



ENOMW STATEMENT ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

**Violence against Women and Girls. Male control over Female Bodies.
Not “Islamic tradition”. Not “private matter”.**

Brussels, 6 July 2017

We, the [European Network of Migrant Women \(ENOMW\)](#), are alerted by the [recent statements by Tariq Ramadan](#), the President of the [European Muslim Network \(EMN\)](#), regarding the practice of **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in relation to Muslim culture and tradition**. Even more concerning is the EMN president’s call to discuss FGM “privately” and to restrain from publically condemning individuals who condone this form of violence against women, in order to protect these individuals’ religious status and position of power.

ENOMW denounces, in strongest terms, any traditional, cultural or religious justification of FGM – a crime against women under international human rights law and a serious violation of women’s bodily, sexual and psychological integrity. We refute Tariq Ramadan’s personal & pseudo-religious interpretations of FGM, as well as his view that, under any circumstances at all, the discussions on FGM should be held privately within religious communities. Like any other crime and form of violence, FGM is a never a “private” business. Anyone justifying this practice – regardless of their social status and achievements – promote violence against women and male control of female bodies.

WHAT IS FGM

The practice of FGM has existed since antiquity, transmitted through generations, until its incorporation into the societal system and its perpetuation to the present day. It traveled the course of history, blended with traditions and religions and continues to be practiced in some societies despite its dangerous and serious impact on the health, integrity and dignity of the victims.

FGM, also referred to by some as Excision, is a practice against girls and women that consist of the partial or total removal or mutilation of the female external genital organs for purely cultural, traditional and non-therapeutic purposes. FGM is often carried out at home with a razor blade or knife and without anesthesia or by doctors who conform to traditional rules.

FGM continues to result in medical and sexual complications, infectious diseases, psychological and social consequences that are harmful, irreparable and, sometimes, leading to death. Girls and women victims never heal as a result of this serious attack on their bodies and will suffer the heavy consequences throughout their lives.

FOUNDATIONS OF FGM

The origins of FGM are difficult to determine: there is hardly any written record deliberating these practices; they are not rooted in any scientific or religious justifications. Indeed, FGM dates back several millennia and persists for essentially ritualistic reasons.

The practice of FGM expresses the perpetuation, to the present day, of **gender stereotypes, deeply rooted in patriarchal communities**. In most societies affected by FGM, the first argument put forward is 'custom'. Others associate this practice with Islam - with the idea of female purity - but this argument is false, since no Koranic prescription mentions the obligation to FGM and the majority of Islamic countries do not practice FGM. Moreover, FGM affects Christians in certain states, as in Egypt, since it is purely and simply a ritual.

THE FLOW OF MALE POWER OVER WOMEN: FROM PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM TO DOMINATION & CONTROL OF FEMALE BODY, SEXUALITY AND DESIRE

FGM is a violation of human rights, a form of violence and a serious attack on the physical and moral integrity of girls and women. This practice represents one of **the most perverse forms of the male domination over women**. It is a phenomenon that arises purely and simply from the patriarchal system enabling men to impose their power, to control the bodies of women, their sexuality, their reproductive functions, their desire and pleasure.

The persistence of FGM and its practice to the present day on the bodies of girls and women under the pretext of religion or customs is only a confirmation of the survival of male domination and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, harmful to women.

NEED FOR FEMINIST SOLIDARITY

To effectively combat FGM, today, there is a need **to end the cultural and religious relativism**, perpetuated by the neo-liberal identity politics. To resist and abolish these acts, **girls and women must unveil them clearly**. In order to do this, we must support each other in our analysis, advocacy and actions, aimed at giving women - regardless of their ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations - their full sexual-reproductive freedom and rights.

ENOMW DEMANDS

- We demand recognition of FGM at the international, European and national levels as a violation of women's rights, integrity and dignity.
- We demand the support of NGOs and institutions that fight against these practices and those who come to the aid of girls and women victims.
- We demand the accountability, condemnation and penalization of all those who are the perpetrators and accomplices of these acts and of all the organisations that justify them on religious or customary grounds