



## **Aurat March Lahore: Manifesto for 2020**

Aurat March is a collective of feminist women, gender and sexual minorities who stand against patriarchal structures that results in sexual, economic and structural exploitation of women. We come together in solidarity, on equal terms, without any funding or association with corporations, non-profits or political parties.

We seek to ensure intersectional politics that view gender in relation to various oppressive and unjust structures. We aim for our struggle to eradicate brutal and inhuman economic and social systems that suppress all, including men, by imposing gender roles that censure feminine men, masculine women and transgender people alike.

Aurat March is part of a movement towards collective action and consciousness building for a socially just and equitable society. We march for the following demands, built around the theme of خود مختاری through which we seek to reconstruct the narrative on violence against our bodies, economic conditions and the environment by both society and the state.

### **1. End to Economic Violence**

- a. We demand that the labour of all women, gender and sexual minorities be recognised and accorded dignity without discrimination. All persons should be accorded a living wage of at least Rs. 40,000 a month (with increments equal to the level of inflation). We demand legal protections for workers in informal, home-based and agricultural sectors, who face disproportionate exploitation, harassment and violence;
- b. We demand an end to discrimination in employment, particularly in regard to wages and benefits;
- c. We demand that the government of Pakistan end all neoliberal austerity measures, undertaken at the behest of the IMF or otherwise, particularly in the health, education and food sectors, which impact working-class women, youth and migrants the most. The government must take onboard working-class women as stakeholders when regulating the prices of basic commodities;
- d. We demand that existing laws such as the Punjab Domestic Workers Act 2019 be immediately notified and implemented through effective oversight bodies;
- e. We demand that the government facilitate women's access to paid-work through provisions of free and quality childcare facilities;
- f. We demand safe and dignified workplaces. The definition of the workplace should be expanded and the consequently implemented to encompass formal, informal and semi-formal sectors; including independent and sub-contracts workers with written or other contracts under the 'Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010'.



g. We demand that the right to unionise be upheld legally and in-practice. We demand that women and oppressed minorities be duly included in the labour movement. This is essential in building a strong and united anti-capitalist movement;

h. We demand that women's contribution to the care economy through home-making and caring for families be recognised as unpaid labour, categorised as 'work' and financially compensated for accordingly;

i. We demand the elimination of discrimination in and non-implementation of inheritance laws which lead to the denial of property rights for women and sexual minorities;

j. We demand an end to the practice of dowry and bride price, which are a form of economic violence and perpetuate the commodification of women and marriage as a transaction;

k. We demand that Pakistan recognise wealth created in marriage as joint property of both spouses.

## **2. End to Violence Against Our Bodies**

a. We demand an immediate and complete end to gender-based violence against vulnerable genders, in both offline and online spaces;

b. We recognise that children are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. The state should take robust steps to protect them. Such violence is traumatic and often comes from within trusted circles, making it more difficult to hold perpetrators accountable. We demand compulsory education and counselling on 'good touch/bad touch' and personal health in all public and private schools;

c. We demand robust policing mechanisms to prevent sexual abuse, investigate and prosecute perpetrators and rehabilitate survivors;

d. We demand the enactment of anti-discrimination laws to ensure the eradication of discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual identity, in addition to other racial, ethnic and differently-abled identities;

e. We call for an end to state-driven violence in the form of police brutality and violence, especially towards women and trans-people; we demand increased accountability for law enforcement by the state;

f. We agitate for decriminalisation and reform of defamation and procedural laws to ensure that victims and survivors of sexual violence and harassment are not silenced or intimidated;

g. We demand the introduction of witness protection programmes to protect witnesses in cases of sexual harassment and assault. We demand that 376A Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 be implemented to



protect the identity of rape survivors. This is essential to ensure that the law is effective in the face of a patriarchal justice system;

h. Evidentiary requirements which discourage survivors of sexual violence from reporting their cases need to be radically amended to reflect the patriarchal realities of sexual violence and accommodate survivor testimony as direct evidence;

i. We demand meaningful access to the legal and justice system. The state should undertake radical reform of the courts and the police to ensure provision of quality legal services that do not reproduce and reinforce patriarchal and class structures;

j. We demand safe and dignified shelters for women, children and sexual and gender minorities across Pakistan. We reject the exploitation and unconscionable detention of women and minors, as at Kashana Shelter in Lahore. We demand that the Punjab Government effectively investigate and prosecute such establishments;

k. We demand the immediate criminalisation of domestic violence across Pakistan;

l. We agitate for implementation of anti-harassment laws at all public and private places under both criminal and civil law. We demand the appointment of independent and trained inquiry committees to investigate sexual harassment complaints at all workplaces and educational institutions;

m. We demand amendments to anti-harassment laws to ensure that they apply to gender and sexual minorities;

n. We demand that the harassment law be applied equally to the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan, particularly where women and vulnerable populations face serious challenges in accessing justice;

o. We demand that universities and campuses be immediately demilitarised. We demand an end to surveillance of gendered and racial groups under the garb of 'security' and the extension of the right to privacy to all, in both private and public spaces. We stand in solidarity with the students of the University of Balochistan and demand an independent and transparent inquiry be conducted into the surveillance incident of 2019. We urge families of our sisters in Balochistan to not allow this incident to keep their daughters from seeking education.

### **3. Environmental Justice**

a. We demand that our right to climate justice be protected and enforced;

b. We demand the devising and use of sustainable and equitable agricultural practices to protect against the destruction of forests, soils, water table, pollution, crop varieties and animal species. In particular, we demand effective food management to prevent shortages like the current wheat crisis which impact migrants, women and gendered minorities the most. Agricultural workers and peasants



should have a direct stake in devising food practice and management. This involves moving away from water-intensive cash crops like rice, cotton and sugarcane to vegetables, pulses and husbandry;

c. We demand immediate access to clean air for everyone. We demand that the government declare a health emergency in areas impacted by smog and take urgent measures to ensure all citizens' right to safe and clean air. Swift effective measures be formulated to regulate fuel quality across Pakistan with due citizen involvement;

d. We demand sustainable, economical and safe public transportation which is energy-efficient, climate-friendly and does not endanger the ecology and heritage of a locality, unlike the Orange Metro Train. This can only be done through meaningful citizen engagement;

e. We reject green taxes and other measures that end up forcing the working-class and poor to pay for new, eco-friendly and sustainable programmes and initiatives. We demand the burden to be placed on the rich and big businesses be taxed to fund such avenues;

f. We call for the protection and respect of animals as an integral part of both our natural and urban environments. We demand accountability for local governments and persons engaged in culling of stray animals;

g. We recognise that true climate justice involves the restructuring of the global economy, and not just the economy of Pakistan. It involves developed countries moving away from export of oil, cars and military equipment, which are particularly detrimental to countries like ours.

#### **4. Reproductive Justice**

a. We demand the right to autonomy and decision-making over our bodies;

b. Consent to sexual relations is an integral right of all individuals. We demand that marital rape be criminalized immediately. Marriage should be built on dignity, equal and free participation, without compulsion;

c. We demand that the government amend the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 for all women across Pakistan;

d. We demand equal access to quality reproductive and sexual health services for women, all genders and sexual minorities. Access to quality healthcare for HIV, and AIDS, and STIs should be prioritised as a public health concern;

e. We demand that women be freely allowed to decide the number and spacing of children they wish to have;

f. We demand an end to discrimination in access to healthcare for trans men and women. Medical institutions, colleges and Medico-Legal Officers should provide training to its staff to ensure that trans



patients are provided timely medical care and in accordance with their self-identified gender, without compromising their inherent human dignity;

g. Recognising the importance of nursing staff and Lady Health Workers to delivering healthcare to women, we demand that they be regularised as government employees and provided due employment benefits.

## **5. End to State Violence**

a. We stand in solidarity with victims of police brutality. Incidents like the Sahiwal massacre of 2018 are proof of growing lawlessness perpetrated by those who are supposed to protect people's lives. The continuity and recurrence of such incidents prove that law enforcement agencies do not provide safety to citizens. We stand by the families of Naqeebullah Mehsud and the victims of the Sahiwal massacre, and demand an impartial judicial inquiry of the Sahiwal incident;

b. We assert that police reforms be put into action specifically focusing on disarming the police and greater accountability for abuse of power;

c. We demand an end to enforced disappearances. Enforced disappearances are one of the gravest human rights violations in the land. Those who have been disappeared must be brought before civilian courts and given their right to due process;

d. It is important to recognise that women may also be forcefully disappeared, though it is men who primarily suffer at the hands of this brutal practice. We also believe that there is an enduring impact of enforced disappearances on women, which is not adequately addressed by governments and societies; Women—as the wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of the disappeared—experience exacerbated hardships and suffer psychological harm after a disappearance.;

e. We demand that truth-seeking and reconciliation commissions be formed to deal with the violence committed by state and non-state actors during military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, former-FATA and Balochistan, addressing sexual violence among others;

f. We are committed to peace. We condemn war and the militarisation of our everyday lives. War is business that only benefits the international bourgeois and western military-industrial complex, at the cost of provision of health, education and shelter to our people. Lasting peace can only be achieved when we transcend the confines of capitalism and the nation-state through an internationalist struggle against violence;

g. We demand an immediate end to the occupation, illegal annexation, militarisation, arbitrary detentions, communications shut down and terrorisation of Kashmir and the people of Kashmir, including the heinous use of pellet guns and enforced disappearances on civilians. We passionately support the democratic and constitutional right of people everywhere to peacefully protest and unite for their political demands, including in Kashmir. Populations under occupation have a right to



determine their political future, the conditions for which have to be made possible by both the nation-states, its people and the international community;

## **6. Inclusion and Non-Discrimination**

- a. We demand dignified, safe and equal access to housing, healthcare, public services, educational institutes and public spaces for gender and sexual minorities and persons of disabilities through making buildings disabilities-friendly, adoption of anti-discriminatory measures, better practices and comprehensive oversight;
- b. We demand provision of clean and safe public toilets and in educational institutions;
- c. We demand quotas in schools, universities, public institutions and jobs to ensure persons with disabilities and trans-people are given equal opportunities;
- d. We demand more quality schools, colleges and hospitals, especially for women and gender minorities in war-torn and remote areas of Pakistan. We recognise the option to move to urban centres for education and healthcare more easily exercisable by men in our society;
- e. We demand equal recognition and accommodation for less visible disabilities, such as chronic and mental illnesses as well as invisible physical disabilities. We condemn how mental illnesses are often framed as women's problems which translates into their stigmatisation and de-prioritisation in terms of public health;
- f. We demand that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2017 be notified to all government departments with immediate effect and urgent measures be taken to develop Rules of Business under the Act for effective implementation;
- g. We condemn discriminatory hostel timings of all students, particularly along gendered lines. We believe that university students should not have hostel timings as it amounts to paternalistic policies for adults;
- h. We demand pedestrian-friendly city planning in the form of working neighbourhoods by putting up street lights to ensure safety of working women who cannot afford private transportation to and from their workplaces;
- i. We demand responsible and non-misogynistic representation of women and gender minorities in entertainment. We also demand responsible, non-sensationalist reporting of issues and news concerning women and gender minorities on mainstream and social media. We believe such representation and reporting incites violence against women and gender and sexual minorities and reinforces patriarchal mindsets.



## **7. Rights of Religious Minorities**

- a. We demand legislation on matters of personal law for religious minorities. The virtual absence of laws deprives minority communities of the right to seek legal protection in their matrimonial matters, get Form-B and CNICs, placing women from religious minorities in particularly disadvantaged conditions;
- b. We demand laws against forced conversions. This law should provide protection to minority women and the government shall establish a committee which prepares a report about the cases of forced conversions and punishes the people involved;
- c. We demand an amendment to the Christian Divorce Act 1869 that allows adultery as a ground for divorce. These narrow grounds for dissolution of marriage violate and damage the dignity of Christians, especially Christian women, due to the social and cultural implications ascribed to the accusations of adultery. Furthermore, we demand the formulation of rules of business for the Punjab Anand Karaj Act 2017 for Sikhs and the Hindu Marriage Act 2017;
- d. We demand safety of all religious minorities and their places of worship, and for the state to severely punish those that may seek to harm them;
- e. We also demand that all religious monuments and places of worship be retained under the sovereignty of members of that faith, under whose council the state will choose to take or withhold any actions related to these sites.

## **8. Democratic Rights**

- a. We demand an end to censorship of the press, academic and online spaces. Freedom of expression is an inalienable right for everyone, and censorship suppresses critical voices while allowing hate speech that incites violence against women and gender and sexual minorities;
- b. We condemn arbitrary limits on the right to freedom of assembly, association and protest, and demand that the state take all necessary measures to ensure that laws which limit this right, including the colonial-era sedition law, be repealed immediately;
- c. While we demand effective justice and accountability for perpetrators of violence, our politics rests on the provision of humane, proportionate punishment. We are firmly against the death penalty and cruel and inhumane punishment in all cases.