

Female Activist group burn Daily Mail, shut down Kensington High Street in protest of anti-migrant rhetoric

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- Sisters Uncut is a feminist direct action group
- Protest targeted the Daily Mail for anti-migrant propaganda that enables racist Tory policies on immigration that put migrant women at additional risk
- 100 women attended the protest

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Today Sisters Uncut took to the streets to protest the anti-migrant propaganda of the Daily Mail, as well as racist Tory policies on immigration. The protest was organised in support of the Movement for Justice [MFJ] demonstration on August 8th to shut down Yarl's Wood Detention Centre.

Over 100 women assembled outside Kensington Library, West London, at midday. At 1pm the group moved to the Daily Mail offices where there were speeches from Sisters Uncut and Movement for Justice demanding an end to the media scapegoating of migrants and racist immigration policies. Among the speakers was a former detainee of Yarl's Wood who spoke of her time in detention and the isolation and terrible violence she experienced there.

Dominique Brown a speaker from Sisters Uncut said - 'safety should not be subject to immigration status - safety is a right not a privilege.

Anita Roberts from Sisters Uncut said, 'Sexist Tory policies on immigration are propagated and validated by the hate spewed by the Daily Mail. Again and again they push the message that migrant lives do not matter and black lives do not matter, we say enough is enough.'

A number of chants from the group were, 'patriarchy will prevail 'till we shut the Daily Mail' and 'Daily Mail shame on you migrant lives matter too.'

The group then moved to Kensington High Street and occupied the road, blocking traffic. Bundles of Daily Mail papers were burned in the middle of the road. Police vans arrived on scene as the protest was reaching its end. The group dissipated shortly after.

Migrant women who come to the UK are often fleeing state violence or torture, sexual and domestic violence elsewhere, only to arrive here and face the violence of our border control, racist immigration laws, police, detention centres, media and government. In detention centres like Yarl's Wood, they are often physically and sexually re-victimised by guards.

We targeted the Daily Mail because:

- Anti-migrant propaganda enables racist and sexist Tory policies on immigration.
- These policies include 'no recourse to public funds' – a legal status which prevents migrant women from accessing state assistance to leave violent relationships [1] – and detaining women in 'immigration removal centres' where sexual abuse is rampant.
- Immigration policies that vilify migrant women put them at additional risk, while funding cuts mean already overstretched services can't meet women's needs.

The protest comes shortly after recent reforms committed even more women - including some EEA nationals - to the immigration condition 'No Recourse to Public Funds.' The July budget also revealed drastic government cuts which will disproportionately affect marginalised groups [2]. This extends to cuts in domestic violence services: **between 2010 and 2014, 32 specialist refuges were closed**, with a greater impact on services for BME women. [3]

In the UK, two women a week on average are killed by a partner or ex-partner. [4] Women who come here as migrants are at greater risk of isolation, vulnerability and violence than those with British citizenship, and racist media rhetoric which vilifies migrants exacerbate these risks. [5]

Sisters Uncut stand with all women living with the threat or reality of violence - whether perpetrated by a partner or by the state. We demand immigration policies which can protect our sisters of colour, now.

Maham Shamsi who attended the protest said 'as an immigrant woman I feel that the right wing media fuels hatred against people who - like everyone else - have the right to support and safety'

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Editor's notes

1. <http://www.aidsmap.com/Migrants-without-recourse-to-public-funds/page/1499995/>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plXuPVbquvQ>
3. <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/jan/31/domestic-violence-victims-risk-cuts>
4. http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic_violence_topic.asp?section=0001000100220036&Title=statistics
5. <http://rightsofwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Domestic-violence-immigration-law-and-no-recourse-to-public-funds-.pdf>
6. Sisters Uncut is a grassroots women-only direct action group opposed to all cuts to domestic violence services. The group emerged in recognition of the cuts to public services disproportionately affecting women who seek specialist help