

Female Genital Mutilation

A Religious Perspective

By

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The Muslim Parliament

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Definition

The cutting out of all or most of the female external genitalia, especially the clitoris is what is called female genital mutilation. Once done, it extinguishes sexual sensitivity and pleasure.

It is part of an age-old desire of the male to control the sexuality of the female.

Health Consequences

- Consequences depend on the severity of the procedure performed;
- These may include: severe pain, shock, haemorrhage, urine retention, ulceration of the genital region and injury to adjacent tissue. Haemorrhage and infection can cause death.

Reasons for having FGM

- Increase male sexual pleasure;
- Initiation of girls into womanhood;
- External genitalia are considered dirty and unsightly, removal promotes hygiene and provide aesthetic appeal;
- Enhancement of fertility;
- Some consider it a religious requirement and link it to virginity and chastity.

Distribution of FGM

- FGM is practiced in African countries, also in some areas of Middle East. Now increasingly elsewhere primarily among immigrants from these countries;
- The number of girls and women who have undergone FGM is estimated at between 100 and 140 million. Further, it is estimated that each year 2 million girls are at risk of undergoing FGM.

Legislation and Policy

- All forms of FGM are illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in Scotland under the Prohibition of FGM (Scotland) Act 2005.
- Under the Children Act 1989 Local Authorities can apply to the courts for orders to prevent a child being taken abroad for mutilation.

Religious Perspective

- The exact origin of 'female circumcision' is not known;
- Islamic sources call it the 'Pharaonic' practice;
- The practice has existed long before the rise of Islam, Christianity and Judaism;
- It is not clear whether the practice originated in Egypt or in some other African countries and then spread to Egypt;
- It is a cultural practice rather than religious – for example, in Egypt it is practiced both among Muslims and Christians. But is not known in Saudi Arabia or Iran. The practice also does not exist in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia where largest number of Muslims live.

Fatwa against FGM by Shaikh al-Azhar, Shaikh Tantawi

22 November 2006, Cairo, Egypt

- FGM has neither been mentioned in Quran nor in Sunnah, the two main sources of Islamic law;
- Prophet Muhammad did not circumcise his four daughters;
- FGM is not an Islamic requirement.

This fatwa was also endorsed by Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shaikh Ali Gomaa and Shaikh Yousif Qardawi.

In conclusion, FGM is a violence against women. It is against their Human Rights.

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