



Long Live March 8 International Women's Day!

During a century, ruling classes have tried to distort the essence of March 8 or reduce its demand to a bargaining leverage within the upper class power struggles. In countries such as Iran and Afghanistan, Reactionary Islamic Regimes, try hard to silence March 8 protests against Sharia law and for Freedom & Equality. We are witnessing emergence of younger women's rights activist is tipping the balance, events such as VDay demonstrations to stop violence against women is gaining momentum around the globe. Thus, it is a necessity to review the origin of March 8 each year that we celebrate, so the younger generation entering Emancipation of Women movement become well informed about its origin.

On 8 March 1857 women working in clothing and textile factories (called 'garment workers') in New York City, in the United States, staged a protest. They were fighting against inhumane working conditions and low wages. The police attacked the protestors and dispersed them. Two years later, again in March, these women formed their first labour union to try and protect themselves and gain some basic rights in the workplace.

On 8 March 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter work hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labour. They adopted the slogan "Bread and Roses", with bread symbolizing economic security and roses a better quality of life. In May, the Socialist Party of America designated the last Sunday in February for the observance of National Women's Day.

Following the declaration of the Socialist Party of America, the first ever National Woman's Day was celebrated in the United States on 28 February 1909. Women continued to celebrate it on the last Sunday of that month through 1913.

An international conference, held by socialist organizations from around the world, met in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1910. The conference of the Socialist International proposed a Women's Day which was designed to be international in character. The proposal initially came from Clara Zetkin, a German socialist, who suggested an International Day to mark the strike of garment workers in the United States. The proposal was greeted with unanimous approval by the conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, including the first three women elected to the parliament of Finland. The Day was established to honour the movement for women's rights, including the right to vote (known as suffrage).

It is appropriate to conclude this historical review with a quotation from Clara Zetkin:

"We know that full emancipation of women; will not be possible only by obtaining the right to work, or having the right to education, although these are also the natural and inalienable rights, and even ahead of our political rights. Our evidence is the experience of countries that women have the so-called right to participate in public, free and direct elections. In these countries, voting rights, without economic independence of women, does not make any real difference in their situation. If the social liberation was possible only with political emancipation, the social problems of women in these countries should have been resolved by gaining the right to vote. We believe that only the women's liberation and human emancipation is possible in its economic expression, emancipation of labour from capital ... If today all the existing rules change and women obtain all the rights that men have. yet it does not mean freedom from economic exploitation of women nor the slavery has ended."

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The Organization for Emancipation of Women (Rahai Zan)

<http://www.Rahai-Zan.org> <http://www.Rahai-Zan.tv>