

Growing up in the Soviet Union, I encountered a unique perspective on freedom of expression. One day, as a curious schoolkid, I posed a question to my teacher: "What things are you not allowed to say against the Soviet authorities and Soviet way of life?" The teacher looked surprised and answered along the following line - "It is up to the authorities to decide."

The Soviet Union has long since dissolved, relegated to the annals of history. Yet, the lessons of those years continue to reverberate. I can't help myself noticing the eerie similarity of the proposed Bill to my childhood experiences. Who and how are going to decide what misinformation is? How open and democratic is this process going to be? I could not find satisfactory answers in the proposed Bill.

It is imperative that we safeguard the right to speak openly, fostering an environment where dialogue and dissent can flourish without fear of reprisal.

As such I would like to express my strong opposition to the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 bill and urge the government to withdraw this Bill.