



On Cologne: Gender, migration and unacknowledged racisms in Germany

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The authors observe that Germany in 2017 finally ratified the 2011 Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women, and also amended the law on rape to emphasise consent, not the physical violence of the rapist. But these changes were not due to decades of feminist pressure, but to the highly publicised harassment of women in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015 by immigrants. This led to sensational media coverage invoking anti-Muslim fears, and pressure from the far right AFD party (Alternative for Germany) and extremist Pegida movement. Cologne encouraged demands for quicker deportations and restrictions on refugee numbers across the political spectrum, and there was a rise of up to three a week in arson attacks on refugee centres. The article notes the response of anti-racist feminists, for example in the internet initiative #ausnahmslos (without exception), challenging the racialisation of sexual harassment and the racial undertones of public debate. But they were in turn attacked for fuelling right wing extremism, and were compared to Holocaust deniers.

See also: 'A Feminist View of Cologne: The current outrage is very hypocritical', *Der Spiegel Online*, 21 January 2016. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-feminists-debate-cologne-attacks-a-1072806.html> [3]

Debate between two leading feminists (Alice Schwarzer and Anne Wizorek) from different generations of feminists responding to Cologne. They disagree about the urgency of addressing sexism within some immigrant communities, as opposed to stressing the persistence of patriarchal attitudes throughout German society. Both seem to agree that groping and sexual harassment should become a criminal offence, a cause which Wizorek had promoted since 2013.

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