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## **Pakistan: Federal Access to Information Bill Just ‘Average’**

The Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) has prepared a Note on the draft Right of Access to Information Act, 2016, which was prepared by the Standing Committee of Federal Cabinet for Disposal of Legislative Business of Pakistan. According to an assessment based on the [RTI Rating](#), the draft receives 97 points out of a possible total of 150 points, putting it in 35<sup>th</sup> place globally out of the 111 laws assessed on the RTI Rating, below any other country in South Asia.

*“The right to information law currently in force in Pakistan is unacceptably weak and so any measure to improve it is somehow welcome”,* said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *“But as the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab have clearly demonstrated, Pakistan can do a lot better than this effort.”*

Some of the key problems with the draft Act are:

- It is restricted to citizens and the scope of information covered is very limited.
- The rules fail to make it clear that it is free to make a request and that a certain number of pages of photocopies will be provided for free.
- There are duplicate regimes of exceptions and the one in section 7 is far too broad.
- There is no public interest override and third parties have a veto over the disclosure of information provided by them.
- The independence of the Information Commission could be further enhanced.

CLD calls on the Pakistani authorities to substantially improve the draft Act, to bring into more into line with the laws in force in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.

The Note and the draft Act are available at: [www.law-democracy.org/live/pakistan-federal-access-to-information-bill-just-average](http://www.law-democracy.org/live/pakistan-federal-access-to-information-bill-just-average).

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