



STATEMENT BY BÜRGERBEWEGUNG PAX EUROPA

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 3

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

Prevention of Violence against women and children

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Recognizing the Problem: Female Genital Mutilation Permitted in Teachings of Islam

Arguably, the most severe form of violence against women and children is female genital mutilation.

The Annotated Agenda notes on page 8 that

participating States have a duty to prevent, investigate, and punish the perpetrators of such violence [against women and children], as well as to protect victims, especially women and children [...].

It is therefore especially troubling that reports of rising numbers of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the OSCE region.

These reports mention 30 million girls worldwide are at risk of being subjected to FGM in the next decade. According to a report¹, FGM remains almost universal in Somalia, Guinea, Djibouti and Egypt and there is little discernible decline in Chad, Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Sudan or Yemen. While these countries are not participating States, it is obvious that they are predominantly Muslim countries. Western news articles about female genital mutilation routinely assert that it is solely a cultural practice, not justified by any religion. Yet again and again we see Muslim imams² justifying it, and it is sanctioned in Islamic law³.

1 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23410858>

2 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/health/female-circumcision-is-a-right-says-imam/story-fn59nokw-1226542730442>

3 "The definition under Islamic law for female circumcision is exclusively the removal of the uppermost extra skin at the top of the clitoral glans." (Australian Iman, see footnote 2)
"Circumcision is obligatory (for every male and female) (by cutting off the piece of skin on the glans of the penis of

United States:

More and more girls in the United States are at risk of being “cut” in order to be marriageable. The risk runs especially high in immigrant families from Africa and the Middle East. “[A] study cited [analysis](#) of data from the 2000 census that found between 1990 and 2000 the number of girls and women in the United States at risk of the procedure – which involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia – increased by 35 percent. [...] The United States has had a law in place against FGM since 1996 and 20 states have passed their own statutes. But, according to the report, as of 2012, there have been no prosecutions under federal law, and only one criminal case has been brought forward under a state statute.”⁴

United Kingdom:

Even though it is illegal in Great Britain, and as many as [66,000 girls have been subjected to this barbarity there, the British have never managed to prosecute anyone for it](#). There are indications of 1,500 new cases of FGM in one hospital alone. Staff are fearful of getting involved [in preventing the practice] because they see the practice as a cultural issue rather than abuse. This despite FGM being a crime since 1985.⁵

Reports⁶ of a [Somali] dental practitioner being “struck off by the General Dental Council for offering the illegal procedure in more than a decade provide evidence that there are indeed doctors willing to perform FGM in Great Britain.

Belgium:

Reports show that more than 8,000 girls were subjected to the practice of FGM in 2010 despite penalties up to five years prison time.⁷

Recommendation to participating States:

Violence against women and children can only be combatted if the problem is recognized. This recognition is especially important with respect to the barbaric practice of female genital mutilation.

- We recommend that participating States recognize that FGM is not a cultural practice, but a religious one as it is endorsed by many Islamic clerics and scholars due to its justification in Islamic law.
- Endorsement, performance and support of FGM must be reported to the authorities and prosecuted.
- Legal penalties for FGM should be raised.
- Educational awareness programs in health education should be introduced.
- As for best practices, it is deplorable that none exist yet.

the male, but circumcision of the female is by cutting out the *bazr* 'clitoris' [this is called *khufaadh* 'female circumcision'])." -- '*Umdat al-Salik* e4.3, translated by Mark Durie, [The Third Choice](#), p. 64

4 <http://www.trust.org/trustlaw/news/female-genital-mutilation-on-the-rise-in-the-united-states-report/>

5 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2424556/More-1-500-women-victims-genital-mutilation-shock-statistics-compiled-ONE-hospital--Somalia.html>

6 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2415492/Dentist-Omar-Addow-struck-offering-perform-female-genital-mutilation-girls.html>

7 <http://www.hln.be/hln/nl/957/Belgie/article/detail/1433087/2012/05/03/Minstens-8-000-Belgische-vrouwen-geconfronteerd-met-besnijden-in-2010.dhtml>