

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Asia > Pakistan > Women (Pakistan) > Women, fundamentalism (Pakistan) > **March 8, 2017: In Pakistan, home-based workers step out of homes to (...)**

March 8, 2017: In Pakistan, home-based workers step out of homes to celebrate working women

Friday 17 March 2017, by [ALI Sheharyar](#) (Date first published: 9 March 2017).

KARACHI: Female home-based workers carrying their infants and young children came out of their homes to celebrate International Women's Day on Wednesday.

They took part in the 'Home-Based Women Workers Conference' hosted by the Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) at the Arts Council of Pakistan.

A large number of women had arrived from different industries and areas of Sindh to attend the conference chaired by HBWWF general secretary Zehra Khan, where union leaders and these women pledged to enhance their struggle against the atrocities against them.

The participants demanded an end to discrimination, equal respect, legislation for home-based workers, and provision of health and social security benefits to female workers.

International Women's Day: 'Women have made great achievements'

Khan said that though it is the 21st century and the world has advanced considerably, Pakistani society is still polluted with obsolete beliefs and cultures, especially pertaining to women in a bid to suppress them.

"The only thing that can help women rise from this abyss is their organised struggle against prevailing injustices," added Khan.

She remarked that March 8 is a day of independence for females from the economic, religious and social constraints placed against them by the so-called religious, political and social leaders belonging to conservative, capitalist and feudalistic schools of thoughts.

'Women should be given equal rights'

She said female workers, especially home-based ones, were deprived of their rights to make unions and act as collective bargaining agents for their wages and other perks that their employers were obliged to provide.

According to the general secretary, sexual harassment has risen at workplaces, while the government remained a silent spectator. It seems that women were systemically being forced to become third-class citizens, she said.

"I am also a women but never in my life had I thought of coming out onto the roads for my rights but circumstances taught me a lot about struggle," said Saeeda Khatoon, senior vice-president of the Ali Enterprises Factory Fire Affectees Association.

A fair chance: 'Govt committed to women education'

She told participants that she lost her only son in the Baldia factory fire but she has come out to fight not only for him but for all 260 families who lost their loved ones. We managed to gather them on a single platform and now we are all united and taking up the case in court, Khatoon added.

Shedding light on the discriminatory employment and wage system, deputy general secretary of the National Trade Union Federation Nasir Mansoor said women are the targets of such discriminatory behaviour by society, including profit hungry industrialists, which makes the lives of working women even more difficult.

He said that industries were outsourcing work to women at home while not caring about their rights to adequate wages, health and safety allowances, social security and others. He added that investors exploited women and underage workers by offering them the lowest rates.

'93% of Pakistani women experience sexual violence'

Mansoor concluded that our political parties are male dominated, therefore one should not expect them to do something for women's rights.

German left wing philosopher Thomas Siebert was also invited to share his views on working women.

He said that in Germany as well, female workers face similar issues and they are deprived of their basic human rights such as medical and health facilities.

According to him, in Germany working women are facing issues such as the preference given to less qualified males over qualified females and the wage gap.

Siebert advised the participant to mobilise and organise themselves to gain recognition in society. He also said that women should also come forward in politics so that they will be able to decide the fate of the country one day.

Sheharyar Ali

P.S.

* THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE. March 9, 2017:

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1351029/home-based-workers-step-homes-celebrate-working-women/>