

# FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: A CRIMINAL OFFENCE.



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**VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN**  
**YOU ARE PROTECTED BY THE LAW**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INFO

CALL  
**3919**

\*Free and anonymous call.

[stop-violences-femmes.gouv.fr](https://stop-violences-femmes.gouv.fr)



## WHAT IS FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION?

**FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IS A VIOLATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN. IT REPRESENTS AN INFRINGEMENT OF THEIR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY. IT IS A HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICE.**

The term «female genital mutilation» covers any operation or intervention on the external female reproductive organs for no medical reason. It includes:

- **Circumcision:** the complete or partial removal of the clitoris and labia minora.
- **Infibulation:** the complete or partial removal of the clitoris, labia minora and labia majora. The two sides of the vulva are then sewn or glued together, leaving only a small opening for urine and menstrual flow. A hard scar forms over the vulva, which must then be cut open for the purposes of intercourse and/or childbirth.

## WHAT ARE THE MEDICAL CONSEQUENCES OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION?



**FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION HAS A SEVERE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AND CAN EVEN LEAD TO DEATH.**

### IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES

- Bleeding, which can lead to haemorrhaging and even death; many young girls die following circumcision.
- Intense, unbearable pain, along with fear, anxiety and, in many cases, mental trauma.
- A burning sensation when passing urine.

### LIFELONG CONSEQUENCES FOR THE VICTIM

- Infections of the vulva, urinary tract and sexual organs, in some cases leading to septicaemia, infertility and even death.
- Difficulties during childbirth: mutilated women are more susceptible to perineal tearing. Both the woman and her unborn child are at risk of death.
- Extreme pain and/or a lack of pleasure during intercourse.
- Severe psychological trauma: anxiety, fear and depression, potentially leading to suicide.

**FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION CAN BE «REPAIRED».  
CONTACT A SPECIALIST ASSOCIATION FOR ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE.**

## YOU ARE PROTECTED UNDER FRENCH LAW



**FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE IN FRANCE.**

**THE LAW PROTECTS ALL CHILDREN LIVING IN FRANCE, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR NATIONALITY.**

**FRENCH LAW APPLIES TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION PROCEDURES CARRIED OUT IN FRANCE AND ABROAD.**

**OFFENDERS CAN BE PROSECUTED UNDER FRENCH LAW, REGARDLESS OF THEIR NATIONALITY, IF THE VICTIM IS A FRENCH CITIZEN OR IF SHE IS A FOREIGN CITIZEN NORMALLY RESIDING IN FRANCE (ARTICLE 222-16-2 OF THE FRENCH PENAL CODE).**

**The French Penal Code sets out the punishments for any person who performs female genital mutilation, along with the person(s) responsible for the victim (where the victim is a child). These are as follows:**

- For any act that causes mutilation or permanent disability, the punishment is **10 years imprisonment and a fine of €150,000** (*article 222-9*).
- Where the victim is a minor under the age of 15, and the mutilation is performed by a legal, natural or adoptive ascendant, or by any other person with legal authority over the minor, the punishment is increased to **20 years imprisonment** (*article 222-10*).

Many relatives and circumcisers have been prosecuted and handed **custodial sentences** by criminal courts in France.

Offenders may be prosecuted up to **20 years after the victim reaches adulthood** i.e. up to her 38th birthday.

## THE LAW IS CHANGING

French law no. 2013-711 of 5 August 2013 added two new offences to the French Penal Code to **provide additional protection for minors:**

- **The act of inciting a minor to undergo female genital mutilation** in return for an offer, promise, gift, present or other benefit, or through the application of pressure or coercion in whatever form, is punishable by 5 years imprisonment and a fine of €75,000 (*article 227-24-1*).
- **The act of inciting another person to perform female genital mutilation** on a minor is punishable by the same sentences (*article 227-24-1*).

According to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence of 11 May 2011, no act of violence against women may be justified on the grounds of «culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called 'honour'».

# WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE IN DANGER?

**WHETHER YOU ARE A VICTIM OR A FRIEND OR RELATIVE OF A WOMAN THREATENED WITH FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION, YOU CAN TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT AND COMBAT THIS FORM OF VIOLENCE.**

## **IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN DANGER.**

**Any person who is aware of such a risk, whether as a healthcare professional or in a personal capacity, has a duty to report their concerns.**

**Failure to assist a person in danger constitutes a criminal offence, punishable under article 223-6 of the French Penal Code.**

### WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT?

- The Public Prosecutor at your local District Court.
- The relevant medial and socio-medical services, and in particular the Maternal and Child Protection (Protection Maternelle et Infantile, PMI) service and the Childhood Social Support (Aide Sociale à l'Enfance, ASE) service.
- 3919, the free, anonymous telephone hotline.
- In an emergency, call 17 or 112 (police).

## **IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OR IN DANGER.**

**All women and girls living in France, irrespective of their nationality, are protected under French law.**

- > You can talk to a doctor, your local Maternal and Child Protection centre (Protection Maternelle et Infantile, PMI), a Family Planning and Education Centre (Centre de Planification ou d'Éducation Familiale), a social worker, or your local Childhood Social Support (Aide Sociale à l'Enfance, ASE) service.
- > You can call the Public Prosecutor at your local District Court.
- > You can inform the police by visiting a police station in person or calling 17.
- > You can get in touch with associations operating in this field, such as GAMS and CAMS (see contact details on the final page of this document).

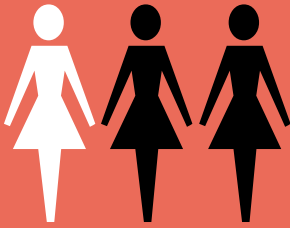


## **IF YOU FEAR THAT YOU, A FRIEND OR A RELATIVE MAY BE SUBJECT TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION DURING A TRIP ABROAD.**

**French law applies to female genital mutilation procedures carried out in France and abroad, if you are a French citizen or you are officially a resident in France.**

- > Contact the Childhood Social Support (Aide Sociale à l'Enfance, ASE) service. This service will protect you up to the age of 21.
- > If you are worried about your sister, cousin or friend under the age of 18, contact the Child in Danger (Allô Enfance en Danger) service on 119. This is a free hotline, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, which exists to protect children in danger or at risk.
- > Contact the Public Prosecutor at your local District Court to report a threat of female genital mutilation. A specialist child protection judge can impose a travel ban to protect the child concerned, without parental authorisation.
- > You can ask a social worker to notify the Public Prosecutor.
- > If you are a French national abroad, you can contact your local French Embassy or Consulate to request protection.





## 1 in 3 women

is affected by female genital mutilation in Africa.

**A total of 125 million women are affected** (source: Unicef).

These practices are becoming less widespread in more than half of countries across Africa and the Middle East.

**3 million** new cases each year.

**53,000 mutilated women** live in France (source: INED).

## Where is female genital mutilation practised?



## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE IN MANY COUNTRIES.

It is practised by various ethnic groups across Africa.

Circumcision is most common in West Africa and Egypt.

Infibulation, meanwhile, is more common in East Africa.

Female genital mutilation also occurs in the Arab peninsula, particularly in Yemen and Oman, as well as in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Global migration has given rise to population groups performing female genital mutilation in several European countries.

Estimates indicate that potential victims may be located in at least 13 European Union member states <sup>(1)</sup>. There are an estimated 53,000 victims of female genital mutilation living in France, as well as many other girls in danger of mutilation. The majority of these are from Ivory Coast, Egypt, the Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal and Somalia.

(1) European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) report entitled Female genital mutilation in the European Union and Croatia (March 2013).

# Common misconceptions

## **MISCONCEPTION:**

***«Female genital mutilation is compulsory in some religions.»***

## **REALITY**

There is no religion that requires female genital mutilation to be performed. It is an ancient custom that is not associated with any particular religion.

## **MISCONCEPTION:**

***«Female genital mutilation increases fertility.»***

## **REALITY**

On the contrary, female genital mutilation can cause infertility and lead to major complications during childbirth, potentially leading to the death of the mother and/or the newborn.

## **MISCONCEPTION:**

***«Circumcision and infibulation are a mark of respect for customs and traditions.»***

## **REALITY**

Female genital mutilation has severe consequences on the woman's physical and mental health. It is an infringement of her dignity and integrity that has lifelong consequences.

# USEFUL CONTACTS

## **Regional and departmental women's rights and equality delegations.**

Find your local delegation by visiting  
[www.stop-violences-femmes.gouv.fr](http://www.stop-violences-femmes.gouv.fr)

## **Commission for the Abolition of Sexual Mutilation (Commission pour l'Abolition des Mutilations Sexuelles, CAMS).**

CAMS is an association that provides legal support to victims. It acts as a plaintiff in legal cases and provides advice to professionals, associations and individuals.  
T: +33 (0)1 45 49 04 00  
[www.cams-fgm.net](http://www.cams-fgm.net)

## **Group for the Abolition of Sexual Mutilation (Groupe pour l'Abolition des Mutilations Sexuelles, GAMS).**

GAMS is the French partner of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. It provides information to families and training to the professionals that support them, especially doctors, social workers and teachers.  
T: +33 (0)1 43 48 10 87  
[www.federationgams.org](http://www.federationgams.org)

## **French Family Planning Movement (Mouvement Français pour le Planning Familial, MFPF).**

MFPF is a feminist and popular education movement that provides public support and information on sexuality and reproductive health matters.  
T: +33 (0)1 48 07 29 10  
[www.planningfamilial.org](http://www.planningfamilial.org)

## **National Centre for Information on Women's and Family Rights (Centre National d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes et des Familles, CNIDFF).**

CNIDFF provides public assistance and promotes access to women's rights and information, combats violence and supports gender equality.  
T: +33 (0)1 42 17 12 00  
[www.infofemmes.com](http://www.infofemmes.com)

## **Femmes Solidaires.**

Femmes Solidaires is a network of associations working to combat violence against women and to promote equal rights across all fields.  
T: +33 (0)1 40 01 90 90  
[www.femmes-solidaires.org](http://www.femmes-solidaires.org)

## **3919.**

France's leading hotline for reporting violence against women. It is a free, anonymous service and lines are open 7 days a week.

## **Fil Santé Jeunes.**

A free, anonymous hotline open 8 am to midnight every day.  
T: +33 (0)8 00 23 52 36  
[www.filsantejeunes.com](http://www.filsantejeunes.com)

## **Allô Enfance en Danger.**

A free, anonymous hotline, open 24 hours a day.  
T: 119



This leaflet was made  
in conjunction with the GAMS

## **Professionals who require an interpreter can contact Inter Service Migrants Interprétariat (paid service).**

251 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Martin, 75010, Paris – T: +33 (0)1 53 26 52 50  
[www.ism-interpretariat.com](http://www.ism-interpretariat.com)