and at home, young girls and women being physically and sexually abused, child marriages or forced marriages imposed on girls who have just reached puberty, female genital mutilation and of course female babies being murdered at birth. Just writing out this list makes me sick.

According to the Guardian, 'more than 130 of 143 countries have gender equality laws, 142 grant equal rights for men and women on property ownership and 129 have laws preventing women from being sacked while pregnant. Some form of parental leave is offered in almost all countries when women give birth, and in 116 countries daughters have equal inheritance rights as sons. But only 76 countries have legislation that specifically addresses domestic violence – and just 57 of them include sexual abuse. Sixty countries offer equal pay, and in 10 countries women are legally bound to obey their husbands.' What is sad is that many women in our country feel that being physically abused by their husbands is normal and that they have the right to hit or beat them if they think their wives have done something wrong.



Women workers strike in 1912.

Data from the World Bank and UN, compiled by the Guardian, indicates that Bangladesh has laws that specifically address domestic violence and have a specialised court or procedure for this. The legislation includes emotional, financial, physical and sexual abuse. India has similar laws. However, Pakistan does not. Having legislation in place is only the beginning and does not necessarily mean much, if women are not aware they have these rights and even if they do are scared of reporting it to the authorities for fear of social repercussions.

Having legislation in place is only the beginning and does not necessarily mean much, if women are not aware they have these rights and even if they do are scared of reporting it to the authorities for fear of social repercussions.

Eve teasing is something many women have to endure on a regular basis whether it is when they are walking down the road, going to school, college university or travelling to their place of work. What I find is that the term 'eve teasing' almost trivialises what is in effect sexual harassment. The word teasing gives the act an almost light heartedness about it but it is not funny nor is it flattering. On the contrary it is humiliating, degrading and frightening. 'Eve teasing' can range from wolf whistles, sexual innuendoes, brushing up against women in public places to even groping. Sexual harassment is sexual harassment no matter what other name we give it and is not and should not be socially acceptable.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision is a barbaric practice that is prevalent in many sub Saharan and Northeast African countries and to a lesser extent in the Middle East and Asia. The WHO defines FGM as "all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons". I was staggered to read that there are more than 125 million girls and women (alive) who have been subjected to this procedure and that it is carried out on young girls from infancy to the age of fifteen. It is an uncomfortable topic and not something people like to discuss but it is a violation of every basic human right. Although in December of 2012 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the elimination of female genital mutilation, it is not rigorously enforced. How can we sit quietly and let it happen? If society turns a blind eye and allows theses atrocities to be committed with impunity then we are truly doomed.

International Women's Day may come around once a year but the struggle for gender equality and the empowerment and emancipation of women is something we have to fight for every day.