

March 8, 2017 International Women's Day: women close schools, occupy farms and go on strike

Thursday 9 March 2017, by [TOPPING Alexandra](#) (Date first published: 8 March 2017).

Women around the world hold first mass International Women's Strike, billed 'A Day Without Women', in protest against pay gaps and violence.

Women closed schools, occupied farms, descended on parliaments and went on strike in countries across the globe in one of the most highly charged and political International Women's Days in living memory.

The first mass International Women's Strike closed schools in the United States and childcare centres in Australia as women took industrial action to highlight the gender pay gap [\[1\]](#) and show solidarity with the global women's movement.

The strike - billed "A Day Without a Woman" - marked the first major action since the global women's marches on 21 January [\[2\]](#), which attracted up to 2 million people onto the streets to protest against violence against women, inequality, oppression and misogyny.

For the strike, which was organised by International Women's Strike, organisers of the Women's March and hundreds of human rights and women's campaigns, supporters were urged to strike from paid and unpaid labour, buy local and wear red [\[3\]](#) and other country-specific colours in solidarity.

A number of schools were closed in the US [\[4\]](#) after women in North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland requested a day off to take part in the strike, which saw women take time out of paid and unpaid work to emphasise their value.

Crowds rallied on the steps of Congress in Washington DC, while others gathered in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Milwaukee, Washington and Berkeley and Democratic women in the House staged a symbolic walkout in solidarity [\[5\]](#).

Thousands of protesters brought traffic to a standstill in Dublin where campaigners gathered to call for a repeal of the 8th amendment, which amounts to a near-total ban on abortion. "There was an amazing atmosphere and a feeling that this generation are tired of having the Catholic church say what they can and can't do with their bodies," said participant Christopher Thomas Flood, a university lecturer.

In London, demonstrators protested outside the family court in Holborn before holding a "speak out" outside the Houses of Parliament.

In Australia, dozens of nurseries and children's centres were forced to close after more than 1,000 childcare workers walked off the job at 3:20 [\[6\]](#), the time at which they begin working for free as a

result of the gender pay gap, while thousands attended a rally in Melbourne. The childcare sector is 97% female but qualified educators earn some of the lowest wages in the country - as little as \$20.61 an hour, or about half the national average wage [7], seven activists were arrested after protesting outside the Kremlin, holding a banner declaring: "Men have been in power 200 years, down with them!"

Women marched in Nairobi, where Maasai women welcomed the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres [8], and, in Dakar, Senegal, women gathered under the banner "Solidarity is Our Weapon". A further strike and protest is planned in the region on 31 July, African Women's Day.

Around 200 women gathered for a march in Tokyo, where they chanted "It's hard to be a woman" and "Our patience is running out!" and held up placards with slogans such as "Let's change our future!"

More than 500 women in Thailand, the Philippines and India participated in a global solidarity strike for their rights, according to the Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law [9] and Development. In Manila hundreds of activists protested outside the US embassy, before joining a bigger rally outside the presidential palace and urging President Rodrigo Duterte to tackle a lack of food, jobs and peace.

Women gathered in Lebanon to highlight the challenges facing women in the Middle East, where the Gulf Centre for Human Rights [10] said human rights defenders faced "captivity, detention, exile [...] surveillance, travel bans and judicial harassment, while others are subjected to torture, disappearance or murder".

Women could be seen dancing at a International Women's Day rally in the Kurdish-dominated southeastern city of Diyarbakir in Turkey.

Across South America mass strikes and demonstrations drew attention to high rates of femicide. In Argentina protests kicked off with a "ruidazo" - a traditional banging of pots and pans - followed by a march in Buenos Aires to protest against the 78% rise in femicide in the past eight years.

In Brazil, women downed tools in more than 60 cities for at least an hour in protest at "structural violence" against women, while women from Movimento Sem Terra, a direct action land reform group, occupied the abandoned farm of a businessman currently in jail because of corruption.

"Brazilian women are seeing that it is not only in Brazil, but it is across the world that women are losing political representation, losing reproductive rights, not making the advances that they should be," said organiser Ani Hao. "We have suffered incredible losses but in Brazil, women are saying that 2017 is the year of our revolution. There is little more that we can lose."

In Poland - where a women-led 'Black Protest' overturned a blanket ban on abortion in October - protesters gathered outside the Law and Justice headquarters, while in Romania women lay on the ground and read out the names of women killed by their partners.

Meanwhile in France, women marched on the Place de la République in Paris and also marched other cities and, in Spain, women gathered to show support to a group of women who, a day earlier, ended a hunger strike to demand politicians' action against domestic violence.

In typically pioneering fashion, Iceland used International Women's Day to announce it would be the first country in the world to require companies to prove they offer equal pay regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and nationality [11]. And in the UK, while members of the Women Against State Pension Inequality group [12] protested outside parliament at plans to increase the retirement age for women. The government used budget day to announce £20m of funding for victims of domestic

violence [13].

Alexandra Topping and *Guardian* reporters

P.S.

* The Guardian. Wednesday 8 March 2017 19.55 GMT Last modified on Wednesday 8 March 2017 22.00 GMT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/08/international-womens-day-women-close-schools-occupy-farms-and-go-on-strike>

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Footnotes

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/nov/10/women-working-for-free-until-2017-equal-pay-gender-pay-gap-fawcett-society>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/live/2017/jan/21/womens-march-on-washington-and-other-anti-trump-protests-around-the-world-live-coverage?page=with:block-588295a1e4b00b8fc2ae2ffe>

[3] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/03/wear-red-down-tools-and-buy-local-for-international-womens-day>

[4] <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/06/women-strike-trump-resistance-power>

[5] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2017/mar/08/international-womens-day-2017-protests-activism-strike-live?page=with:block-58c0096ce4b0f24dba722ecb#block-58c0096ce4b0f24dba722ecb>

[6] <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/mar/08/more-than-1000-childcare-workers-walk-off-job-over-pay-gap>

[7] <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/may/31/fair-work-commission-raises-australias-minimum-wage-by-1580-a-week>°.

While the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, issued a gushing statement praising Russian women's "beauty and vitality" and their ability to be "always on time"

[[<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54007>

[8] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/01/will-antonio-guterres-be-the-uns-best-ever-secretary-general>

[9] <http://apwld.org>

[10] <http://www.gc4hr.org>

[11] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2017/mar/08/international-womens-day-2017-protests-activism-strike-live?page=with:block-58bfd046e4b0bd9dcee5694e#block-58bfd046e4b0bd9dcee5694e>

[12] <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/11/stephen-crabb-says-it-is-impossible-to-unwind-womens-pensions-changes>

[13] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2017/mar/08/international-womens-day-2017-protests-activism-strike-live?page=with:block-58bfd1ae4b0f24dba722e82#block-58bfd1ae4b0f24dba722e82>