



Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

Press release

HRDs learning to use social media safely

Lahore, 15 February 2019. Amid growing fears of curbs on social media – especially on social media activists and journalists who have spoken out on subjects that receive little, if any, space in the mainstream media – the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has strongly felt the need to equip human rights defenders (HRDs) with measures to use social media apps safely and productively.

In a statement issued today, HRCP has expressed its reservations ‘concerning reports of the government’s recent plan to “crack down” on social media. The state must heed the sheer number of HRDs across the country who rely on social media apps for news, information on human rights violations, and calls to mobilize around rights-based issues – especially in many areas where social media apps are the only secure means of communication.

‘HRCP has facilitated 11 training workshops recently. These were delivered by Bolo Bhi, which works for digital rights in Pakistan. The workshops were attended by a total of 263 HRDs from 77 districts/cities, including Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, Sukkur, Karachi, Hyderabad, Quetta and Peshawar. This has allowed HRCP to reach participants from areas as under-serviced as southern Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan, interior Sindh, central Balochistan and western KP.

‘The increasing importance of communication through digital platforms for HRDs requires understanding the risks involved in using such mediums. These workshops trained HRDs – a large number of them, women – to understand and secure their presence online and in the field, especially given the increasingly hostile environment in which many operate. The fundamental right to information is closely linked with ways of exercising freedom of expression, movement and assembly – all of which are critical to human rights work in Pakistan.’

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