

YOUNG HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTER OF THE YEAR

FGM (Female Genital Mutilation)

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FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) is a common cultural practice in many parts of the world today including the Middle East, East Africa and Southeast Asia. Its mere existence makes it too common. Typically involving girls aged below fifteen years of age, this traumatic procedure may involve removing, stitching and cauterising the genitals.

So what justifies this? The WHO (World Health Organisation) explains: The procedure has no health benefits for girls and women. FGM is a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It is mainly done by communities as a rite of passage or with the intent of preserving a girl's virginity by trying to reduce their libido hence the removal of erogenous tissue.

Typically an elder woman normally the victim's grandmother will profane the girl. In such practicing groups there is an unhealthy idea of body image where the female genitals are considered impure and dirty. This being the case, women who have not been butchered are often discriminated against. As it is often done unprofessionally with neither sterile instrument nor adequate anaesthetic it can have damaging lasting effects on its victims; these include cysts, urinary tract infections, PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), bleeding and even infertility. Horrifically crude utensils are normally employed. These can include anything from razor blades to fingernails, from cut glass to scissors.

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Although the crime is relatively specific it affects a huge number exceeding double the population of the UK, a number we cannot ignore - that is as many as 140million individuals in the world today.

In developing countries the threat is particularly serious as medical professionals are becoming increasingly involved. 18% of cases and rising have been done by trained cutters who have outright abused their authority on families. Two thirds of FGM victims are Africans, with the largest concentration of FGM being present in Somalia. An appalling 96-8% of Somali women are 'circumcised' which goes on to contributing to widespread FGM culture within the Somali Diaspora.

In areas with considerable immigrant populations in the UK, awareness should be raised of FGM as around 20,000 girls are at risk in Britain and France. Too often is it the case that unsuspecting girls are sent on 'holidays' with family where FGM is carried out abroad. It is illegal in 22 African countries as well as 12 industrialised countries however much of it slips under the radar.

Though France employs a tougher protocol in actively examining potential victims on return, Britain continues to hide behind the curtain of cultural sensitivity. As a result of this around 100 convictions linked to FGM have been made in France whereas absolutely none have been made in Britain despite a total of 82 incidents being reported to Scotland Yard. Since its outlawing in 1985, the practice has a paltry sentence of 14 years attached to it for inflicting permanent damage.

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Collaboration together as humans is the only way to eradicate this monster.
Let us try to make this the last generation to be violated by the knife.