

Resolution 2135 (2016)¹

Female genital mutilation in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. As of 2016, some 200 million women and girls in the world have undergone genital mutilation. These practices take place primarily in certain countries of Africa and Asia, but they also occur in Europe. Every day, women and girls who are nationals of or resident in Council of Europe member States are at risk of being subjected to genital mutilation.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly first condemned these practices back in 2001 in [Resolution 1247 \(2001\)](#) on female genital mutilation and again in 2013 in [Resolution 1952 \(2013\)](#) on children's right to physical integrity. However, despite growing international awareness of the seriousness of female genital mutilation, the practice persists and remains rooted in the cultures and traditions of the practising communities. In this context, the Assembly points out that no religious text prescribes female genital mutilation.

3. The Assembly underlines the fact that female genital mutilation is an act of violence against women and children and a flagrant violation of human rights. It causes serious physical and mental harm, and is a violation of the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and of the right to health. As mutilation is practised in most cases during childhood, it also constitutes a violation of children's rights.

4. The Assembly is convinced that prevention must lie at the heart of all efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation and must involve all those concerned, whether the practising communities, grass-roots organisations, social and education services, the police, the justice system or health-care professionals. Awareness-raising, information and education campaigns must include both women and men from the communities concerned and work to dissociate these practices from religion, gender stereotypes and the cultural beliefs which perpetuate discrimination against women.

5. In the light of the above, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:

5.1. recognise female genital mutilation as violence against women and children and systematically include this issue in national procedures and policies to combat violence, as well as to publicly condemn female genital mutilation, including through relevant legislation;

5.2. run public awareness-raising and information campaigns on combating female genital mutilation, provide information in the languages most spoken by the practising communities, and support, including financially, the initiatives of non-governmental organisations in this field;

5.3. raise awareness among victims and their families of the fact that, contrary to their beliefs, female genital mutilation is not an issue of honour but an act of violence against women and girls, and an act against the human right to health;

5.4. criminalise the act of subjecting a woman or girl to genital mutilation or coercing her into undergoing it, and the act of inciting a girl to undergo such an act, including where this is practised by health-care professionals, or providing the perpetrator with the means required for this purpose;

1. *Assembly debate* on 13 October 2016 (35th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14135](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo; and [Doc. 14148](#), opinion of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Liliane Maury Pasquier). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 13 October 2016 (35th Sitting).



- 5.5. take all necessary measures to prevent girls from being subjected to genital mutilation when travelling to their parents' countries of origin and, to this end, step up international judicial and police co-operation;
 - 5.6. ensure extraterritorial jurisdiction for domestic courts so that criminal prosecutions can be initiated when mutilation has been committed abroad on, or by, nationals or residents of Council of Europe member States;
 - 5.7. sign and/or ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention"), fully apply its provisions and co-operate to the closest possible extent with the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and the Committee of the Parties in monitoring implementation of this convention;
 - 5.8. provide women and girls who have been subjected to or are at risk of being subjected to genital mutilation with access to emergency services, such as free helplines and shelters, and to health-care and advice services;
 - 5.9. arrange and co-ordinate the collection, at national level and in line with a common methodology, of data on cases of female genital mutilation, ensure they are disseminated to the authorities involved in the fight against these practices, with due regard for international data protection and confidentiality standards, and on this basis frame appropriate and targeted policies to bring an end to female genital mutilation;
 - 5.10. train health-care professionals, teachers, the police, social workers and those working in reception centres for asylum seekers in how to detect female genital mutilation in a culturally sensitive manner without diminishing the seriousness of the practice, and set up mechanisms making it possible to identify girls at risk or those having been subjected to genital mutilation;
 - 5.11. encourage the reporting of women or girls at risk by providing adequate legal protection to professionals where reporting is mandatory;
 - 5.12. provide training for health-care professionals to enable them to diagnose female genital mutilation and provide appropriate care for women and girls suffering from the physical and psychological consequences of this mutilation;
 - 5.13. recognise female genital mutilation, or the well-founded fear of female genital mutilation, as persecution within the meaning of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, introduce gender-sensitive asylum procedures and incorporate the female genital mutilation issue into individual interviews with women coming from countries where this is practised;
 - 5.14. include the fight against female genital mutilation in international co-operation and development aid activities.
6. The Assembly encourages national parliaments to support action to prevent female genital mutilation at national level and through their international co-operation activities.
 7. The Assembly welcomes and supports the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations which include the eradication of female genital mutilation by 2030 and encourages all Council of Europe member States to make an active contribution to the implementation of the goals.
 8. Lastly, the Assembly recognises that female genital mutilation is linked to other harmful traditional practices, in particular early and forced marriages, which warrant separate consideration.