

**An appeal to restore citizens' right to information
denied by the Election Act 2017**

1. The Election Act 2017 passed by the Parliament is akin to a surgical strike to demolish Article 19A of the Constitution of Pakistan that grants every citizen the right of access to information in all matters of public importance. It has created a mindless and undemocratic process where voters are obliged to vote without knowing any facts about the credentials of the candidate they are voting for.
2. As many as 19 declarations on oath which were earlier mandatory for a candidate have been deleted in the newly passed Election Act 2017. This would only enable increasingly dishonourable, unethical and unlawful representatives to flock our future assemblies.
3. The contestants for Pakistan's highest law making institutions would be delighted to know that they may now hide the loans taken (and not returned) from any bank or financial institution. They may also remain silent on not having paid government dues or utility bills. They are no longer bound to declare the companies they own, 'Iqamas' they possess, countries they are citizens of or the foreign passports they hold.
4. The Election Act 2017 also brings glad tidings for the criminals who can now hide their pending criminal cases, the profession they are engaged in, the school they went to or the degrees they claim to possess. They do not have to declare the income tax, the agricultural income, the land holding or the amount paid to a political party that awarded the ticket to a candidate.
5. While the world has moved on to pro-active disclosures, the citizens of Pakistan have been deprived of their fundamental right of information already enshrined in the Constitution. As a citizen, I appeal to Your Honour to rescind the 2017 Election Act as contrary to the fundamental right of information granted to all citizens by the Constitution of Pakistan.

Respectfully,

Naeem Sadiq
A citizen of Pakistan

