

## **Statement on intimate partner violence within activist communities**

**Anarchist Feminists Nottingham, UK**

Intimate partner violence within our communities is an issue that affects us all. It must be addressed. We can no longer ignore it.

We are the women who work with you, organise with you, and are your friends. We write this statement to bring this issue to light and raise a community response to this all-too-common occurrence.

We work together to create communities that are safe spaces of resistance. We recognise that we are traumatised by the large-scale violence inflicted upon us by the state and capitalist society. Yet we must also recognise the ways that our communities are wounded by the interpersonal violence rooted in patriarchy and sexism that occurs between intimate partners.

Interactions within activist communities often mirror the relationships of oppression that we try to fight, where what is respected are masculine forms of power. There is an assumption that people who identify as activists will automatically treat each other with respect. We have found this to be untrue. In fact, this assumption actually serves to further normalise and invisibilise unequal power dynamics, and enable the denial of their existence and their detrimental effects. This often happens in cases of intimate partner violence.

When a survivor reveals abuse, they should be believed, supported and offered as much protection as possible. Their safety, concerns, choices and wishes should be prioritised and respected. With the survivor's consent, perpetrators should be confronted.

The survivor's needs and wishes must be at the forefront when they are leaving an abusive relationship. However, the process of prevention, confrontation and protection requires a community response where we all take responsibility for what happens next. The attitude that issues of abuse are between the survivor and perpetrator alone is isolating for survivors and also prevent a real change in attitudes towards violence in relationships.

Therefore we believe that the community as a whole has a responsibility for confronting perpetrators and offering connections to resources and support. We believe that justice looks like community accountability, ensuring the survivor's safety and honouring them and their wishes.

As people who wish to create a world free from domination and oppression, we envision communities in which survivor's concerns are taken seriously, where they don't have to live in fear or shame or silence.

We want a community in which people are held accountable for their actions, not only at meetings, but also behind closed doors. We want survivors to feel confident to come forward about abuse and know that their communities will

support them and that they will not be judged, blamed, or shamed for sharing their experience and pain. We also want perpetrators to be willing to engage with a process of change.

*Note: We are using gender neutral language but recognise that most intimate partner violence is committed by men.*