

Lahore: Women workers march on The Mall to observe International Women Day

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LAHORE: Over 1500 women marched on the Mall, from Nasir Bagh to Punjab Assembly under the banner of Women Workers Help Line (WWHL) to celebrate the International Women Day on Monday, March 08, 2010. Despite prevailing fear among Lahorites after early morning suicidal attack on FIA building in Model Town, women workers, including home-based workers, domestic workers, brick kiln and embellishment workers made their way to Nasir Bagh to observe the International Women Day. To show solidarity with victims of Monday morning blast, WWHL canceled its segment of musical program and decided to celebrate the day in a simple manner.

Participants reached Nasir bagh in small groups from different areas of Lahore. The rally started around 1'O clock from Nasir Bagh and terminated in front of Punjab Assembly at 3' O clock. Led by WWHL leaders, Bushra Khaliq, Azra Shad, Riffat Maqsood and others, the participants were chanting full throat slogans against repressive anti-women laws and anti-workers laws. They were holding placards and banners inscribed with demands in favor of women workers. Among the participants there was large number of young girls, who were singing revolutionary songs.

Participants wearing red dupattas (scarfs) around their necks were marching in a disciplined manner behind the main banner, reading "Women struggle to continue till the end of all sorts of injustices and discriminations against women". The rally had a true radical color and mood as participants continued chanting anti-capitalist slogans all the way. The main slogans include "end to economic injustice", No to violence against women ""women want equal rights""Long live socialism" "End with discriminatory laws against women" Down with US imperialism""No to capitalism" No to Extremism" .

At the end of the rally, WWHL leaders addressed the marchers. Speaking on the occasion General Secretary Women Workers Help Line Bushra Khaliq said women workers are the most marginalized section of our society. They are facing a number of problems including social, economic repression in the shape of denial to their just rights by the state and society. She condemned the extremist forces and capitalists joining hands to crush women rights. She also read out solidarity messages sent by various international organizations to WWHL on Women Day.

Chairperson WWHL Azra Shad said women workers have dared to come out on the roads despite prevailing fear. She said women workers are deprived of fundamental rights adding that they should be given equal wages. She urged the Punjab government to regularize the katchi abadis in Lahore. Spokesperson Labor Party Pakistan Farooq Tariq addressing the participants urged the government to issue social security cards to home-based women workers. He said women workers should be given minimum wage as Rs.15000.

Zahida Sheikh of Awami Tehreek , Shazia Khan of Awami Jamhoori Forum , Riffat Maqsood of WWHL, Rozina Saif of Home-based Women Workers Union also spoke on the occasion.

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