

Statement from South London, North London and Brighton Solidarity Federation about sexual assault within the anarchist/activist community (2012)

This statement comes from recent discussions within South London and North London Solidarity Federation locals, and in response to a recent case of sexual assault which took place in the wider activist community. Following the actions taken by North London, South London and Brighton Solidarity Federation locals, this statement was written by the South London Gender Working Group.

We want to state clearly a number of things.

We believe that in the event of sexual assault it is necessary to take action, and that it is appropriate to look towards processes of community accountability. In exploring how to deal with such situations, we have looked at the experiences of other activist and political communities, and the literature that has stemmed from these. We strongly support other groups who have initiated these processes; these enact a sense of responsibility and care we should have for and with each other.

It is entirely appropriate to exclude the perpetrator from spaces which the survivor may wish to be in, so as to avoid creating a platform for the particular abusive relationship to continue. It is clear that for many people, activism and politics are the environments in which they seek to form abusive relationships; therefore we exclude them from our spaces and events. In light of this, excluding a perpetrator from our events and meetings is a likely initial response that we will make to an account of abuse, and we defend our decision to do so.

In one particular recent case, a number of SolFed locals and members have come under attack for taking such a stance. It is our understanding that within similar situations it is fairly common for the survivor who calls someone out, or those who support them, to come under attack. It is not uncommon that this is in the form of endless questions around language and the very foundations of accountability processes.

In this statement we want to express our continued commitment to processes of community accountability. While we believe that all processes within a political community such as ours should be subjected to critique, we take seriously recent expressions of groups intent on disrupting any of these processes. We encourage those who have stated this as their intention to reconsider their position. This case of sexual assault comes out of a wider background of gendered violence, misogyny, sexism and patriarchy which are perpetuated within activist communities and often go unchallenged. As such, neither this individual case, nor our responses to it, can be seen in isolation.

At the same time we call for solidarity with all processes of community accountability. We invite the wider activist community to engage with the feminist tradition of these processes. It is of huge importance for political communities to maintain the safety of the spaces they create, and address questions of privilege.

Signed by the following locals:

South London
North London
Brighton
Thames Valley

Source: <http://www.brightonsolfed.org.uk/south-london/statement-from-south-london-north-london-and-brighton-solidarity-federation-about> (accessed 6 July 2022)