

Pakistan: Women health workers fight for their rights

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Women health workers are protesting across the whole of Pakistan for their wages for the last four months. They often do not receive them and they are also demanding that their contracts be made permanent.

Their struggle is inspirational. They have blocked main roads and defied state brutality many times in many cities. Despite the severe repression they face, they are confident enough to come to Lahore again to raise their demands.

They blocked the mall and sat on the road for several hours in front of the Punjab Assembly chanting slogans demanding their wages, permanent jobs and wage structure. Goons of the mall road traders attacked the peaceful protest. The police were watching them terrorising the protestors but did nothing to stop the attack. One driver was seriously injured, but rushed to escape.

Once again the determined women health workers, and the male workers supporting them, defied the attacks of the traders who are effectively supporting the provincial government. The consciousness of health workers has risen very high, they recognise, and are not afraid to say, that both the federal and provincial government are playing with them, claiming that the demands of the workers are the responsibility of other institutions.

We have to build our own force. We have no confidence in the ruling elite and must not hope for their benevolence. Many RSM comrades, including women comrades, joined the sit in and continue to support it and show their solidarity with the women health workers.

We demand:

- Independent commission of trade unionists, lawyers, social and political activists to investigate not only the Lahore attack, but also other attacks by the police and goons in several cities.
- 200 percent pay increase for women health workers and supervisors and for other staff!
- Pay the petrol allowance for their work!
- Permanent contracts for all!