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**Editorial note:**

There can be no doubt that the women's issue has become a national concern, and while there are a number of vocal people who are trying their level best to push women into confinement, and to take away our rights, we are happy to note the number of women who, as individuals or organisations, are coming forth to protect those rights. HOWEVER, certain issues are of immediate concern:

QISAS AND DIYAT -- The Council of Islamic Ideology has proposed that the Qisas, or blood-money paid to a victim's family, be fixed at the equivalent of 30.63 kgs of silver, BUT THAT THE MONEY FOR A WOMAN BE HALF THAT OF A MAN! This will be put before the Majlis-e-Shoora for final approval. In effect, this means that in the eyes of the CII, a WOMAN'S LIFE IS ONLY WORTH HALF THAT OF A MAN. Furthermore, in the case of any physical damage caused to a woman, she will only receive half the amount fixed for a man. This is not justified anywhere in the Quran. If a woman is guilty of a crime however, this same bill says she will receive the SAME AMOUNT OF PUNISHMENT AS THE MAN. Before this bill is passed, it is essential that the women protest about this and make their voice heard.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE - Again, the Majlis-e-Shoora will be presented this bill for approval. There is a lobby which wants to TAKE AWAY WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE. This is totally unacceptable since Pakistan came into existence through the vote of the women. As more than half the total population, women have every right to vote and to have a say in the country's functions, at all levels.

THE RIGHT TO DRIVE - The right of women to drive has once again been raised as an issue. We know that this only affects a limited number of women, but if today they can say women can't drive, tomorrow they will say that women can't ride on buses or come out into the streets. For those of you who think this is far fetched, we would like to inform you that such a bill has twice been put up in Sind, it has twice been rejected, but who can guarantee the third time?

BANNING WOMEN FROM THE NEWS - APNS has introduced a new directive, that of stopping the film editions of daily newspapers. In itself this seems innocuous, however the implications are grave. WAF/Karachi has registered its protest and pointed to the contradiction of allowing women to continue in films as before but stopping their coverage in the press. This is a directive which can be used to stop the publishing of any women's photographs and then stopping their coverage altogether.

All these are ominous events and must be countered. WE CALL ON ALL WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS AND WOMEN'S GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS TO BE ALERT TO THESE CHANGES AND TO REGISTER THEIR PROTEST IN ANY AND EVERY MANNER THEY CAN. If there are any suggestion as to actions which can be undertaken or helped by WAF we would appreciate contact.

## Expansion of WAF

We are happy to announce that WAF Lahore has been endorsed by the Punjab Women Lawyers Association (Lahore), Women's Social Organisation (Punjab) and Business and Professional Women's Club (Punjab). A chapter of WAF has been set up in Peshawar, and women from Abbotabad and Hyderabad have expressed an interest in doing likewise. WAF Karachi has also been endorsed by two more organisations, which means that the total strength of WAF is increasing as well as spreading over the country.

In addition to formal endorsements, WAF received a very encouraging letter of support and solidarity from the Pakistan Women's Institute (Lahore) as well as from a number of individuals who have shown an interest in joining WAF. We are encouraged by such letters and hope that more women will write to us.

## ACTIVITIES OF WAF LAHORE

### Spreading Information:

In keeping with our objective to disseminate as much correct information concerning women in Pakistan as possible, WAF participated in and helped organise a seminar on Female Labour in Pakistan. This was held under the aegis of Pakistan National Centre, Lahore on 24th April, 1982.

WAF arranged for the main speaker and paid for his trip from Islamabad. The paper was entitled: The Sociology of Female Work Participation, by Javed A. Zaki. In addition, WAF formed a panel of three discussants who raised the following relevant points:

- a) there are far more women working in Pakistan than is shown in the official statistics. This low count is a result of men asking men about women's work, and due to a deficient definition of work which excludes a large number of women.
- b) whether the impact of a woman's work on herself, is positive or not depends heavily on whether she is paid for the work or not -- Most women who work feel very positively about their work despite poor wages and bad conditions of work.
- c) when women work for wages, they assume a double burden since they continue to run their households. This dual pressure can adversely affect women because of the pressure it puts on them. However, this is not the result of the work itself, but of society's attitudes.

All of the above points were amply illustrated with concrete examples, and empirical studies in both the rural as well as urban areas. (Copies of the various points are available in article form on request).

Solidarity with other women:

On May 1st, Labour day, WAF sent a message of solidarity and support to all working women through the newspapers. The text read:

"On May Day, which commemorates the sacrifices of the working people of the world and symbolises the unity of working men and women. The Women's Action Forum expresses its solidarity with the working women of Pakistan. In Pakistan today, particularly the working women are facing a bleak future in view of the campaign to erode those rights which they already enjoy. The WAF feel that the working women of this country must be commended for the courage and determination with which they shoulder their responsibilities.

In addition, various groups of WAF members attended different rallies. One group went to the Kissan Hall rally, another attended the meeting at Kala Shah Kaku, while yet another went to the rally at the Sunny Flour Mills. At this last function, members were pleased to note that for the first time, not only were the women present at the rally acknowledged, but the woman's issue was also recognised, and one of the resolutions passed was a direct support of women workers and their rights.

The National Commission on the Status of Women

WAF Lahore has now sent in its official recommendations on the structure, composition and functions of such a commission. In addition, 522 signatures were collected on the five basic points which have been sent to the President and a copy to the Women's Division.

WAF Lahore recommended that:

- a. The Commission should be headed by a woman.
- b. That such a woman should be from the private/non government sector.
- c. That the Commission in the first instance should be headed by a woman from a province other than the Punjab in appreciation of the work done by women of other provinces. The Sindi Aurat Conference recently held in Karachi in April 1982 has supported WAF Lahore on this issue. (Dawn 11th April).
- d. The Sindi Aurat Conference further recommended that representation on the Commission be equal from all the provinces. The Working Committee of WAF Lahore supports this resolution.
- e. That the Commission be composed so as to give 60% representation to non governmental women's organisations.

Spreading Awareness:

In the past two months, our great achievement has been in this field. On May 13th, WAF held its first large programme in YMCA, Lahore. Almost 500 women turned up to attend the function. We were delighted and would like to thank the women from the following areas of Lahore and establishments: Kot Lakhat, Shadara, Railways, Wyeth Laboratory, The City, The Family Planning Centre of Manawa, Pakistan Women's Institute, Women's Social Organisation, Institute of Home Economics, WAPDA, Punjab Women Lawyer's Association, APWA, Tehrikh-e-Khawateen, The Kinnaird College girls from the Career Counselling Club and Drama Club, and all the individuals who came. We particularly would like to thank those who made this show possible, Salima Hashmi, and Samina Ahmed for their skits kept us all in fits of laughter, Perrin Cooper, Kishwar Nahid, Rubina Qureshi, Nazir Begum for their entertainment; the women who through their speeches shared their problems and thoughts with everyone: Nahid Akhtar, Tanvir Shahzadi Rubina Jamil and Ms. Shuja; and lastly we thank all of you who came some like Roohi Bani and Sarwat Attique, despite busy schedules elsewhere and who made this such a memorable occasion.

What the women, all of us together, managed to do that day, was to create an atmosphere of unity and sisterhood. It is through such collectiveness that we can make an impact on the nation as a whole.

We sincerely hope that all of you who came that day will keep in touch. We know it is not possible for all to come together on such a large scale all the time, but through sending representatives and through newsletters we hope to keep in touch.

News from other WAF chapters:

The newly formed chapter in Peshawar has passed a resolution in support of the Family Laws Ordinance (61). Pindi-Islamabad is looking into the case of the couple who had been sentenced to 20 lashes in public for the offence of zina. Pindi-Islamabad and Karachi WAF's both issued statements in support of the teachers strike while it was still on. Karachi WAF is pursuing the sports issue, and has asked the Olympic Association of Pakistan on what basis it is denying women athletes to participate in the Asian games.

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