

International Women's Day

Feminists, internationalists, anticapitalists

Sunday 8 March 2020, by [DUGGAN Penelope](#) (Date first published: 8 March 2020).

The new rise of the women's movement in recent years has been propelled largely by the issue of violence. Since the first manifesto of [Ni Una Menos](#) in Argentina in 2015, the challenge has been to violence against women in its economic, social, state, domestic and gender forms. In 2016 [Polish women](#) mobilized on the issue of abortion and the first feminist women's strikes took place.

Contents

- [Feminist strike: rejection of](#)
- ["We know that transnational](#)
- [Again the initiative comes](#)
- [Building a strong, inclusive](#)

These were followed by demonstrations on the occasion of the inauguration of Trump in January 2017 - not only in the [United States](#) but [internationally](#). The call for the International women's strike on International Women's Day 2017 and the explosion of the #metoo movement in September of the same year marked another stage of the international extension of this movement. [1]

We have seen the determined and marked presence of women in climate movements, democratic protest movements in [Algeria](#), [Sudan](#), [Brazil](#) and Chile, as well as the struggle of the women of [Rojava](#). We should not forget the women in the [yellow jackets](#) or the movements against the "reform" of pensions in France. And importantly movements have called for women's strikes in [Latin America](#), the [Spanish state](#), [Italy](#), [Switzerland](#) and [Belgium](#). [2]

Feminist strike: rejection of the system as a whole

The call for feminist women's strike connects with a moment in which women are in the front line of the fightbacks against neoliberal policies, in general and in the ways they specifically affect women. The women's strikes challenge gender violence making the link with #metoo, economic violence in wage and income inequality and the effects of austerity, social violence in state repression, violence to women's right to control their own bodies and violence to the planet including that caused by excessive consumption. The feminist strike call therefore goes beyond the notion of a workplace stoppage, it is a method of action symbolizing a rejection of the system as a whole.

Like any wave, this one is uneven, in some regions not yet having had a lasting impact, experiencing a downturn in others. There have been high points such as the massive mobilizations in [Argentina](#), Brazil or [Chile](#), the [millions of women on strike in the Spanish state in 2018](#), while other countries starting later built their first strike only in 2019, such as Belgium or Switzerland

In 2020 Mexico, a country notorious for the high rate of femicides, is a focus of attention in the

bourgeois press. [3] On the ground feminists are more cautious. [4] The call for action has been joined by the Second International Gathering of Women Who Struggle (December 2019) organized by the Zapatistas, calling for common action against violence against women and girls this year and specifically this 8 March:

We know that whatever the day, week, month, or year, somewhere in the world a woman is scared that she will be attacked, disappeared, or murdered. We already confirmed that there is no rest for women who struggle. So we want to propose to you who are listening to us or reading us or watching us, a joint action:

It could be any day of the year, because we know that the patriarchal system doesn't rest from abusing us, but we propose that this joint action of women who struggle all over the world take place on March 8, 2020. [5]

After a successful first centralized initiative in Brussels in 2019 the Belgian movement is aiming for more events in different localities, taking into account also the different rhythms in different parts of the country. [6]

Feminists in France have campaigned throughout the movement on pension reform to point out how women will lose particularly badly, and to promote 8 March as a day of mobilization and feminist strike - although the major trade-unions have been reluctant to call a strike on the heels of the long-lasting strike movement on pensions. Although coordination at a national level has been difficult given the long period in which national meetings could not be planned because of the transport strike, significant mobilizations are expected in different cities. [7]

“We know that transnational power of contagion of the feminist movement is definitely stronger than the coronavirus”

In Italy and Switzerland, faced with the spread of the coronavirus Covid-19 and governmental restrictions, the movements have organized decentralized actions, [using flashmobs](#) and other tactics to get the message across. As the Swiss organization SolidaritéS explains:

On 28 February this year, the Federal Council took exceptional health measures to curb the spread of the Coronavirus and banned all demonstrations by more than 1000 people. As a result, the strike activists announced a restructuring of the programme for this major day of mobilisation. SolidaritéS will join the various decentralised actions this Sunday. [8]

Again the initiative comes from the Global South

The task for everyone today is to build an organized, inclusive movement that will be sustained over time and ensure women are a strong actor on the political and social scene internationally.

Once again the initiative in this direction has come from Latin America. Between 9 and 11 January the 8 March coordination in Chile called for a plurinational meeting of “Those who struggle”. The call that came out of this meeting underlines:

The undersigned collectives came together to add their voices to the multiple calls for action and revolt launched on March 8 and 9 by the working class, indigenous, black and peasant women, as well as students, lesbians, trans and transvestites. We call for the construction of common strategies to continue to fuel the feminist rebellion that is spreading throughout the world against domination,

exploitation, occupation and dispossession. [9]

Building a strong, inclusive, diverse and international movement

It highlights the threat of the extreme right “which fuels hatred against racialized communities, women, lesbians and transgender people,” which women are fighting in a comprehensive struggle that recognizes differences and diversity of experiences. It goes on to call “for the rise of a vast process of mobilization that would disrupt all aspects of life,” citing the right of women to control their bodies, and their land, against violence, denouncing sexual violence as political violence; to rebel against militarization and the systematic violation of women’s human rights and freedoms “as women in the Middle East and Kurdistan are doing, following the historic resistance of the Rojava”.

They also point to “the global childcare crisis, the increase in debt and incarceration as direct forms of dispossession, casualization and denial of life”. They call “to revolt and affirm our power to say no, to say enough, and to show the way forward, synchronized in the same dance, as we have been – a dance that is a condemnation which weaves together our multiple stories and scars, pointing to those who are truly responsible for the management of misery..”

This call, signed by collectives from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay as well as others from Kurdistan, Bulgaria, France and Italy and the International Women’s Strike of the United States, shows the importance given by this new movement to building a movement that includes all women in all their diversity, and to taking their full place, including the space that has historically been denied to women, in the struggle to overthrow the capitalist and patriarchal system.

Penelope Duggan

P.S.

• International Viewpoint. 8 March 2020:
<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article6437#nh8>

Footnotes

[1] See for example [#MeToo in Japan](#) ; and
<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article6437#nh1>

[2] Sarah Jaffe in conversation with Cinzia Arruzza and Tithi Bhattacharya, *truthout*, 9 February 2018. Available on ERSSF (article 43285), [Interviews for Resistance: Women Across the Globe Are Planning to Strike on March 8. Here’s Why.](#)

[3] *New York Times* 26 February 2020 [“Women in Mexico Are Urged to Disappear for a Day in Protest”](#), *The Guardian* , 7 March 2020 [‘This is our feminist spring’: millions of Mexican women prepare to strike over femicides.](#)

[4] Heather Dashner ERSSF (article 52330), [March 8 - International Women’s Day in Mexico.](#)

[5] Enlace Zapatista, ESSF (article 47857) [Mexico: Letter from Zapatistas to Women Who Fight All Over the World](#).

[6] See [Collectif 8 mars](#).

[7] See for example [On Arrête Toutes](#), [Toutes en grève 31](#).

[8] Full statement (in French) ESSF (article 52331), [En grève féministe le 8 mars, quoi qu'il en soit !](#).

[9] See *Viewpoint*, 4 March 2020. On ESSF (article 52332), [Transborder Call for a Feminist Strike on March 8th and 9th 2020](#).