

# International Women’s Day 2017: Moving forward in a time of uncertainty and upheaval

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/03/07/international-womens-day-2017/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/03/07/international-womens-day-2017/)

*Since the first celebration of International Women’s Day, the fight for women’s rights has seen many milestones – the adoption of the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), the establishment of the [Women, Peace and Security agenda](#), an international commitment to [achieve gender equality by 2030](#). However, recent setbacks in the United States and United Kingdom have sparked widespread concern that this progress is under attack. Professor Christine Chinkin and Dr Louise Arimatsu reflect on a time of uncertainty and remind us to keep focused, moving forward together in solidarity.*

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[International Women’s Day \(IWD\)](#) was first celebrated in 1911 when over a million women and men around the world participated in public rallies and marches calling for a range of reforms including the right of women to work, to vote, to hold public office, to end discrimination. Over the last century there has been significant progress on all these fronts and more. Yet, in January 2017 – the day after President Trump’s inauguration – an estimated 5 million protestors worldwide felt compelled to take part in the [Women’s March](#) united by the common concern that recent setbacks to the progressive realisation of women’s rights in some parts of the world had become more immediate and widespread.

These concerns were well-founded. On his first full day in office, the new President [reinstated the Mexico City Policy](#), colloquially known as the ‘global gag rule’, which strips USAID funding to any organisation that ‘performs or actively promotes abortion as a method of family planning in other nations’. The decision (which is [feared to extend beyond previous restrictions](#)) was widely condemned and described by the European Parliament as ‘[a direct attack on and a setback for gains made for women’s and girl’s rights](#)’ prompting it to call for Member States to significantly increase sexual and reproductive health and rights funding to protect women’s access to birth control and safe and legal abortion. Trump’s decision to reinstate the policy was not unexpected. After all, ever since the measure was first introduced under Reagan in 1984, nearly every new President has reversed their predecessor’s actions. But



claimed to do in June 2016 in response to the House of Lords Select Committee Report on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict. We should demand that the UK lead by example and take a leading role in establishing and contributing to an international fund to finance access to birth control and safe and legal abortion to fill the financing gap created by Trump's gag order.

On 8 March, International Women's Day, the organisers of the Women's March are once again calling on women everywhere to show our solidarity and this time through the [act of striking](#). Not everyone will feel comfortable doing so and many will be unable to do so. To deprive society of women's labour – paid and unpaid – is to draw attention not just to the traditional power imbalance between the employer (public or private) and the worker but rather to the patriarchal power structures that permeate all societies. It is a radical act but no more radical than that taken by those who participated in the peaceful public protests in 1911.

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### **About the authors**



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