

## Ujrat Tahafuz Aur Sakoon- Our Position- AM @2022

**This year we march for our labor. This year we march for the burden that is placed on us and our bodies. This year we march with our rage and anger and demand acknowledgement, recognition and reward for this burden. We march for a living wage. We march for social security. We march for our right to rest and leisure.**



We believe that human labor is at the rooh and heart of creating and producing for society as a whole. We labor in factories, on farms, labor as home-based workers, on the streets as sanitation workers, in homes as domestic workers, and as artisans.

The labor we also undertake is our activities, our behaviors, our emotions, our responsibilities which maintain society. Our work is mental, physical, emotional, whether it is in the production and provision of food, taking care of the elderly, raising and socializing children, or taking care of the environment and nurturing our communities. We sustain life as it is—with our hearts, our minds, and our bodies. We are now two weeks from the march and will take this time to talk about our lives and the struggles that we experience every day in the systems of patriarchy, capitalism and feudalism. We believe that for our complete azaadi, these systems need to be dismantled.

The economic systems and societies we live in acknowledge and pay, albeit poorly, the labor that is 'productive' or can produce tangible commodities while the tremendous amount of work we do for ourselves, for our families and communities becomes naturalized into non-existence or is not seen as legitimate work. Our gender is simultaneously glorified in popular discourse as self-effacing and 'caring' beings and we believe that this is done to keep it unpaid, to keep us in our 'place' (read the *chaar dewari*), to keep us from speaking up, from organizing and from demanding our rights.

This is the kind of invisible exploitation that patriarchy then reinforces through our forced roles in families. If we demand recompensation or simply want a break, we are reminded of the good child or the good partner/wife, who is expected to take care of everyone but not to expect much in return. The role of us as caretakers, as women, as the khwajasira community and non binary persons, is taught to us early on which is reinforced throughout our lifetimes by all sources of socialization: media, places of learning, work, our teachers, peers, families, political leaders, and ultimately the state. If we don't follow, we are shamed or threatened with censure or violence. Often we suffer from physical, mental, psychological and emotional abuse as a direct result of wanting relief from something that we didn't choose in the first place. The violence makes us more susceptible to needing health leaves from paid work, adding to our health costs and further threatening our job security, whether we are domestic workers, contractual workers or unregularized, unregistered, informal workers working on piece-rate or daily wage.

For those of us who choose to marry, marriage further reinforces this responsibility and gendered division of labor as unspoken expectations in a legal contract. The burden to create and reform families is placed on us. We are told 'acha, tum theek karlogey', 'ab theek hojayega' 'larkay ki shaadi kar den aap, uski biwi usko theek karday gi.' We are expected to surrender ourselves for the emotional comfort of others and become vessels for the pain of our partners and our families. The burden of bringing families together and the family unit's very survival (read izzat) is placed squarely on us. It's ironic that when a marriage ends, we are left with nothing for the work we have done to sustain the home or maintain life for others.

Some of us do the work of birthing, however, all of us do the work of rearing and socializing the young, which is central to any functioning society. We believe this work is central to the process of social (re)production, caring for the elderly, those who have disabilities, maintaining households & family members, building communities, and marching on the streets to claim our basic rights.

The invisible exploitation that patriarchy imposes on us is further reinforced and enabled by a misogynist capitalist system and all forms of fundamentalisms, be they cultural, economic or social. In its quest for profit, systems policies thrive on our cheap labor based on their gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. We are deliberately relegated to low-paying and unprotected work and benefits. Our bargaining power is compromised to extract endless 'contributory' or 'helper' services, whether on farming lands, inside factories or sweatshops, and/or within the home and the homestead.

Privatization of government services and state-owned enterprises has also had a direct impact on marginalized communities' access to basic public services and social protection programs. Removal of subsidies, bailouts for corporations, austerity measures and cuts in social development spending in

Pakistan have further made the lives of women, gender minorities and other poor and marginalized communities more precarious. The subcontracting and third-party contracting system across 'productive' sectors gives no protections regarding minimum wage, social protection, health insurance, or occupational & job security. Women and gender minorities in particular are harassed, bullied, and denied minimum wage and decent work.

We reject the dominant economic model because it relies on our subjugation within the home and in labor markets, to drive up profits for a few. We are angry and have no patience for policies and systems that are ableist and discards differently-abled bodies, people suffering from mental health, gender minorities and older peoples. It fails to take stock of unpaid 'care' work which is not included in macroeconomic calculations nor counted as part of the Gross National Product.

We declare that the work of caregiving and of emotional labor shall not be treated as free. We demand social security for all our labor that adds value to both the economy and society. Our labor will not be a free ride anymore. The labor we do to maintain life for others is our own. And thus we have the right to consent. We also assert the right to say no if we are tired of working. We have a right to say no when we don't want to work for free or under exploitative, subhuman conditions.

We demand from the state, the provision of social security & protection through monthly stipends to be treated as social security for all women and the khwajasira community. We also demand that this not be confined to income support, but also in living wages; health insurance; maternity leave, prenatal confinement and postnatal care in all places of work; unemployment support, child, geriatric and disability support care facilities in the home and through dedicated public facilities; protection against occupational hazards, including in unprotected and hazardous work, and seriousness in addressing the effects of climate change and disasters on our lives and livelihoods. We demand a living pension for all workers. As workers, we believe we have the right to social protection, whether we are single, married, widowed, separated or divorced, and whether we work as as casual or day laborers; temporary or part-time workers; contract workers; unregistered or undeclared workers; home workers or home-based workers; and/or as unpaid household caregivers.

We assert that the welfare of the child is the responsibility of the state including provision of care and protection from forced labor, sexual abuse, trafficking and exploitation. We demand that the state prioritize welfare by supporting child care centers in every district of Karachi and child support services in the rest of Sindh.

We believe that the labor carried out by all women (cis or trans), transmen, khwajasira, and nonbinary people should be safe and free from any kind of discrimination, stigmatization, bullying, violence, and harassment.

We place these demands not only to a fundamentally patriarchal state but also our society which refuses to acknowledge the existence (let alone value) of our work. We are angry and we will keep fighting, for our collective freedom, for azaadi from abuse, oppression, harassment and exploitation.

Ek hi nara, ek junoon, Ujrat Tahafuz aur Sakoon