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# ISLAM & FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

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WOMEN IN ISLAM SERIES



MUSLIMS FOR  
PROGRESSIVE VALUES



# What is Female Genital Mutilation?

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) refers to the partial or total removal of or other injury to the external female genitalia. FGM is conducted for non medical reasons and has no known health benefits to the women and girls it is performed on.

## The Four Types of FGM / C:

### Type 1

Partial or total removal of the clitoral glans and/or the clitoral hood.

### Type 2

Partial or total removal of clitoral glans & labia minora, w/ or without the removal of the labia majora.

### Type 3

Infibulation or the narrowing of the vaginal opening with a seal by cutting or stitching the labia minora or labia majora.

### Type 4

Other harmful procedures to genitals including pricking, piercing, or scraping.



# FGM In Numbers

**200  
MILLION**

The number of women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 that have undergone FGM.

**31**

The number of countries that have a substantial practice of FGM/C.

**1 IN 3**

The number of adolescent girls who have undergone FGM that were cut by a medical professional.

**70%**

The percentage of women and girls in affected countries that believe that the practice should end.

**3  
MILLION**

The number of girls and young women globally who are at risk of FGM every year.



# Why Is FGM Performed?

**Social pressures to conform to what others are doing.**

**Associated with cultural beliefs of femininity & modesty.**

**To control or limit a woman's sexual desires.**

**Believed to increase a woman's marriageability.**

**As rite of passage to prepare a girl for adulthood.**

**Believed to ensure premarital virginity and marital fidelity.**



# FGM / C in the Qur'an

In the Qur'an, there is no mention of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) although some verses exist that proponents of FGM refer to as justification for their support for the practice. However, all of these verses refer exclusively to male circumcision.

“Allah is the One who made the Earth a habitat for you, and the sky as a structure, and Allah designed you, and has perfected your design.”

**Quran 40:64**

A number of verses in the Qur'an do exist that condemn any act that negatively impacts the human body, which is a creation of God. These verses, including the one above and verse 30:30 and 2:195, condemn any act that interferes with the creation of God without reasonable justification. Recognizing that FGM/C negatively impacts the human body, we can infer that the Qur'an does indeed condemn the practice of FGM/C.



# THE STORY OF HAJAR

One of the most direct verses of the Qur'an, verse 16:123, urges all Muslims to follow the way of Prophet Ibrahim (AS), which includes circumcision. However, in the context of circumcision, this applies exclusively to male circumcision. Some Muslims point to a story that tells of the fury Sarah felt when Hajar became pregnant with Ismail. In her rage, Sarah threatened to kill Hajar but Ibrahim (AS) commanded her to pierce her ears and her genitalia. There is little to point to the accuracy of the story and even if it was true, the female circumcision in the story refers to an act of punishment, not a holy or pure act.



# FGM / C in the Hadith

There is no evidence in any authentic (sahih) recorded traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) expressly approval for any practice resembling FGM/C. Instead, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered men who embraced Islam to be circumcised in accordance with the traditions of the Prophet Ibrahim (AS). However, no report exists of an authentic Hadith expressing the same support for circumcision of women and girls. Some supporters of FGM highlight certain Hadith as expressing approval of the practice but a number of scholars and at prominent Islamic academic institutions have stated that all of the Hadith that claim the legality of FGM are not *sahih* (authentic).

Furthermore, claims that FGM is mubaah (permissible) cannot be justified as FGM is in direct contradiction with Qur'anic verses and sahih Hadith which condemn any harm to the human body.

*"Allah has cursed those who curve their teeth and those elongate their hair with additions and those who change God's creations."*

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)  
(An-Nawawi vol. 13 pg 102)



## BUT WHAT IF FGM IS A CULTURAL PRACTICE?

Many proponents of FGM argue that because it is a cultural practice, it should be allowed under Islamic law. However, Islam forbids cultural practices that are a) in conflict with Islamic teachings and b) harmful to an individual or the entire community. This is in line with the early days of Islam, which saw the practice of female infanticide eradicated and the practice of polygamy strictly regulated.

*“...even if your fathers did not comprehend anything and they were not properly guided?”*

**(Quran: 2:170)**



# RECENT FATWAS ON THE PRACTICE OF FGM

**2006**

A meeting of Islamic scholars from across the Muslim world resulted in a fatwa banning the practice of FGM.

**2010**

34 Islamic Scholars signed a fatwa banning the practice of female genital mutilation.

**2010**

In Iraqi Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Islamic Scholars Union issued a fatwa stating that FGM was not an Islamic practice

**2018**

An Imam in Dublin issued fatwa against FGM in all its forms.

**2018**

A fatwa in Somaliland forbid FGM and provided compensation to victims of FGM.



# REFERENCES

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