

Statement on Sexualized Violence in Peace and Conflict Studies

Sexualized violence occurs in many areas of everyday life, including in research and academia. It can affect anyone. The Executive Board of the German Association for Peace and Conflict Research (AFK e.V.) strongly condemns any form of sexualized violence, be it physical or psychological¹. On behalf of the AFK, the Board expresses its solidarity with all those who are or have been confronted with sexualized violence and who suffer from its devastating and long-term effects.

Violence, in all its forms, is a testament to power and structural inequalities. These are inherent to the structure and everyday life of universities, colleges and other scientific institutions. Structural, intersecting inequalities, based on gender, sexual orientation, race, class, religious affiliation, or geography, favour the exploitation of such power relations in the highly hierarchical higher education system and result in discrimination. Within this system, researchers are often required to give in to the structures of the scientific system in order to work within them, making students and staff, due to their limited options for action, particularly exposed to the arbitrariness of persons in positions of power. This can enable and even encourage sexualized violence. Moreover, speaking about sexualized violence is still strongly taboo, which makes it difficult for those affected and those in solidarity with them to address it. In addition, survivors and bystanders run the risk of not being heard or even of being blamed for the abuse they face. Such dynamics are well known and underlined in research on dealing with sexualized violence.

Precarious and short-term employment, the neoliberalization of universities and the individualisation of studies, teaching and research conditions put (non-)academic staff at risk of being exposed to these inequalities. In addition, the structure of study programs in which individuals occupy dominant positions exacerbates these hierarchies. It is therefore highly problematic that students are not, per se, covered by the German General Equality Act (AGG).

Studies in peace and conflict inquire into the multilayeredness of conflict dynamics and resolution, relations of domination, power and forms of oppression. This research agenda does not free its academic field from reinforcing gendered, racialised and classed hierarchies and dependencies that promote the abuse of power. As such, sexualized violence has occurred and continues to happen in the context of peace and conflict research.

As a professional association of researchers, students and practitioners, the AFK calls on all colleagues not to look away when incidents of violence and abuse of power occur. It calls on colleagues to show solidarity with those affected, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or status group, and to support them. The AFK urges research institutions to establish and

¹ A definition can be found, among other sources, on the BuKoF website:

<https://bukof.de/online-handreichung-sdg/>

and on the website of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency:

https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/expertise_sexuelle_belaestigung_im_hochschulkontext.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

AFK e.V.

<https://afk-web.de/cms/stellungnahme-zu-sexualisierter-gewalt-in-der-friedens-und-konfliktforschung/>

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strengthen support structures that provide support, guidance and training that focus on empowerment and sensitisation. There is a need for contact points and preventive measures that ensure transparent procedures and provide effective sanctions against offenders on an organisational and staff development level. We call on all individuals, especially those in positions of power, to support and push for change within their institutions.

We, as AFK, seek to create safer spaces for everyone. The AFK condemns sexualized violence of any kind. It is aware of the intersectional character of sexualized violence and stands for a climate in which sexualized violence can be made public and those affected receive support. We call on all stakeholders to report incidents that occur, including at AFK events, to the Executive Board or the Women & FLINTA Representatives. The Executive Board reserves the right to submit a motion to the members' assembly to exclude members who exploit their positions of power and use violence. Furthermore, the Executive Board is committed to sustainable structures within the association in order to prevent discrimination. The AFK offers corresponding awareness trainings and spaces for critical reflection at its colloquium and works in close cooperation with the AFK diversity team. The AFK furthermore commits to institutionalising sustainable and preventive structures. It continues to support the overcoming of factors favouring violence on the way to a non-hierarchical, discrimination-free and solidary scientific enterprise.

For further information

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2015) Sexual Harassment in Higher Education – Gaps in Protection and Recommendations.

Selection of support services for survivors of violence

(Suggestions for additions are welcome at frauenbeauftragte@afk-web.de)



- **Helpline for Violence Against Women**
Phone: 08000 116 016
- **Helpline for Violence Against Men**
Phone: 0800 1239900
- **Central Information Office for Autonomous Women's Shelters**
<https://www.frauenhaus-suche.de>
- **Weibernetz e.V. – Federal Network of Women, Lesbians, and Girls with Disabilities**
<https://www.weibernetz.de/startseite.html>
- **Federal Association Mobile Counseling**
Nationwide counseling on right-wing extremism, racism, antisemitism, conspiracy theories, and right-wing populism
<https://bundesverband-mobile-beratung.de>
- **bff Women Against Violence e.V.**
<https://www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/de/hilfe-beratung.html>
- *Association for Women, Lesbians, Trans, Inter*, and Queer People***
<https://broken-rainbow.de/>

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- More support services can be found at:
<https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen/hilfe-und-vernetzung/hilfe-und-beratung-bei-gewalt-80640>

