

# WILPF CONDEMNS NEW YEAR'S EVE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

January 8, 2016

On 5 January 2016, reports of large-scale violence against women perpetrated by a group or groups of men on New Year's Eve in Cologne and other cities in Germany were published. Later, the Cologne police reported that of more than 120 filed complaints with them, about three-quarters are including sexual harassment claims and in two cases rape.

WILPF strongly condemns this violence targeted against women and their freedom of movement. We are deeply concerned and worried for several reasons as this represents an unprecedented case of large-scale violence against women in Europe.

Early statements, including that of the Mayor of Cologne, suggested that now women might have to change their behavior and keep possible perpetrators at "an arms length distance." Social media immediately reacted on this #einearmlaenge suggestion with the adequate outrage, yet unfortunately in some cases offering racist or violent alternatives. The solution to these issues cannot be that women have to adapt to violent behaviour, but the root causes of this behavior need to be identified and challenged. Nothing else can prevent these events from reoccurring.

Further, the confusion surrounding the whole matter is striking. Once again, women as always are put in the middle, used for ulterior motives, and the violence against them is likely to be miss-used for racist goals.

Now, three days later many questions as to how this could have happened remain. Who are the perpetrators? How many were they? Was it an organized "attack"? If so, how could this happen without being noticed? What did the police do?

On Monday the Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, the state in which Cologne is located, will hear the first police report of New Years Eve and the resulting events. We hope this will shed some light on the remaining questions and a transparent and thorough investigation will provide some comprehensive answers.

We shall refuse any racist and patriarchal use of recent events. This needs to be solved in a non-violent matter, ensuring the political, economic, and social justice of all.

Women and feminists must not be forced to decide between: standing in solidarity against racism or against patriarchy, as if these two forms of oppression were not part of the same paradigm.

More soon.

<http://wilpf.org/wilpf-condemns-new-years-eve-violence-against-women/>