

NOT ONE ROGUE COP

Recent events – from the BLM uprisings, to public health pandemic powers, to the policing of the women's vigil on Clapham Common – have brought attention to the often violent role of policing today. Police in Britain are being handed more powers and protections through COVID legislation, Spy Cops Bill and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. These pieces of legislation can apply or hold sway in Scotland too.

Even without new powers, we have seen how Police Scotland reacted to the Offensive Behaviour at Football (Scotland) Act 2012 being repealed, how they kettle anti-racists at demos, the facilitation of an attack on a solidarity with asylum seekers demonstration and the confrontational comments coming from the Scottish Police Federation on policing tactics during BLM and throughout the pandemic. Police Scotland also have authority over surveillance, input into mental health services, being the first point of call for domestic abuse, sexual assault and rape, and other hate crime allegations; presence in the majority of our schools; security at major public events; and now responsibility for public health and enforcing lockdown restrictions. The time for a reassessment of policing in Scotland is long overdue.

This is not one rogue cop. The police have now stated they will put undercover police into bars and nightclubs to protect women from sexual assault. But violence against women is also state violence: from austerity to political imprisonment to state sanctioned rape from undercover cops to everyday surveillance and intimidation: these are all acts we need to challenge. Violence against working class women is also class violence, violence against Black women and women of colour is also sexism and racism. State action or inaction is key in these processes and so we ask: is the purpose of the police to protect us? And if not, why do they have such extensive powers and what can be done about that?

We want to bring together women who have an interest in looking at this as a class issue. This is intended to be a women-led organisation but if we are serious about the class underpinnings of state violence, then it has to also address the effects of state violence on everyone. We want to look at how the criminal justice system, as part of the state, helps to perpetuate this violence and how we can challenge this. Whether that is direct action and protest; building networks; education on your rights; legal work; policy work; participative research and organising in constituent communities as well as how to reach out to others and build links with existing groups.

We will be investigating and publicising the attitudes and behaviour of the Police Service of Scotland towards women, working class communities, Black communities, disabled people and others. We will be highlighting calls for increased, rather than ringfenced, investment in domestic abuse services, rape crisis support, free public childcare with recognition and support of additional caring responsibilities, the NHS, social services and other vital care and support services for women; and investment in social housing, including for women and children at risk of domestic abuse

None of us hold all the answers but we all have an interest in the issues outlined and a responsibility to take them on. We start from the principle that state violence can be challenged and we uphold our right to protest.