MYTH-BUSTING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

February 2022

EndFGM

FGM happens in a context of traditional norms and beliefs – including in Europe. Justifications provided for this practice range from abiding by tradition, to the preservation of ‘virginity’, social pressure, reasons of hygiene, the control of women’s sexuality and as a pre-requisite for marriage. However, NONE of these stated reasons make it acceptable. FGM is a heinous form of violence against women and girls. It intentionally alters or injures the female external genitalia for non-medical reasons, and is performed against the will of the woman or girl. It takes away control over their bodies, their sexuality, and their right to have basic bodily functions free from infections and pain. In short, it violates their human rights.

Are there any circumstances in which FGM is acceptable?

Are some types of FGM less harmful than others?

ALL forms of FGM cause lasting physical harm to women and girls and are a violation of their bodily integrity. All types of FGM affect the lives of survivors with physical, emotional, psychological consequences.

Is FGM a religious practice?

Are there no religions which make FGM a compulsory practice. Practising a certain religion DOES NOT indicate that is someone practising FGM. It is linked to traditions and customs based on family history, country and/or ethnicity of origin.

Is FGM a problem in Europe?

The COVID-19 crisis has reduced the ability to travel for FGM practices, but it does not stop the practice from being performed in secrecy. The COVID-19 crisis has also made it more difficult for women and girls to access psychological support and medical care if needed.

What is the EU doing to tackle the problem of FGM in the EU?

Are there any circumstances in which FGM is acceptable?

What is it possible to end FGM globally once and for all?

Ending all forms of violence against women and girls – including FGM – is a key aim of the EU’s equality policies. The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 includes actions to work towards this goal. The EU will present a legal proposal to prevent and combat specific forms of gender-based violence and a specific Recommendation on the prevention of harmful practices. The EU works with its partners to promote gender equality. The EU provides funding for projects from NGOs aiming to combat violence against women and girls. The EU will continue working with survivors, affected families and communities, experts, policy makers and NGOs to achieve this goal. The EU will present a legal proposal to prevent and combat specific forms of gender-based violence and a specific Recommendation on the prevention of harmful practices. The EU works with its partners to promote gender equality. The EU provides funding for projects from NGOs aiming to combat violence against women and girls.