



Women's action forum

WAF Statement on May Day - 2018

On 1st May – the International Labour Day -- WAF pays rich tributes to women workers, trade unions and industrial and non-industrial workers in celebrating the Labour Day in Pakistan. The Day commemorates the strike in Chicago on 1 May 1886 when 40,000 workers marched demanding the 8-hour working day. That day across United States more than 300,000 workers walked off refusing to work more than 8 hours. WAF on May Day wants to remember women garment workers of Chicago who went on a strike also in Chicago in 1910 against low wages and inhuman working conditions. That protest became the marker for International Women's Day, celebrated every year on 8th of March.

WAF pays a special tribute to Pakistan's *mehnatkash and mazdoorkhawateen*. It salutes millions of Pakistan's women who work and toil in factories, in brick kilns as bonded labour, at home as piece rate workers, in other people's homes as domestic help, work in fisheries and are *khetmazdoors* contributing their labour as unpaid family helpers. Our *salaam* to all of them; and also to women who work at home and are taken for granted.

WAF stands in solidarity with *mazdoorkhawateen* in their demands for recognition, in their struggle for equal wages, to be counted as workers, to be given maternity and health benefits, to be assured the minimum wage, have schools for their children, are released from bondage, and a life free of harassment and violence at home and work. WAF salutes those who have struggled and succeeded in getting adopted home based workers policies in Sindh and Punjab, who have mobilized and organized women workers and especially those who have the courage to raise their voices and break barriers to claim their space.

On this International Labour Day, WAF pledges to support the uncounted millions of home based workers and unpaid family helpers in rural areas for acknowledgement in the national data; for elimination of the wage gap, for ensuring minimum wage, for the implementation of home based workers policy, for appointment letters for factory workers, for farm and fisheries workers to be declared as "labourers" as in Sindh, for security, safe transport and protection of sexual abuse and harassment.

WAF and women's organisations, and women workers demand: that all women's work be counted and compensated. Specifically the demands are for:

1. Recognition of all workers in industrial, agricultural and services sectors in rural and urban areas with legislation for agricultural workers.
2. Social security for all categories of women workers including home based workers
3. 50% raise for all workers (male and female) with minimum wage at Rs. 30000.
4. Appointment letters to be mandatory for all workers - permanent, temporary, contract, short term, etc.
5. Uniform benefits for all categories of workers – permanent, temporary, contract and short term, etc.
6. Set minimum pension at Rs. 15000
7. End the system of bonded labour.
8. End curbs on trade unions; trade unions to should ensure women's active participation in unions and strive for 33% women membership.
9. Implement ILO Conventions 98 and 87 and ILO Convention 100 on equal pay for equal work; Sign ILO Convention 177 on home-based workers; ratification and adoption of ILO C 189.
10. Social security, health and accident insurance for all workers; right to maternity leave and provision of day care centres for women workers.
11. Safe environment for women free of sexual harassment and sexual violence at the workplace in rural and urban areas.
12. All contract employees to be confirmed.
13. Regulate intermediate capitalist enterprises.
14. End precarious labour.
15. Discard all neo-liberal policies of privatization, liberalization and de-regulation especially the deregulation of the labour sector which has vastly expanded the informal economy.
16. End the privatization of all public sector enterprises and the mandatory laying off of workers.
17. Register all workers in the formal economy so that they can access the rights granted in the constitution and international agreements signed by Pakistan.
18. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that all workers have access to all basic rights and we call upon the state to fulfill its obligations.

Workers of the world, unite!

For further Contact:

Naila Naz / Mumtaz Mughal

0300-4536313 / 0333-4320993

Convener's WAF Lahore