

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF WOMEN'S ACTION FORUM & THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

4th November 2006

Resolution

25 years on, WAF renews its commitment to justice and to achieving a peaceful, tolerant, egalitarian social order premised on democracy from the household to the international level.

WAF reaffirms that:

- Women's rights are inherent, inalienable and indivisible, and without women's rights, humanity remains incomplete;
- Women have the right to decide all matters concerning their lives in the private and public spheres;
- The Government of Pakistan is responsible for ensuring
 - the security of person and rights of citizens regardless of sex, religion, class, and ethnicity;
 - the security of livelihood and equal economic and political opportunities, and
 - the provision of education, health and other basic services

WAF calls upon the Government to curb growing intolerance, extremist politico-religious elements and traditional power elites who attempt to hold Pakistan hostage.

WAF opposes all forms of discrimination and calls for:

- The separation of religion from the state
- The repeal of all discriminatory legislation
- Legislative reform to bring about equal rights of women and girls in inheritance, a share in marital property and assets, and the promotion of joint ownership of property and land;
- The legalization of adoption for couples and single women and the same inheritance rights for adopted and biological children.

WAF views the 'Protection of Women' Bill being tabled in parliament as insufficient and reiterates its demand for the full and complete repeal of the Hudood Ordinances (1979), as well as the laws of qisas and diyat, blasphemy and the Qanun-e-Shahadat.

WAF opposes the neo-liberal and patriarchal policies of globalisation imposed by IMF, the World Bank and the WTO that have resulted in the feminization of poverty, have further disempowered women economically and undermined their control over natural resources including land, seeds, water, and forests. It calls for:

- An end to privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation that cause food insecurity and inflation and increase women's burden and vulnerability to market forces;
- The protection from privatization of the First Women's Bank Limited established as an affirmative action for women as recognized by the Lahore High Court in its 1997 ruling (WAF vs. the State of Pakistan).

WAF renews its commitment to peace and non-violence in the settlement of all disputes. It condemns the use of the language of democracy and human rights by neo-imperialist forces to further their own agendas such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. It equally strongly condemns the use of force by extremists inside and outside the country, the violence perpetuated by all those who take the law into their own hands and the use of force by the state to settle political issues, as for instance in Bajaur, Waziristan and Balochistan.

Mindful that the fundamentalist forces that the so-called war of terror is fighting were originally created and nurtured by imperialist states at the detriment of people's rights, especially women, WAF calls upon women across all classes, castes, ethnicity and religions to unite against the War of Oppression and Terrorism led by pro-globalization forces and for:

- The de-nuclearisation of all countries without exception and the disarmament of all militant groups, militias etc.
- The future of Kashmir to be determined by the Kashmiris themselves and for Kashmiri women who bear the brunt of the conflict to be equal decision-makers in all negotiations.

WAF expresses its concerns at the persistent failure to address the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable women in Pakistan especially those affected by the 2005 earthquake. It calls upon all relevant authorities and development agencies to recognize and address the special needs and concerns of women, and for:

- Women to be equal decision-makers in all aspects of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction and the formal recognition of women as heads of households
- Women's equal rights to compensation, land tenure and property, shelter, public infrastructure, social protection;
- Ensuring the dignity and security of women, especially widows, abandoned and destitute women, and the permanently disabled.

WAF resolves to continue its struggle for the rights of women and all disempowered people and to support and strengthen all movements and campaigns for the protection of people's livelihoods, rights and liberty in a democratic, secular and just society.

Women's Action Forum: Karachi, Lahore & Islamabad