

# **NOT** **WITH ME** **MEN AGAINST SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE AND RACISM**

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(online on march 5.)

## **“Not with Me – Men Against Sexualized Violence and Racism”**

We want to express our sympathy and solidarity to all those women who fell victim to sexualized violence on New Year’s Eve in Cologne and elsewhere. These incidents have shocked us to the core and angered us immensely. Sexualized violence – no matter which gender it is committed against – represents an attack on the right to sexual self-determination. There is no room in this world for sexualized violence. We call for the best-possible support to be provided to all those affected by (sexualized) violence. We support the demands made by women’s rights organizations that legal protection loopholes (coercion, rape, assault) be swiftly abolished. The fundamental idea behind the Istanbul Convention “No means no” must also be transposed into German law. It must apply without exception to every person everywhere and under all conditions.

We oppose the “New Year’s Eve incidents” being instrumentalized to justify racist claims, right-wing populist agitation or the tightening of refugee and asylum regulations in Germany. Doing so caters to the stereotype of the oriental male sex offender and turns sexualized violence into a problem that only applies to “the others”, the “North Africans”, the “Moroccans”. We equally oppose the stereotypical attribution that *all* men are – potential or actual – sexual offenders.

Sexualized violence – not just against women – is nothing new and is a serious problem also in Germany. Every one of us is affected by it because it is committed in all areas of life: in families, partnerships, in the workplace, in apprenticeships, schools, children’s homes, in public on the street, within our own four walls, in refugee facilities and in prisons. Sexualized violence can affect every single person. In words and deeds. There is no justification or legitimate reason for sexualized violence. It violates the universal right to sexual self-determination which is, in our opinion, an inalienable right for everyone.

### **This is what we are fighting for:**

We say: **Not with us! We actively oppose every form of sexualized violence and racism.**

**1.** We categorically reject all **perceptions of masculinity** that legitimize (sexualized) violence. We equally oppose all forms of masculinity that cater to the rule of “might makes right” and are based on exclusion. At the same time, we are aware that we ourselves are also not free from discriminatory thoughts and deeds. We must remain self-critical in our reflections on prejudices and stereotypes so that we may recognize and overcome them.

**2.** Fear and insecurity in the face of foreigners frequently merge with **racism**, which caters to exclusion and degradation. We advocate consistently standing up for the individual and upholding our commonly shared **humanity**.

**3. Men are heterogeneous!** We support a view of men that considers the diversity of men – based on their origin and in terms of their social and individual circumstances. We need an atmosphere of constructive debate, in which different and common cultural perceptions of masculinity can be openly discussed. Our view of ourselves should not lead to the marginalization and degradation of others.

4. We oppose a **debate on refugees** in which refugee men and boys are perceived as a threat and (potential) offenders instead of as people in need of protection who have fled from repression, terror, violence and poverty. Refugee men have the same right to safety, privacy and care as refugee women and children. We are equally aware that the rise in racism as well as the violent acts committed against refugees are discussed differently, depending on whether women or men are the victim.

**We demand that:**

**1. Every form of sexualized violence must be prosecuted and rigorously penalized.**

Existing loopholes in the law must be closed. The agreement ratified by the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) must be fully transposed into law by the legislators. Extraditions and deportations are not the solution to the problem, however.

**2. Protection against sexualized violence must be guaranteed everywhere, including in refugee facilities.** There is a great need to improve in this area. In keeping with the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EU's Reception Directive, effective concepts for protecting refugees from sexualized violence must be developed and implemented.

**3. The police, judiciary and private security guards** must be made more aware of sexism and racism and be trained in how to deal with sexualized violence so that criminal prosecutions can actually be pursued and the aggrieved suitably cared for.

**4. The work of counselling centres** must be strengthened and their range of services extended. Gender-sensitive and self-reflective youth work with boys and men's counselling, are crucial for the prevention of violence. These areas must urgently be expanded. By the same token, the range of support services provided to women and girls should be maintained and broadened.

**5. Sexualized violence occurs in every corner of society. Violence prevention and educational work** needs to be broad in scope. It must not only focus on the male and female perpetrators, but also consider those boys and men affected by violence. Male-sensitive counselling, social and educational work for men and boys must be improved in terms of its professionalism and human resource capacities. It should consider that men and boys can also be vulnerable. The interests and problems of men and boys must be considered and taken seriously. Gender-sensitive and intercultural training is indispensable for experts working in this field.

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Status 4.3.2016