrast, China operates one of the world's most restrictive digital environments, enforcing total state control over online content, banning foreign platforms, and implementing real-time surveillance³—a model that shares similarities with Pakistan's expanded regulatory approach under PECA 2025.

National and International Concerns

The enactment of PECA 2025 has triggered strong responses from national and international stakeholders, including journalist associations, human rights organizations, political opposition, and global media watchdogs. Organizations like Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) have criticized the law, arguing that it violates fundamental human rights, restricts free expression, and could be used to target journalists, political activists, and dissenters. They highlight concerns over vague definitions of "false information", which could lead to the arbitrary prosecution of critics and independent media outlets.

In Pakistan, media organizations such as the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) have rejected PECA 2025, calling it an attempt to silence independent reporting and control the digital narrative. The political opposition, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and other parties, has also raised concerns, warning that the law grants excessive powers to the executive branch, lacks judicial oversight, and threatens Pakistan's democratic foundations. Meanwhile, the government maintains that the law is necessary to curb digital misinformation, enhance cybersecurity, and establish clear legal frameworks for online accountability.

¹ Electronic Frontier Foundation. (2023). *Free speech and platform regulation in the USA under Section 230*. Retrieved from www.eff.org

² Government of the United Kingdom. (2023). *Online Safety Act 2023*. Retrieved from www.gov.uk

³ China Law Translate. (2021). *Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China (2017)*. Retrieved from www.chinalawtranslate.com

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Significance and Implications

The introduction of PECA 2025 marks a critical juncture in Pakistan's digital governance and civil liberties. If implemented without proper safeguards, it risks undermining freedom of speech, restricting journalistic independence, and expanding state surveillance. Conversely, if properly reformed, it could help combat genuine cyber threats, improve digital accountability, and align Pakistan's cyber laws with international best practices.

This report examines PECA 2025's provisions, its alignment with global regulatory frameworks, and its potential consequences for Pakistan's media landscape, political environment, and digital rights. By providing a detailed comparison with media laws in India, the USA, the UK, Turkey, and China, as well as analyzing stakeholder responses and legal critiques, this report aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the law's implications and the broader debate on digital governance in Pakistan.

Methodology

This incident report on the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025) employs a comprehensive, multi-faceted research methodology to ensure a balanced, evidence-based analysis of the law's implications. The methodology incorporates qualitative and comparative legal research, stakeholder analysis, and a review of national and international media laws to contextualize Pakistan's digital regulatory framework.

Data Collection Methods

The report draws upon a variety of primary and secondary sources, including:

- **Legal Documents:**
 - PECA 2025 text and official amendments.
 - Pakistan's Constitutional provisions related to freedom of expression.
 - Previous iterations of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA 2016) for comparison.
- **Comparative Analysis of International Laws:**
 - Media and cybercrime regulations from India, the USA, the UK, Turkey, and China were reviewed to compare state control, misinformation laws, penalties, and enforcement mechanisms.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- **Expert Opinions & Stakeholder Responses:**
 - Statements from legal experts, digital rights activists, journalists, and political leaders.
 - Official responses from government representatives, opposition parties, and international organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, CPJ, IFJ, HRCP).
- **Media Reports & Scholarly Articles:**
 - Reports from reputed media outlets, human rights organizations, and digital freedom advocacy groups.
 - Academic research on fake news legislation, cyber laws, and digital governance.

Comparative Legal Framework Analysis

A country-wise comparison was conducted to examine how different legal systems regulate misinformation, digital censorship, and online speech. Key aspects compared include:

- **Regulatory authorities** overseeing digital platforms.
- **Scope and definition** of fake news and misinformation.
- **Penalties and enforcement mechanisms** for misinformation violations.
- **Surveillance and investigative powers** of government agencies.
- **Freedom of speech protections vs. state control over digital content.**

Stakeholder & Political Party Analysis

A detailed review of political responses was undertaken, analyzing the stances of major political parties in Pakistan, including PTI, PPP, JUI-F, JI, ANP, and MWM. The government's official justification for PECA 2025 was also examined.

Recommendations Based on Best Practices

The Fake News Watchdog's recommendations are derived from:

- International best practices in digital governance.
- Fact-checking mechanisms in democratic countries.
- Input from media experts and legal professionals advocating for a balanced approach to misinformation regulation.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Limitations of the Study

- The analysis is based on publicly available data, and government deliberations on PECA 2025 were not fully transparent.
- Since PECA 2025 is a new law, long-term impacts remain speculative and require future observation.
- While the report considers multiple perspectives, political biases in stakeholder responses could influence their positions.

This report adopts a holistic approach to assess PECA 2025's potential impact on free speech, press freedom, and digital governance in Pakistan. By incorporating legal analysis, expert insights, stakeholder opinions, and global comparisons, it aims to provide an objective and well-rounded perspective on the law's consequences and necessary reforms.

WHAT IS PECA 2025?

The Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 introduces significant amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (PECA) to modernize Pakistan's legislative framework for combating cybercrime and addressing the challenges posed by the rapid advancement of digital technologies. Below is a summary of the key provisions and objectives of the Act:

Key Amendments and Provisions:

1. Establishment of New Authorities:

a. Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority (SMPRA):

- i. A new regulatory body is established to oversee social media platforms, regulate unlawful or offensive content, and ensure online safety.
- ii. The Authority has powers to block or remove content, issue guidelines, and impose fines on social media platforms for non-compliance.
- iii. It also promotes education, research, and awareness about online safety and digital rights.

b. National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA):

- i. A new investigation agency is created to handle cybercrime inquiries, investigations, and prosecutions.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- ii. The NCCIA replaces the Cyber Crime Wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and is empowered to conduct forensic analysis and digital investigations.

2. Regulation of Social Media Platforms:

- a. Social media platforms are required to enlist with the SMPRA and comply with its regulations.
- b. Platforms must establish transparent procedures for handling complaints related to unlawful or offensive content.
- c. The Authority can block or remove content that is deemed harmful, including content that incites violence, spreads hate speech, or promotes terrorism.

3. Definition of Unlawful or Offensive Content:

The Act defines unlawful or offensive content as content that:

- a. Incites violence, hatred, or public disorder.
- b. Spreads fake or false information.
- c. Contains obscene or pornographic material.
- d. Promotes terrorism or violence against the state.
- e. Damages the reputation of individuals or institutions.

4. Social Media Complaint Council:

- a. A new Social Media Complaint Council is established to receive and process complaints from the public regarding violations of the Act.
- b. The Council consists of a Chairman and members with expertise in information technology, law, and social media governance.

5. Social Media Protection Tribunal:

- a. A Tribunal is established to adjudicate cases related to social media violations and appeals against decisions of the SMPRA.
- b. The Tribunal has the authority to decide cases within 90 days, and its decisions can be appealed to the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

6. Penalties for False Information:

- a. The Act introduces penalties for the dissemination of false or fake information that causes fear, panic, or public unrest.
- b. Offenders can face imprisonment of up to 3 years or a fine of up to 2 million rupees, or both.

7. Powers of Investigation:

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- a. Only authorized officers of the NCCIA have the power to investigate cyber crimes under this Act.
- b. The NCCIA can collaborate with other law enforcement and intelligence agencies for joint investigations.

8. Transitory Provisions:

- a. Until the SMPRA and NCCIA are fully established, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the existing investigation agency will continue to perform their functions.

9. Miscellaneous Provisions:

- a. The Act includes provisions for the budget, accounts, and audit of the SMPRA.
- b. It also provides indemnity to government officials and authorities acting in good faith under the Act.

Objectives of the Act:

1. Modernization of Cybercrime Legislation:

The Act aims to update Pakistan's legal framework to address the growing complexities of cyber threats and digital crimes.

2. Protection of Digital Rights:

The establishment of the SMPRA and NCCIA is intended to protect citizens' digital rights, regulate online content, and promote responsible internet usage.

3. Combating Misinformation and Hate Speech:

The Act introduces mechanisms to tackle the spread of fake news, hate speech, and content that incites violence or public disorder.

4. Alignment with International Standards:

The amendments reflect Pakistan's commitment to aligning its cybercrime laws with international best practices for cybersecurity and digital rights protection.

5. Promoting Accountability in Cyberspace:

The Act seeks to ensure accountability among social media platforms and users by enforcing compliance with national laws and regulations.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

MEDIA REGULATIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Media regulations vary significantly across countries, reflecting diverse political, legal, and cultural landscapes. While some nations emphasize press freedom and minimal government intervention, others implement strict regulatory frameworks to control digital content and combat misinformation. Pakistan's Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025) introduces stringent oversight of social media, criminalizes misinformation, and expands state control over online discourse. In contrast, countries like the United States prioritize free speech, while China enforces absolute state control over digital platforms. Nations such as the United Kingdom, India, and Turkey adopt a middle-ground approach, balancing content regulation with media independence. This section explores how PECA 2025 compares to media laws in India, the USA, the UK, Turkey, and China, highlighting key similarities and differences in content moderation, regulatory authorities, penalties, and press freedom.

Media Regulations in India⁴

- **Regulatory Authorities**
 - The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 empower the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to regulate online platforms.
 - The Press Information Bureau (PIB) Fact Check Unit monitors fake news.
 - The Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC) oversees digital news and OTT platforms.
 - The Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) deals with online crimes.
- **Social Media & Digital Content Regulation**
 - The IT Rules 2021 require social media platforms to appoint grievance officers and remove content flagged by the government within 36 hours.
 - Intermediaries must trace the originator of messages upon government request.
 - Fake news regulations give fact-checking powers to PIB, leading to concerns over press freedom.

⁴ MeitY (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, India). (2021). *Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021*. Retrieved from www.meity.gov.in

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP) grants the government control over online data use.
- **Definition of Unlawful Content**
 - The IT Act, 2000 prohibits content that:
 - Threatens public order, decency, or morality.
 - Defames individuals or spreads misinformation.
 - Threatens national security or sovereignty.
- **Investigative Powers**
 - The IT Rules authorize government agencies to monitor and intercept digital communications.
 - The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and state cybercrime units investigate digital offenses.
 - The Indian Telegraph Act permits surveillance of digital communications.
- **Stakeholder Concerns & Criticism**
 - Journalists and civil rights groups argue that the IT Rules and PIB Fact Check Unit grant excessive government control over news and digital content.
 - The traceability clause in the IT Rules is seen as a threat to end-to-end encryption.
 - The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 is criticized for allowing government access to private user data.

Key Difference between PECA 2025 and Indian Media Regulations

While both PECA 2025 and Indian media regulations aim to combat cybercrime and misinformation, their implementation raises concerns about press freedom and government overreach.

- Pakistan's PECA 2025 establishes new regulatory bodies and harsh penalties for fake news, prompting fears of digital censorship.
- India's IT Rules & DPDP Act impose platform liability and grant the government power to remove content and trace messages, raising privacy and free speech concerns.

Both laws reflect a trend toward increasing state control over digital media, but critics argue they risk undermining democratic freedoms.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Media Regulations in the United States of America (USA)^{5 6}

- **Regulatory Authorities**
 - Federal Communications Commission (FCC): Regulates broadcast media but has limited control over digital platforms.
 - Federal Trade Commission (FTC): Monitors digital markets, misinformation, and consumer protection.
 - First Amendment Protections: The U.S. does not have a central regulatory body for social media content, as free speech is protected under the Constitution.

- **Social Media & Digital Content Regulation**
 - No mandatory platform registration or direct content control by the government.
 - Social media platforms self-regulate under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (CDA), which grants them immunity for third-party content.
 - Government cannot censor content unless it involves illegal activities (e.g., incitement to violence, child exploitation).
 - Platforms voluntarily moderate content through their community guidelines (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube).

- **Definition of Unlawful Content**
 - The First Amendment protects most speech, including controversial or false information.
 - However, some content is restricted under existing laws:
 - Incitement to violence (Brandenburg v. Ohio).
 - Defamation (must meet a high legal standard of "actual malice" for public figures).
 - Child pornography and explicit illegal content.
 - Platforms voluntarily remove harmful content, but the government cannot legally force removal without a court order.

- **Investigative Powers**

⁵ Electronic Frontier Foundation. (2023). *Free speech and platform regulation in the USA under Section 230*. Retrieved from www.eff.org

⁶ U.S. Congress. (1996). *Communications Decency Act, Section 230*. Retrieved from www.congress.gov

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- Law enforcement agencies (FBI, Department of Justice, Cyber Crime Units) investigate cybercrimes, but they require a warrant for surveillance.
- The Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches, so authorities cannot monitor digital activity without legal authorization.
- The Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) regulates how authorities access digital communications.
- **Fake News & Disinformation Laws**
 - Fake news is not illegal, as it is protected under the First Amendment.
 - The government cannot punish misinformation unless it causes direct harm or defamation.
 - Platforms regulate misinformation (e.g., Twitter's fact-checking policies, Facebook's removal of false COVID-19 claims).
 - Defamation cases require plaintiffs to prove actual harm and malice in court.
- **Stakeholder Concerns & Criticism**
 - Civil Liberties Groups (ACLU, EFF): Oppose any government intervention in content regulation.
 - Tech Companies: Concerned about potential regulations affecting their autonomy.
 - Public Debate: While misinformation is a problem, many Americans resist government involvement in online speech regulation.

PECA 2025 vs USA's Media Regulations

- Pakistan's PECA 2025 introduces strict state control over social media and online content, criminalizing fake news and expanding government surveillance powers.
- The USA has no equivalent law due to First Amendment protections, allowing broad free speech rights, even if the content is false or misleading.
- In Pakistan, the government has direct authority to remove content and prosecute users, whereas in the U.S., private platforms regulate speech and the government cannot legally censor content without due process.

Thus, PECA 2025 reflects an authoritarian approach to digital governance, while U.S. media regulations prioritize free expression, despite challenges posed by misinformation.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Media Regulations in United Kingdom (UK)^{7 8}

- **Regulatory Authorities**
 - Ofcom (Office of Communications): Regulates broadcast, digital media, and online platforms under the Online Safety Act 2023.
 - Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): Enforces data protection laws (GDPR, UK Data Protection Act 2018).
 - Crown Prosecution Service (CPS): Prosecutes cases of online harassment, defamation, and illegal content.
- **Social Media & Digital Content Regulation**
 - Social media companies must prevent and remove harmful content (illegal material, hate speech, self-harm content, child exploitation).
 - Platforms must comply with Ofcom's regulations or face fines of up to 10% of global revenue.
 - Does not criminalize misinformation or defamation unless it violates existing laws.
 - Free speech is protected, but companies must take action against harmful but legal content.
- **Definition of Unlawful Content**
 - Illegal content includes:
 - Child sexual abuse, terrorism, and incitement to violence.
 - Hate speech and harassment under the Public Order Act 1986.
 - Defamation is a civil offense, and lawsuits require proof of serious harm (Defamation Act 2013).
- **Investigative Powers**
 - Law enforcement agencies (Metropolitan Police, National Crime Agency, CPS) investigate cybercrimes.
 - Authorities require court approval for surveillance or accessing private data (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000).
 - Social media companies, not the government, regulate content removal, under Ofcom's oversight.

⁷ BBC News. (2023). *Online Safety Act: UK's new internet regulation explained*. Retrieved from www.bbc.com

⁸ Government of the United Kingdom. (2023). *Online Safety Act 2023*. Retrieved from www.gov.uk

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- **Fake News & Disinformation Laws**
 - No specific law criminalizing fake news, but platforms must tackle misleading content under Ofcom's rules.
 - Defamation laws apply, but penalties are civil, not criminal.
 - The UK government does not have the power to block social media content directly.
- **Stakeholder Concerns & Criticism**
 - Human rights groups: Concerned about the "legal but harmful" content category, which might impact free speech.
 - Tech companies (Meta, Twitter, Google): Oppose potential over-regulation and high fines.
 - Privacy advocates: Raise concerns about the requirement for messaging apps to scan encrypted messages for illegal content.

Comparison with PECA 2025

- Pakistan's PECA 2025 introduces strict state control over digital platforms, criminalizes misinformation, and allows government agencies to block content.
- The UK's Online Safety Act 2023 enforces platform accountability without government censorship, emphasizing corporate responsibility over direct state control.
- Pakistan's law grants the government broad powers, while the UK relies on independent regulatory bodies (Ofcom) to enforce online safety rules.

Key Difference:

The UK emphasizes free speech and corporate responsibility, whereas Pakistan centralizes digital regulation under the government, leading to concerns over censorship and state control.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Media Regulations in Turkey⁹ ¹⁰

- **Regulatory Authorities**
 - Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK): Regulates broadcast and digital media.
 - Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK): Enforces internet regulations and can block websites.
 - Social Media Law (2020 Amendment to the Internet Law 5651): Requires platforms to appoint local representatives and comply with content takedown requests.
- **Social Media & Digital Content Regulation**
 - The Social Media Law (2020) requires major platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to appoint local representatives for government oversight.
 - Platforms must store user data in Turkey and comply with government takedown requests within 48 hours.
 - Failure to remove content can result in fines, bandwidth throttling, or total platform bans.
 - Misinformation Law (2022) criminalizes spreading false information that causes public concern, with up to 3 years in prison.
- **Definition of Unlawful Content**
 - Unlawful content under Law 5651 includes:
 - Threats to national security or public order.
 - Insults against the President or state institutions (under Article 299 of the Penal Code).
 - Defamation and misinformation that disrupts public peace.
- **Investigative Powers**
 - The BTK and RTÜK can restrict internet access and order social media platforms to remove content.
 - New surveillance measures allow authorities to track user activities and force ISPs to store data.

⁹ Reporters Without Borders. (2024). *Turkey's digital censorship and media laws: A growing threat to press freedom*. Retrieved from www.rsf.org

¹⁰ Turkish Parliament. (2022). *Disinformation Law: Misinformation and digital media regulations in Turkey*. Retrieved from www.tbmm.gov.tr

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- Law 7253 (2020) grants police enhanced digital surveillance powers, requiring VPN and social media data sharing.
- **Fake News & Disinformation Laws**
 - The Disinformation Law (2022) criminalizes spreading false information that threatens public order.
 - Violators face up to 3 years in jail if found guilty of deliberately spreading misleading news.
 - Journalists and social media users are often prosecuted under this law.
- **Stakeholder Concerns & Criticism**
 - Human Rights Watch (HRW) & Reporters Without Borders (RSF): Argue the Social Media and Disinformation Laws are used to jail critics.
 - Opposition parties call the law a tool to silence dissent before elections.
 - Major tech companies like Twitter and Meta resisted compliance with the 2020 Social Media Law but eventually appointed local representatives.

PECA 2025 vs Turkey's Social Media & Disinformation Laws

Both Pakistan (PECA 2025) and Turkey (Social Media & Disinformation Laws) share strict government control over digital spaces, including social media regulations, criminal penalties for fake news, and expanded surveillance powers.

- Pakistan's PECA 2025 creates a centralized regulatory body (SMPRA) and criminalizes misinformation, but its tribunal system adds an extra layer of legal control over online content.
- Turkey's Social Media Laws require platform compliance with local authorities, and its Disinformation Law allows criminal prosecution of journalists and users.

Both countries face international criticism for using digital laws to suppress dissent, censor opposition, and restrict press freedom.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Media Regulations in China¹¹

- **Regulatory Authorities**
 - Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC): Central authority regulating digital content, internet governance, and censorship.
 - Ministry of Public Security (MPS): Enforces cyber laws and investigates online crimes.
 - Great Firewall: A government-controlled system that filters, blocks, and monitors online content across China.
 - State Council Information Office: Oversees news media and controls information dissemination.

- **Social Media & Digital Content Regulation**
 - Strict content censorship through the Great Firewall:
 - Bans foreign platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Google.
 - Blocks politically sensitive topics (e.g., Tiananmen Square, Hong Kong protests).
 - Real-name registration: Social media users must register with their real identities.
 - Content filtering: Platforms must proactively remove politically and socially sensitive content.
 - Misinformation & Fake News Laws:
 - Spreading false information is punishable by imprisonment.
 - Media is strictly controlled by state agencies.

- **Definition of Unlawful Content**
 - Unlawful content under China's cyber laws includes:
 - Criticism of the Communist Party or government policies.
 - Promotion of Western democratic values.
 - Content related to protests, dissent, or Taiwan's independence.
 - Unverified or misleading information that disrupts public order.

- **Investigative Powers**
 - The Ministry of Public Security (MPS) can monitor online activity in real-time.
 - Surveillance & AI-based monitoring used to detect dissent.

¹¹ China Law Translate. (2021). *Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China (2017)*. Retrieved from www.chinalawtranslate.com

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- Social Credit System: Online activities affect a citizen's social credit score, influencing access to services like travel and loans.
- Companies are required to share user data with the government (e.g., WeChat and Alibaba comply with surveillance regulations).
- **Fake News & Disinformation Laws**
 - Strict punishment for spreading "rumors" or false information:
 - Users can be jailed for up to 7 years for spreading politically sensitive false news.
 - Social media platforms must delete "unverified" content immediately.
 - Government tightly controls news sources—only state-approved sources can distribute political information.
- **Stakeholder Concerns & Criticism**
 - International human rights organizations: Condemn severe online censorship and lack of press freedom.
 - Foreign governments: Criticize China for restricting digital freedoms and state surveillance.
 - Tech companies: Face pressure to comply with Chinese regulations or risk being banned.
 - Activists and journalists: Often arrested or detained for criticizing the government online.

PECA 2025 vs China's Media Regulations

Both Pakistan (PECA 2025) and China (Cybersecurity Laws & Great Firewall) impose strict government control over digital spaces, including social media regulations, criminal penalties for fake news, and expanded surveillance powers.

- Pakistan's PECA 2025 introduces a centralized regulatory body (SMPRA) and criminalizes misinformation, but still allows some access to foreign platforms.
- China's model is more extreme, banning foreign platforms outright and implementing AI-powered surveillance.
- Both countries face criticism for restricting press freedom and digital rights.

Key Difference:

China has a fully state-controlled internet, while Pakistan's approach still allows some degree of digital freedom but increases government oversight over online content.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Tabular Comparison of PECA 2025 with Media Regulations in India, USA, UK, Turkey, and China

Aspect	Pakistan PECA2025	India	USA	UK	Turkey	China
Regulatory Authority	SMPRA, NCCIA, Social Media Tribunal	MeitY, PIB Fact Check Unit	FCC, FTC (no direct content regulation)	Ofcom, ICO	RTÜK, BTK	CAC, MPS, Great Firewall
Social Media Regulation	Mandatory platform registration, strict government control	Intermediaries must follow IT Rules, remove flagged content	Platforms self-regulate under Section 230	Platforms self-regulate under Ofcom's supervision	Platforms must appoint local reps, comply with takedown orders	Foreign platforms banned, strict state control
Content Restrictions	Fake news, defamation, hate speech, national security risks	Fake news, defamation, national security risks	Illegal content only (terrorism, child abuse, incitement to violence)	Illegal content (terrorism, child abuse), hate speech laws	Fake news, defamation, national security, criticism of state	Political dissent, Western values, anti-government speech
Penalties for Misinformation	3 years imprisonment, fines up to 2 million rupees	No specific law; defamation is civil, takedown orders apply	No criminal penalties, only civil defamation lawsuits	No criminal penalties, only civil lawsuits	3 years imprisonment for spreading false information	Up to 7 years in prison for spreading rumors
Surveillance & Investigation	NCCIA has broad powers, real-time digital monitoring possible	Police can access user data under IT Act, trace originators of messages	Law enforcement requires court approval under Fourth Amendment	Law enforcement requires court approval under privacy laws	Police can monitor social media, ISPs must store user data	AI-based mass surveillance, real-time content monitoring
Censorship Level	High – Government can block content, prosecute journalists	Moderate – Government can order takedowns, platform compliance required	Low – Free speech protected, no direct censorship	Moderate – Platforms must remove harmful content, fines apply	High – Government controls narratives, fines & bans possible	Extreme – Total internet control, content filtering, foreign platforms blocked
Criticism & Concerns	Suppression of free speech, political targeting, lack of transparency	Free speech concerns, increasing government control over digital media	Misinformation risks, but strong free speech protections	Balancing free speech and harmful content moderation, privacy concerns	Used to silence dissent, control digital narrative	One of the world's most restrictive digital environments

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Pakistan's Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025) introduces strict government control over digital platforms, criminalizes misinformation, and expands state surveillance. A comparison with India, the USA, the UK, Turkey, and China reveals varying degrees of regulation, platform accountability, and press freedom across these nations.

Key Takeaways:

- Pakistan's PECA 2025 is among the most restrictive digital laws, granting broad powers to government authorities to regulate and penalize online content.
- India and the UK adopt a regulatory approach that balances government oversight with platform accountability, but concerns remain about increasing state control.
- The USA prioritizes free speech, with minimal government intervention, allowing platforms to self-regulate under Section 230 protections.
- Turkey and China impose strict state control, with China being the most extreme—banning foreign platforms and enforcing real-time censorship.
- Pakistan, Turkey, and China use misinformation laws as tools for political control, raising international concerns over press freedom and suppression of dissent.

PECA 2025 places Pakistan closer to Turkey and China in terms of state-controlled digital governance rather than democratic models like the USA, UK, or India. It reflects a shift toward greater censorship, increased penalties for misinformation, and broad surveillance powers, sparking concerns about freedom of expression, press freedom, and human rights.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

KEY CONCERNS AND DEMANDS BY THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Amnesty International's Response on PECA 2025

Amnesty International has expressed strong concerns over the passage of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 by Pakistan's National Assembly. The organization criticizes the amendments for further tightening the government's control over the digital landscape and undermining freedom of expression. Below are the key points from Amnesty International's response:

Key Concerns:

- **Tightening Government Control:**
 - Amnesty International describes the amendments as a move to further tighten the government's grip over Pakistan's already heavily controlled digital space.
 - The organization warns that the new provisions could stifle online dissent and freedom of expression.
- **Criminalization of False and Fake Information:**
 - The Act introduces a new criminal offense for spreading false and fake information, punishable by up to 3 years in prison and a fine.
 - Amnesty International criticizes the vague and ambiguous framing of this offense, which could be misused to target dissent and silence critics, as seen with the previous use of PECA.
- **Expansion of Regulatory Powers:**
 - The amendments establish the Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority (SMPRA), which is granted broad powers to block and remove online content.
 - Amnesty International argues that the vague criteria for content removal violate international human rights standards, particularly the principles of proportionality and necessity.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- **Lack of Consultation and Debate:**
 - The amendments were passed without meaningful consultation or debate with civil society, raising concerns about the lack of transparency and inclusivity in the legislative process.
- **Broader Context of Digital Repression:**
 - Amnesty International highlights that these amendments are part of a broader trend of digital repression in Pakistan, including the use of intrusive surveillance technologies and laws like the Digital Nation Pakistan Bill, which lack human rights safeguards.
 - The organization points to the ongoing blocking of social media platforms, such as X (formerly Twitter), as evidence of the government's restrictive approach to digital freedoms.

Amnesty International's Demands:

- **Withdrawal of the Bill:** Amnesty International calls on the Pakistani authorities to immediately withdraw the amendments.
- **Meaningful Consultation:** The organization urges the government to engage in a consultative process with civil society to amend PECA in line with international human rights law.
- **Protection of Freedom of Expression:** Amnesty International emphasizes the need to ensure that any legislation respects and protects the **right to freedom of expression** and access to information.

To conclude, Amnesty International's response highlights significant concerns about the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025, particularly its potential to further restrict freedom of expression and online dissent in Pakistan. The organization calls for the withdrawal of the amendments and urges the government to adopt a more inclusive and rights-respecting approach to digital regulation.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)'s Response

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has raised objections to the amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2025, which criminalizes the "intentional" spread of "false news" with penalties of up to three years in prison or a fine of 2 million rupees (USD \$7,100). The bill, already approved by the National Assembly and Senate, awaits the president's signature. CPJ and journalists argue that the law will restrict press freedom and give excessive control to the government over online content.

Key Concerns:

1. **Threat to Freedom of Speech:** CPJ warns that the amendments will disproportionately restrict free speech in Pakistan under the guise of combating misinformation.
2. **Government Overreach:** The law grants the government and security agencies sweeping powers to control digital media, potentially suppressing dissent.
3. **Lack of Accountability:** The bill expands the definition of online harms and establishes four new government bodies for digital media regulation, raising fears of increased censorship.
4. **Targeting Journalists:** Journalists fear that the law could be used to silence independent reporting and critical voices under vague definitions of "false news."
5. **Unconstitutional Measures:** The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists sees the amendments as unconstitutional and an infringement on citizens' fundamental rights.

Demands:

1. **Presidential Veto:** CPJ urges President Asif Ali Zardari to reject the bill to protect press freedom and citizens' rights.
2. **Protection of Journalists:** The CPJ along with the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) demands safeguards to prevent the misuse of the law against media professionals.
3. **Nationwide Protests:** Journalists have announced protests against the bill, calling for its withdrawal or major revisions to prevent censorship.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

4. **Transparent Regulations:** Media organizations demand a more transparent and consultative approach to regulating digital media rather than granting broad powers to the government.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)'s Response

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed deep concern over the passage of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill 2025 in the National Assembly. The HRCP warns that the bill, if enacted, could further restrict freedom of digital expression and be used to target political workers, human rights defenders, journalists, and dissidents. Below are the key points from the press release:

Key Concerns:

- **Targeting Dissent and Criticism:**
 - The HRCP highlights the state's poor record on protecting digital freedoms and fears that the bill will be used to penalize criticism of state institutions.
 - The bill could become a tool to suppress political dissent and silence voices that challenge the government or state authorities.
- **Vague Definition of Fake or False News**
 - Section 26-A of the bill criminalizes the dissemination of "fake or false news", but the term is not clearly defined.
 - The bill refers to vague outcomes such as causing "fear, panic, disorder, or unrest", which could be misused to target legitimate expression.
 - The prescribed punishment of up to three years' imprisonment is deemed excessive and disproportionate.
- **Overregulation of Digital Content:**
 - The bill establishes four new authorities to regulate digital content, imposing multi-layered controls that the HRCP argues are disproportionate.
 - This overregulation is expected to have a chilling effect on freedom of expression and opinion, further restricting Pakistan's already limited digital freedoms.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- **Lack of Judicial Oversight:**
 - Appeals to the proposed Social Media Protection Tribunal will go directly to the Supreme Court, bypassing intermediate judicial oversight.
 - The tribunal will comprise government-appointed members, raising concerns about executive control and diminished independence in adjudicating digital rights cases.
- **Existing Overregulation of Digital Freedoms:**
 - The HRCP notes that digital freedoms in Pakistan are already overregulated through laws and policies, which have harmed people's right to information and connectivity.
 - These rights are essential for a functioning 21st-century democracy, and the bill risks further undermining them.

HRCP's Demands:

- **Open and Extensive Debate:** The HRCP calls for the bill to be openly and extensively debated in the Senate before it proceeds further.
- **Protection of Fundamental Rights:** The government must ensure that any legislation respects and protects fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and access to information.

The HRCP's press release underscores the potential dangers of the PECA Amendment Bill 2025, particularly its impact on freedom of expression and digital rights. The organization urges the government to reconsider the bill and engage in a transparent and inclusive legislative process to avoid further eroding Pakistan's democratic freedoms. The bill, as it stands, risks becoming another tool for suppressing dissent and undermining the rights of citizens in the digital space.

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)'s Response

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has strongly condemned the latest amendments to Pakistan's Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2025, warning that they further restrict freedom of expression, criminalize dissent, and expand government control over digital spaces. The IFJ, alongside its affiliate, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), has called for the immediate repeal of the legislation, citing concerns over its vague definitions, excessive penalties, and lack of judicial oversight.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Key Concerns:

- **Criminalization of Misinformation:**
 - The introduction of Section 26(A) penalizes the dissemination of misinformation, disinformation, or content likely to cause “fear, panic, disorder, or unrest”, punishable by up to three years in prison or a fine of PKR 2 million (USD 7,150).
 - The vague definition of ‘fake news’ could be exploited to suppress journalism and dissent.
- **Government Control Over Digital Media:**
 - The creation of a Social Media Regulation and Protection Authority expands government oversight, empowering authorities to block or remove online content.
 - Four new regulatory bodies will impose multi-layered digital controls, increasing censorship and state surveillance.
- **Targeting of Journalists and Activists:**
 - Media groups, political activists, and human rights defenders fear that these amendments could be used to silence criticism of state institutions.
 - The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) has labeled PECA 2025 as a tool to stifle democratic voices.
- **Lack of Transparency and Consultation:**
 - The bill was passed without stakeholder input or public debate, raising concerns about government overreach and a lack of democratic process.
- **Weakened Judicial Oversight:**
 - Appeals to the newly proposed Social Media Protection Tribunal—composed of government-appointed members—would go directly to the Supreme Court, bypassing lower courts and reducing judicial independence.

IFJ Demands:

- Immediate repeal of the PECA 2025 amendments.
- Meaningful consultation with journalists, civil society, and digital rights groups before passing any new cyber laws.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- Protection of press freedom and the right to free expression, as guaranteed by Pakistan's Constitution.
- Rejection of the bill by President Asif Ali Zardari to prevent its implementation.
- Countrywide protests to oppose the law, including a grand sit-in outside Parliament on February 14, 2025.

The IFJ and PFUJ argue that PECA 2025 represents a dangerous expansion of government control over digital expression, using misinformation laws as a pretext for censorship. The law's vague wording, broad enforcement powers, and lack of oversight pose a direct threat to journalists, activists, and the public's right to information. The IFJ urges Pakistan's government to reject the amendments and uphold constitutional freedoms.

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ)'s Response

The **Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ)**, led by its president Afzal Butt, has strongly rejected the amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill 2025, calling this an attack on press freedom and free speech. PFUJ has vowed to resist these amendments through **nationwide protests** until they are withdrawn. The organization criticizes the government for **not consulting journalists and stakeholders** before passing the bill and warns that these amendments will **further restrict media freedom** in Pakistan. Below are the key points from the PFUJ's response:

Key Concerns:

- **Lack of Consultation:**
 - The government did not consult any journalistic bodies or stakeholders before introducing the bill, making the process unilateral and non-inclusive.
 - This lack of consultation undermines the legitimacy of the law and raises concerns about its intent.
- **Gagging Freedom of Speech:**
 - PFUJ believe the bill is designed to gag freedom of speech and intimidate journalists and media organizations.
 - The bill's provisions, particularly those related to "false or fake news", could be misused to target journalists and suppress critical reporting.
- **Damage to Pakistan's Global Ranking:**

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- Pakistan's press freedom index is already declining, and these amendments will worsen the situation.
- **Opposition to Unilateral Tribunals:**
 - The PFUJ rejects the establishment of tribunals to regulate digital content, arguing that law enforcement agencies or police officers should not have the authority to decide what constitutes false or fake news.
 - Such tribunals could lead to executive overreach and further restrict press freedom.
- **Call for Protests:**
 - The PFUJ announced plans to hold countrywide rallies against the new law starting the following week.
 - If the government does not withdraw the law, the PFUJ will stage a sit-in protest outside Parliament to demand its repeal.

PFUJ's Demands:

- **Withdrawal of the Law:** The PFUJ calls for the immediate withdrawal of the PECA Amendment Bill 2025.
- **Inclusive Legislation:** The government should engage in consultations with journalistic bodies and stakeholders to draft laws that protect freedom of expression and press freedom.
- **Protection of Journalists:** The PFUJ emphasizes the need to safeguard journalists and media outlets from intimidation and harassment under the guise of regulating digital content.

The PFUJ's response highlights the journalistic community's strong opposition to the PECA Amendment Bill 2025, which they see as a threat to press freedom and freedom of speech in Pakistan. The union's plans for countrywide protests and a potential sit-in outside Parliament underscore the urgency of their demands and their commitment to resisting laws that undermine democratic freedoms. The PFUJ's stance reflects broader concerns about the government's increasing control over digital and media spaces, which could have far-reaching implications for journalism and free expression in Pakistan.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Forum for Digital Rights and Democracy (FDRD)'s response

The Forum for Digital Rights and Democracy (FDRD) has strongly opposed the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025, criticizing it for being passed without meaningful consultation with stakeholders. The Forum argues that the amendments threaten fundamental rights, free speech, and democratic values by granting excessive powers to the federal government over digital platforms. It urges the government to repeal the law and adopt a more transparent and inclusive approach to digital governance.

Key Concerns:

- **Lack of Consultation & Undemocratic Process:**
 - The amendments were passed without debate or stakeholder input, undermining transparency, inclusivity, and accountability.
 - This lack of consultation reduces the law's legitimacy and weakens democratic principles.
- **Excessive Government Control Over Digital Regulation:**
 - The Federal Government has unchecked authority to appoint members of regulatory bodies, including:
 - Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority
 - Social Media Complaint Council
 - Social Media Protection Tribunal
 - The absence of parliamentary oversight and civil society involvement raises concerns about impartiality.
- **Vague & Broad Legal Terminology:**
 - The use of ambiguous terms like "aspersions" and an expanded definition of "complainant" creates room for misuse.
 - This could suppress legitimate speech and criminalize dissent.
- **Criminalization of Defamation & Increased Self-Censorship:**
 - The criminal penalties for defamation discourage free expression, particularly affecting journalists and activists.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- Many countries are shifting towards civil remedies instead of criminal defamation to balance accountability with free speech.

Demands:

- **Repeal of the PECA Amendment Act 2025:** The government should withdraw the amendments to protect fundamental rights and digital freedoms.
- **Transparent Consultation Process:** The government should engage stakeholders (civil society, academia, journalists, and rights organizations) before making legal changes.
- **Parliamentary Oversight & Civil Society Involvement:** The appointment process for digital regulatory bodies should be transparent and involve civil society and parliament to ensure fairness.
- **Clearer Legal Definitions & Safeguards:** Ambiguous terms like "aspersions" should be clearly defined to prevent misuse and political victimization.
- **Shift from Criminal to Civil Defamation Remedies:** The law should focus on civil penalties instead of criminalizing speech, aligning with international best practices.

To conclude, FDRD views the PECA Act 2025 as a serious threat to free speech and digital rights. It calls for immediate repeal, meaningful consultation, and reforms to ensure a fair and democratic approach to online governance in Pakistan.

Parliamentary Reporters Association of Pakistan (PRA)'s Response

The Parliamentary Reporters Association of Pakistan (PRA) has strongly opposed the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2025 (PECA Amendment Bill) and declared it a black law. The association staged a walkout from the Senate session in protest against the bill, condemning the way it was being passed.

Key Concerns and Demands:

1. **Lack of Transparency & Consultation:**
 - The bill is being passed in a non-transparent and forceful manner, which the PRA equates to a midnight attack on press freedom.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- The government did not consult journalists or media organizations before drafting the amendments.
- 2. Opposition from Journalists & Political Parties:**
- Opposition parties and journalists united in their protest against the bill.
 - Several senators, including Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Senator Abbas Kamran, and Senator Falak Naz, expressed solidarity with journalists and raised concerns over the negative impact of the bill.
- 3. Impact on Press Freedom & Journalistic Rights:**
- The bill imposes severe restrictions on journalists and digital media platforms.
 - The PRA believes the bill threatens independent journalism and is a move towards suppressing freedom of expression.
- 4. Urgent Appeal to Government & Prime Minister:**
- The PRA has urged Prime Minister and government officials to take immediate notice of journalists' concerns.
 - They demand the withdrawal of the PECA Amendment Bill or at least major revisions to protect press freedom and journalists' rights.
- 5. Call for Parliamentary Debate & Legal Review:**
- The PRA insists that rushed legislation without proper parliamentary debate and stakeholder consultation is unacceptable.
 - They demand a thorough review of the bill in consultation with media representatives before its passage.

The Parliamentary Reporters Association of Pakistan (PRA) has rejected the PECA Amendment Bill, 2025, calling it draconian and undemocratic. They demand the government reconsider its approach, engage with journalists, and ensure press freedom is not compromised.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

RESPONSES BY MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s Response to the PECA Amendment Bill 2025

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has strongly criticized the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill 2025, expressing grave concerns over its implications for democracy and freedom of expression. During a media interaction, Senator Ali Zafar, speaking on behalf of the PTI, highlighted the party's opposition to the bill and its potential to suppress dissent. Below are the key points from the PTI's response:

Key Concerns:

- **Threat to Freedom of Expression:**
 - Senator Zafar emphasized that freedom of expression is the soul of democracy, and the amended PECA Act effectively bans it.
 - The new interpretation of “fake news” in the bill is seen as a tool to stifle free speech and eliminate democratic debate.
- **Government Control Over Tribunals:**
 - The PTI criticized the government's increased control over tribunals established under the amended act, calling it an infringement on constitutional freedoms.
 - Senator Zafar argued that by placing government-appointed members in key positions, the government has compromised the independence of the regulatory process.
- **Violation of Constitutional Rights:**
 - The PTI described the amendments as a violation of the constitution, particularly the right to freedom of expression.
 - Senator Zafar stated that jailing individuals for expressing their opinions is unacceptable and undermines democratic principles.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- **Walkout in Protest:**

- PTI senators walked out of the Senate in protest against the government's plans to pass the PECA Amendment Bill.
- Senator Zafar explained that the walkout was in solidarity with journalists and civil society, who have also opposed the bill.

PTI's Demands:

- **Formation of a Joint Parliamentary Committee:**

- The PTI demanded the formation of a joint parliamentary committee to review the controversial bill.
- The committee should ensure that all stakeholders, including journalists and civil society, are consulted in the legislative process.

- **Reconsideration of the Bill:**

- Senator Zafar called on the government and parliament to reconsider the bill, emphasizing that criticism and pointing out mistakes are fundamental to democracy.
- The PTI reiterated its opposition to censorship in all forms and urged the government to prioritize the interests of the people and constitutional values.

The PTI's response underscores its strong opposition to the PECA Amendment Bill 2025, which it views as a threat to democracy, freedom of expression, and press freedom. The party's walkout from the Senate and its demand for a joint parliamentary committee reflect its commitment to protecting constitutional rights and ensuring inclusive legislative processes. The PTI's stance aligns with the broader opposition from journalists, civil society, and other political parties, who fear the bill could be used to suppress dissent and stifle democratic debate. The bill is expected to face further scrutiny as it moves to the Senate for approval.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)'s Stance on PECA Amendment Bill 2025

Although Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) supported the government to pass PECA Amendment Bill 2025 in the National Assembly and the Senate, however, PPP Senator Sherry Rehman has publicly strongly opposed the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2025, citing a lack of consultation with stakeholders, including journalists.

Key Points from PPP's Position:

1. Lack of Transparency & Consultation:

- The bill was not discussed in the committee before its passage.
- PPP believes that journalists and other stakeholders were not consulted, making the process undemocratic.

2. Support for Journalists' Amendments:

- PPP supports amendments proposed by journalists to safeguard press freedom.
- The party is working towards establishing a council within the PECA framework to ensure oversight.

3. Commitment to Press Freedom:

- Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has reaffirmed PPP's support for journalists and their right to free expression.
- The party will engage with journalists to propose amendments to the bill.

Abdul Qadir Patel, a member of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), stated that it would have been better to discuss the PECA matter in the National Assembly. He emphasized that the PPP does not support suppressing people's voices.

In nutshell, the PPP opposes the PECA Amendment Bill in its current form, calling for greater transparency, consultation, and protections for press freedom. The party has pledged to work alongside journalists to introduce necessary amendments.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Awami National Party (ANP)'s Stance on PECA 2025

The Awami National Party (ANP), through its chief and senator Aimal Wali Khan, has strongly opposed the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025), labeling it a "black law" that threatens freedom of expression and political dissent. Speaking in the Senate session, Khan warned that those who challenge the state's narrative will be the primary targets under this law.

He criticized PECA 2025 for curbing free speech rather than addressing the root causes of misinformation. Instead of suppressing voices, he urged the government to engage with media and civil society to develop transparent mechanisms for combating fake news. Khan also highlighted ANP's long history of sacrifices for freedom of expression, emphasizing that his party has faced media trials and political repression since 1947.

In essence, ANP rejects PECA 2025, arguing that it grants excessive power to the state to silence critics and restrict press freedom. The party calls for a more inclusive approach to digital governance that upholds democratic values, media independence, and civil rights.

Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan's Stance on PECA 2025

Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JI) has strongly opposed the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025), rejecting it as an undemocratic law that threatens freedom of expression. During a press conference in Karachi, Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman, a central leader of JI, stated that the government introduced the PECA Ordinance without stakeholder consultation, making it unacceptable to the party.

Rehman criticized both the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) governments for previously introducing similar regulations in 2016, arguing that repressive media laws have been used by successive governments to suppress dissent. Expressing solidarity with journalists, he affirmed that JI stands with the media against PECA 2025 and will not tolerate state-driven attacks on press freedom.

While advocating for a responsible code of conduct to curb misinformation, Rehman condemned state favoritism in media coverage and the forced abduction of

Incident Report on PECA 2025

journalists during PTI's tenure. He acknowledged the dangers of fake news but emphasized that combating misinformation should not come at the cost of fundamental freedoms.

In summary, Jamaat-e-Islami firmly opposes PECA 2025, calling for stakeholder engagement, press freedom protections, and fair media regulations that do not serve as a political tool for censorship.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F)'s Stance on PECA 2025

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) (JUI-F) has expressed strong reservations about the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025), criticizing the government's lack of consultation with opposition parties before introducing the bill.

Shahida Akhtar Ali, a JUI-F member of the National Assembly, condemned the government's unilateral approach, stating that standard legislative procedures were ignored. She emphasized that excluding opposition parties from the amendment process would have negative political consequences, widening the divide between the ruling party and its opponents. She further noted that while the government may have avoided consulting PTI, it should have at least engaged JUI-F and other opposition stakeholders.

Senator Kamran Murtaza took a firmer stance against PECA 2025, questioning the government's urgency in passing the bill and highlighting its vague and ambiguous language. He specifically criticized the lack of a clear definition of "fake news", arguing that this ambiguity could lead to the misuse of the law against political opponents, journalists, and dissenting voices.

Additionally, Murtaza opposed Section 29 of PECA, which prohibits legal challenges against actions taken under the law, calling it undemocratic and a violation of fundamental rights. He urged the government to amend this section, ensuring transparency, accountability, and judicial oversight.

JUI-F's opposition to PECA 2025 revolves around concerns over lack of stakeholder consultation, legal ambiguity, and potential political misuse. The party calls for greater transparency in digital legislation, judicial accountability, and an inclusive lawmaking process to protect fundamental rights and press freedom.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM)'s Stance on PECA 2025

Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, chief of Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM), has strongly condemned the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025), calling it "unconstitutional" and a direct violation of freedom of speech. He accused the government of using the law to suppress dissent and conceal its actions, particularly in the wake of recent political shifts and regime changes.

Abbas also criticized the judiciary, alleging that it has failed to uphold justice, drawing parallels between Pakistan's legal system and the injustices faced by people in Palestine and occupied Kashmir. Expressing solidarity with journalists, he pledged to actively resist PECA 2025, arguing that the law is designed to serve the interests of a select few rather than the general public.

Abbas reaffirmed his commitment to protesting against PECA 2025, vowing to stand with media professionals and civil society in defending democratic rights and free expression.

OFFICIAL RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Federal Minister for Information, Attaullah Tarar, has dismissed concerns over the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2025, asserting that it is not aimed at working journalists but rather at regulating digital media to address its unchecked expansion and lack of accountability.

Key Points from the Minister's Statement:

1. Regulation of Digital Media:

- Unlike print and electronic media, digital media has no formal regulatory mechanism.
- The bill formally defines digital media, covering online platforms, mobile apps, and information systems.

2. Addressing Online Misinformation & Crimes:

- Tarar cited instances where fake news and malicious campaigns spread unchecked.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

- The Cyber Crime Investigation Agency will be established to tackle deepfakes, child pornography, and online crimes.
- 3. Ensuring Journalists' Protection & Representation:**
 - The Digital Rights Protection Authority will include a journalist representative to ensure transparency.
 - A 24-hour speaking order requirement prevents arbitrary actions against journalists.
- 4. Concerns Over Digital Journalism & Media Sustainability:**
 - The rise of unregulated digital journalists is shrinking space for print and electronic media, causing financial difficulties.
 - He criticized digital content creators who earn without paying taxes or following editorial standards.
- 5. Government's Open-Door Policy:**
 - The government invites media organizations for consultations to ensure the bill's objectives are clearly understood.

Minister Tarar assured that the PECA Amendment Bill 2025 does not target journalists but seeks to regulate digital media, curb misinformation, and protect traditional journalism from economic challenges.

CONCLUSION

The PECA 2025 Debate – Balancing Regulation and Freedom

The Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025 (PECA 2025) has sparked a nationwide debate over the delicate balance between digital regulation, national security, and the fundamental right to free speech. While the government defends the law as a necessary measure to combat misinformation, cyber threats, and digital crimes, critics argue that it grants excessive powers to the state, threatens press freedom, and suppresses dissent. The rushed passage of the bill, lack of stakeholder consultation, and vague definitions of key offenses such as “fake news” have only deepened public distrust and fueled resistance from journalists, opposition parties, and civil society.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

A comparative analysis of PECA 2025 with media regulations in India, the USA, the UK, Turkey, and China reveals that Pakistan's approach mirrors authoritarian digital control mechanisms rather than democratic models. Unlike the USA and the UK, where self-regulation and judicial oversight protect free speech, PECA 2025 centralizes power within the government, allowing authorities to restrict digital content, enforce takedowns, and prosecute individuals based on loosely defined offenses. While India has strict IT Rules, and Turkey criminalizes false information, the harshest digital control model remains China's, where state censorship is absolute. Pakistan's increasing shift towards heavy-handed digital regulation raises serious concerns about the erosion of democratic values, media independence, and public accountability.

The strong opposition to PECA 2025 from national and international stakeholders—including Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)—underscores widespread fears of digital repression. Political parties, including PTI, PPP, ANP, JUI-F, and JI, have rejected the law, warning that it could be misused to target opponents, control political narratives, and limit free expression. Even religious and civil society leaders, such as Allama Raja Nasir Abbas of MWM, have condemned PECA 2025 as unconstitutional and undemocratic. The journalistic community, led by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), has vowed to resist the bill, staging protests against state interference in media affairs.

The Way Forward:

Fake News Watchdog's Recommendations

While tackling fake news and misinformation is essential, it must not come at the cost of fundamental freedoms and human rights. To ensure a fair, transparent, and balanced approach to digital regulation, the Fake News Watchdog recommends the following key reforms to PECA 2025:

1. Clarity in Definitions

- The definition of "fake news" and "misinformation" must be precise and legally sound to prevent misuse against journalists, opposition figures, and independent voices.
- Clear distinctions should be made between satire, opinion, investigative reporting, and deliberate disinformation to protect

Incident Report on PECA 2025

legitimate speech.

2. Consensus-Based Legislation

- The government must engage in dialogue with journalists, digital rights organizations, media houses, opposition parties, and civil society before enforcing new digital laws.
- A parliamentary committee on digital media should be formed to review contentious sections of PECA 2025 and ensure broad-based consensus.

3. No Political Victimization

- The law must not be weaponized to silence political opponents or restrict criticism of government policies.
- Legal safeguards should be introduced to prevent arbitrary arrests, selective enforcement, and politically motivated cases under PECA 2025.

4. A Scalable System for Fake News Detection

- Instead of blanket censorship, a structured mechanism for identifying and debunking misinformation should be developed.
- A public fact-checking database should be maintained, allowing independent verification of disputed news claims before legal action is taken.

5. Fact-Check Desks in Government Institutions

- Dedicated fact-checking units should be established within key government institutions to combat misinformation transparently and responsibly.
- These units should collaborate with independent media watchdogs to maintain credibility and impartiality.

6. Investment in Research and Education

- Universities and research institutions should be encouraged to conduct studies on misinformation patterns, digital literacy, and the role of AI in detecting fake news.
- Digital literacy programs should be launched to educate citizens, journalists, and policymakers on distinguishing credible information from false narratives.

Incident Report on PECA 2025

To conclude, PECA 2025, in its current form, represents a significant challenge to free speech, press freedom, and democratic accountability in Pakistan. While combating digital misinformation is a legitimate concern, the lack of transparency, rushed legislative process, and broad state powers raise fears of authoritarian control over the digital space. If left unchecked, this law could set a dangerous precedent, paving the way for increased government interference in media, digital surveillance, and political censorship.

For Pakistan to uphold its democratic values, PECA 2025 must be revised through stakeholder engagement, judicial oversight, and clear legal frameworks that protect both national security and fundamental freedoms. The Fake News Watchdog's recommendations provide a balanced roadmap for strengthening Pakistan's digital regulations while safeguarding press independence and public discourse. Without these reforms, PECA 2025 risks becoming a tool of repression rather than a means to ensure digital accountability.



The End