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Switzerland

# One year later, the feminist strike remains mobilised and determined

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**Since the surge of 14 June 2019, the feminist struggle has not stopped, and the collectives have continued to organize. The purple wave, while certainly smaller, still managed to splash across the country on 14 June 2020.**

Exactly a year ago, the Feminist Strike movement in Switzerland paralyzed the country after building for one year a relationship of forces – in workplaces, educational establishments and localities – that led to the historic mobilization of 14 June 2019. [1] A grassroots mobilization by self-organized collectives in neighbourhoods, schools or universities, but also by women workers in certain sectors.

A year later, very little has changed at the political level and in the concrete reality of women, transgender and non-binary people! The demands made by feminist collectives have not been reflected in material social progress, despite an increase in the percentage of women elected to parliament. But a real change in our lives will not go through Berne or the federal authorities. Federal Councillor Berset reminded us of this by proposing, just days after the 2019 Feminist Strike, an increase in the retirement age for women.

## **Feminist alarm: women on the front line**

The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have hit employees and precarious workers head on and revealed what the Feminist Strike movement had emphasized from its beginnings: the indispensable role of female work and the central contribution of social reproduction for the functioning of society.

The pandemic has also made visible the systemic inequalities within society. Whether in the workplace or the home, women have been at the forefront of the crisis. The public debate on so-called essential and non-essential activities has brought to light the workers who, until now, have been mostly in the shadows: sellers, cleaners, nurses, domestic workers or educators. Indeed, these women, most of them non-European workers and from immigrant backgrounds, were not alone in seeing their working conditions deteriorate. But, once at home, they found themselves having to perform more domestic, educational and care tasks due in particular to the closure of the schools. Added to this is the increase in sexist violence within the family.

## **Don't give up, keep fighting**

This context of social, economic and health crisis could have prevented the mobilization planned for 14 June 2020: it only strengthened the determination of the feminist movement in Switzerland and consolidated the feeling of revolt. Thus, the Feminist Strike proposed a program for a feminist exit from the crisis with demands developed from the manifesto of last year's strike. These mainly focused on the salary and social upgrading of feminized professions, the reduction of working hours, and the centrality of care, investment and the accessibility of public services. In addition to demands on the necessary fight against gender-based and sexual violence, there is one related to the current context, namely the fight against police and racist violence.

The actions organized this Sunday, 14 June, brought together around 1,000 people in Neuchâtel, 3,000 in Lausanne and 5,000 in Geneva. The mobilization took different forms ranging from a strike of domestic tasks to

street mobilizations, with blockades of the road axes and virtual interventions.

## The future will be feminist, or it will not be

Thanks to the collective networks that have been maintained since last year, the Feminist Strike has coordinated across all the cantons and has been able to reinvent itself creatively. Women's anger has been heard across the country. Therefore, this 14 June remains an important mobilization which gives promising prospects of struggle for the autumn, in order to face the attacks of the employers and the neoliberal policies whose economic effects are already being felt (waves of layoffs, bankruptcies, social exclusion, exploitation of employees or increased unemployment).

The radicalism of the movement has been there and has demonstrated its ability to mobilize, despite the context of crisis, with areas of convergence with other social movements.

"We no longer want the old world, but the well-being of 99% of the population and the environment by putting life at the centre", this is the message conveyed today by the Feminist Strike!

19 June 2020

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Solidarités](#).

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[1] See "[The feminist strike of 14 June 2019, towards a mass movement in Switzerland](#)", "[Women's strike in Switzerland with more than 500 000 women participating](#)", "[Women's/Feminist Strike in Switzerland: A Step Forward on the Road of the Internalization of Feminist Struggles](#)".