

## **Aurat March Concept Note**

The Women's March seeks to unite women for the cause of gender justice and collective social change based on principles of inclusion, dignity, and respect.

The March came to existence in 2018 when a group of women from various affiliations, backgrounds, and professions, came together to discuss the need for collective action. With the International Women's Day coming up, the group decided to put out a call for a city-wide 'Aurat March' commemorating the occasion. Two main points were raised: the March should be a collective endeavour, not led by any single group or affiliation or organization; and that the March would raise voices on a diverse range of issues to express solidarity for the connected nature of our struggles.

For this reason, the March is being called by 'Hum Aurtein', a collective of women belonging to diverse ethnicities, classes, and sections of society, who not only constitute the ones planning the event, but also the ones who will show up on March 8. The March is not funded by any political parties or groups.

We are inspired and fuelled by the momentum of feminist movements and struggles worldwide, and those taking place in our country right now. From #MeToo to the Women's March in various countries, from sexual harassment cases erupting in our cities to collective voices of outrage coming out against child abuse, we see this March as another moment in a series of responses from women who are tired of the injustices we are subjected to. Now is the time to speak and take to the streets -- as loudly as we can, and in the greatest numbers we can rally. The March is a symbolic gesture by the women of Karachi that says: we refuse to stay silent now, we demand peace.

We believe that women's rights are central to our work towards a progressive and equitable society. We envision a world in which women from all groups, ethnicities, religious communities, economic backgrounds; working class women; displaced and refugee women; differently abled women; transgender women and persons belonging to other gender identities; are free to exercise autonomy over their lives, and to build just and peaceful communities.

Our key areas of concern, as outlined in our manifesto, are violence against women, workers' rights, reproductive and environmental justice.

- Ending violence, including violence against women carried out and promoted by patriarchal forces as well as state-backed violence targeting activists and communities
- Workers' rights: create an economy that is equitable and transparent where all workers have access to a living wage, affordable healthcare for themselves and their families, and workplaces free from harassment and discrimination
- Reproductive Justice: All women have the right to make informed decisions about pregnancy and childbirth and access to quality and affordable reproductive health services
- Environmental Justice: Every person and community has the right to clean water, clean air, access to and enjoyment of public lands. Our climate and natural resources must be protected for ourselves and future generations.

