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# **Pakistan - Aurat Azadi March: WDF launched with a pledge to fight patriarchy, social injustice and violence**

Saturday 10 March 2018, by [HUSSAIN Nusrat](#) (Date first published: 9 March 2018).

Different organisations celebrated International Women Day with a resolve to fight for equal space, rights and against patriarchy and rising violence against women.

Women Democratic Front (WDF), a new socialist-feminist organisation, was launched at the National Press Club on Thursday.

Hundreds of delegates from Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab had gathered at the first congress which elected Ismat Shahjahan as its president and Aliya Bakhshal general secretary and other office-bearers.

The delegates passed the front's manifesto and constitution envisaging a broad-based struggle against patriarchy, capitalism, national oppression, religious fascism and authoritarian political system.

Hundreds of working women, political activists, students and intellectuals gathered on the occasion to give the Pakistani women's movement a new lease on life.

Women rights campaigner Dr Farzana Bari, who was the guest of honour, took the oath of commitment from the office-bearers.

She welcomed the formation of the socialist-feminist political organisation, saying that it has been a long-time since progressives were a force to be reckoned with on Pakistan's political landscape.

She expressed the hope that WDF would be able to work together with workers, students and peasant movements struggling for the rights of the oppressed nations to forge a genuine progressive alternative to the pro-establishment status quo political parties.

Speaking on the occasion, newly elected WDF President Ismat Shahjahan said that Pakistan is currently going through a reactionary period where extremism is on the rise, patriarchy has taken on a brutal character, oppression against marginalised communities and nations are increasing.

She also lamented that economic and social exploitation of the working classes were also on the rise. They are forced into contractual or part-time jobs to become migrant labourer or face unemployment, she added.

Addressing the delegates, Alya Bakhshal said the state ideology, structures, laws and policies were all based on patriarchal principles in which women have been rendered as second class citizens.

On one hand, the Constitution speaks of gender equality, while on the other hand state policies and laws are based on gender inequality, discrimination and violence which keep women in a state of

virtual slavery, she added.

In this environment, progressive women have been organising themselves and were ready to take forward their struggle under the banner of the WDF.

Awami Workers Party President Fanoos Gujjar also spoke on the occasion and appreciated the efforts of the women activists.

He extended his support to the WDF in organising women.

After the congress, the participants held a 'Women's Freedom March' from the NPC to Nazimudin Road chanting slogans against violence, war, anti-women feudal and tribal traditions and norms, exploitation of working class women and girls.

Pakistan People's Party Senator Sherry Rehman and PPP women activists also joined the rally to express solidarity with the WDF.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Rehman commended the efforts of the organisers for setting up the new socialist front.

In the congress a resolution was passed to condemn the brutal murder of a seven years old girl at Mehrabadi, a suburb of Islamabad last night.

A delegation of transpersons also joined the march in solidarity and spoke on the occasion pledging to fight social discrimination and the patriarchal system.

Other speakers on the occasion included, Tooba Syed, Alia Amirali, Nasreen Azhar, Rabia Waheed, Shaha Ajoon Khan, Taj Meena, and Marvi Latifi, Azmat Beg.

A number of working class organisations and parties including the Women's Action Forum, Young Teachers Association, Home-Based Women Workers Union as well as the Awami Workers Party, Awami Jamhoori Party, Girls at Dhabas also attended the event, vowing to work together with the WDF to take forward both the women's movement as well as the cause of left-wing politics.

Speakers emphasised the imperative of ending all forms of violence, noting the disastrous effects of war and terrorism on women in the peripheral regions of the country, including Fata Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan.

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**P.S.**

\* Daily Morning Mail Last updated Mar 9, 2018:

<http://morning.pk/2018/03/aurat-azadi-march-wdf-launched-pledge-fight-patriarchy-social-injustice-violence/>