

## **The policy prompt for the competitors residing in India participating in the Law & Policy competition of CSAW 2017**

One of the major concerns for law enforcement, governments and responsible citizens these days is the rise of fake news and their fast propagation through social media and chat programs. The false news propaganda campaigns with patently false information have been found to be forwarded to friends and family by users of WhatsApp, Facebook, and other social media channels. These have sometimes caused riots, mob lynching, aggravated assaults, and often vicious reactions from celebrities.

For a democracy to function, the news sources must be reliable, and any information that has not been vetted by proper channels should not be circulated and acted upon. Besides false news items, often doctored videos and other multi-media based news items have been circulated to cause even more pronounced effect on mob psyche.

Let us assume that the government decides to make a policy intervention to reduce or eliminate false news. One extreme for example would be to change the IT Act such that anyone found guilty of sending out false news or doctored images or videos using any kind of social media or chat programs could be imprisoned for some duration and fined heavily. Another extreme would be to technologically determine when a news item is false or an image doctored or a video manipulated and create a technology solution that would stop the propagation (which may or may not be technologically possible without sniffing all network traffic or some such extreme intrusive measures by the government which may hamper civil rights).

In order to frame a law, first the government has to formulate a policy regarding intervention in this serious matter – which has to balance between civil liberties of the citizens, and the sanctity of the news and other ways citizens are affected and informed. The policy should be such that it respects civil liberties, and adopts a posture that is not only agreed upon by constitutional legal experts, but also technologically enforceable. For example, snooping network traffic for all the traffic may be technologically feasible but financially not viable. On the other hand, adopting a 'laissez faire' attitude will not solve the problem. The government is consulting technology experts, cyber security experts, constitutional lawyers, civil liberties groups, and politicians to come up with a viable, feasible, enforceable policy on which laws can be drafted. The government needs your help.

**In 3,000 words or fewer, develop a policy proposal for the government to solve the menace of fake news propaganda menace through legally tenable, enforceable, economically feasible policy.**

Your team may consist of law students, management students, political science students, engineering students etc – if they are students at any level at a university or an institute in

India during November 2017, they can participate in your team. Please refer to the FAQ of this event to know more about the rules and regulations.