

Minutes of the WAF WC Meeting
24th March 2021

Participants

1. Ambreen
2. Bunny
3. Erum Kashif
4. Farida Shaheed
5. Humaira (Noni)
6. Iqra Masood
7. Naila
8. Najji
9. Nida Usman
10. Rubina Jamil
11. Salima Hashmi
12. Tauseef
13. Ume Laila

Agenda item # 1-; Aurat March/Aurat Azadi March – Lahore Strategic Plan

The Minutes of the Meeting held with the AM/AAM Organizers is given on the WAF Forum WhatsApp dated March 18th.

The salient features are:

AM/AAM-WAF will not resort to deploying the Blasphemy Laws or Qazf provisions

Will not file cases with FIA.

Will not appeal to the Ulema or unelected authorities

Will not reply to toxic tweets.

Instead, will give a political response and use legal and media strategies to deal with the backlash in each city.

Noni brought up the issue of the allegations of Abdul, Akbar Chitrali, MNA, JI, which are false and fabricated and based on the doctored video. He was asking for a ban on AM.

Ume Laila wanted clarification on how far WAF was going with AM, as it had become dangerous, and the organizers were being attacked individually. She said there was now a fear factor among the communities and they were asking questions, and WAF needs to think this through.

Farida said it was easier to crack down on individuals and suggested we continue solidarity with AM.

Ruby suggested that there could be internal committees in cities – which could be Rapid Response Committees who could counter attacks quickly.

Nida said that earlier AM was not an individual entity, but in the last few years it had become one. She thought that if the organization was flexible and fluid and organized the march under a general banner it may make it more difficult to attack individual organizations or persons.

Bunny disagreed with Nida, saying that if they ban the March on 8th March, WAF will also be affected. As it is there is no freedom of association since each Jalsa/Jaloos needs an NOC, and that is how they control.

Farida mentioned that she had never seen so much coverage of the 8th March Aurat March before, and this was one of the reasons for the back lash.

Erum said that the March would never stop and suggested we widen the base of the March by involving people from all walks, like teachers, health workers etc. and also do more preparation and see if there are any gaps in our preparation.

Farida said that we were also young once, and now these younger people have their own perspective, their own humour and we should find ways to continue the solidarity.

Salima also suggested a broad-based coalition of people, different groups. She said one of the strengths of WAF had been that there was no hierarchy, so the authorities couldn't find a President or Secretary to arrest. Said a broad-based coalition was essential.

Nida asked if Parliamentarians from other parties could help. Farida said she had been in KP and while talking to the MPA's of JUI, PTI and BAP she realized that we do not expect any support from them.

Bunny said that some of the PPP Parliamentarians were supportive, and Nighat Dad was talking to Fawad Chaudry. Sheerin Mazari was also trying to help discreetly, to prevent a back lash against herself. They are trying to find out who doctored the video.

Naila suggested we have a meeting with AM, Lahore, and everyone agreed that this was a good idea.

Agenda item # 2: Single National Curriculum (SNC)

-WAF is planning a press conference and have prepared a questionnaire for the media.

Bunny asked what the intent of the questionnaire was, and Erum explained that it was questions they would like the press to ask the Government. Nida added that it was to educate the media about the SNC, so that the quality of their questions improves. It was decided to call it a List of Questions and not a questionnaire, since that had a different connotation.

Farida said she could help with the questions and answers and that they should be well articulated and linked to what's happening in the country or else the press will not be interested.

Nida said they would share the Open Letter with the media, decide on speakers, hand the press the list of questions, tell them about the implications. Final logistics need to be worked out.

It was decided that Erum, Nida and Zeba would be the lead team, Ruby and Neelam would be the support team and would also give initial briefing.

Erum and Nida will work out details, fix time, (if possible next Wednesday, 31st March, 3 to 5pm) and also arrange that people can join on-line.

Agenda item # 3: *Statement in Solidarity with Turkish Women.*

Farida said that the Turkish women activists wanted support on Social Media, and they were trying to push back hard against their Governments withdrawal from The Istanbul Convention, signed to eradicate violence against women.

Farida's Statement in support of the Turkish women was approved and has also been put on WAF WhatsApp.

Hashtags from Turkish Women asking for support:

@KadinKaolisayonu

#IstanbulSozlesmesiYasitir

#IstanbulSozlemesiBizim

24 March 2021

WAF Press release/statement in Support of Women in Turkey

Women's Action Forum is appalled that Turkey's government has announced its withdrawal from the international Istanbul Convention, **an accord designed** to prevent, prosecute and eliminate all forms of domestic violence that ironically enough is named after the city in which it was launched 10 years ago: Istanbul, Turkey's famous city.

The **Istanbul Convention** is the world's first binding treaty intended to specifically prevent and prosecute all forms of domestic violence as well as sexual harassment, sexual violence, forced marriages, forced abortions and sterilisations amongst other things. WAF is deeply concerned that the withdrawal is tantamount to the Government condoning domestic violence and sending a signal that it is okay to beat, maltreat and even kill women at home. We also fear this may encourage other states to backtrack on commitments made or stall measures to protect respect and promote women's human rights in the domestic and public spheres.

We therefore urge the government of Turkey to withdraw the decision and fully implement the convention. Women's Action Forum stands in solidarity with all our Turkish sisters who are strongly protesting this decision.