

# BOLO BHI

## ALL-FEMALE ADVOCACY GROUP FIGHTS INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN PAKISTAN

Project URL: <http://bolobhi.org/>

Project Twitter: [@BoloBhi](https://twitter.com/BoloBhi)

- Digital Engagement
- Education
- Internet

In 2010, the Pakistani government ordered internet service providers to block Facebook, YouTube and certain Flickr and Wikipedia pages, citing safety and moral concerns.

Farieha Aziz, a journalist for Newsline at the time, saw a different side to the story when a group of citizens were attacked and labelled as blasphemers by the press for attempting to explain the drawbacks of blocking an entire platform like Facebook.

When the government tried to create a national internet firewall in 2012, Aziz left her job and together with activist and blogger Sana Saleem founded Bolo Bhi – an all-female-led online advocacy organisation that fights internet censorship in Pakistan.

Meaning 'speak up' in Urdu, Bolo Bhi has since been fighting tirelessly to challenge Pakistan's increasingly alarming internet censorship. The group's biggest fight to date has been to take on the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (PEC) Bill, which proposes to criminalise political expression like commentary, blogging, caricatures and memes.

Although Bolo Bhi wasn't able to stop the bill from being passed by Pakistan's National Assembly, the group continues to fight it in the senate. "We already have commitments from senators, including the chairman, who said very publicly in one of the sessions that this bill is not going to pass in its current version," Aziz explains, adding that "many times in our struggles we get disillusioned because there are no...quick victories, but...what's important is the process and that we keep at it."

Aziz and her team's efforts are not going unnoticed. Bolo Bhi received the 2016 Freedom of Expression Award for Campaigning from Index on Censorship, an international organisation defending freedom of expression. Learn more at <http://bolobhi.org>

*Image courtesy of World Bank Photo Collection*

*Last updated: 02nd of August, 2016*