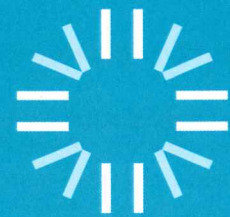
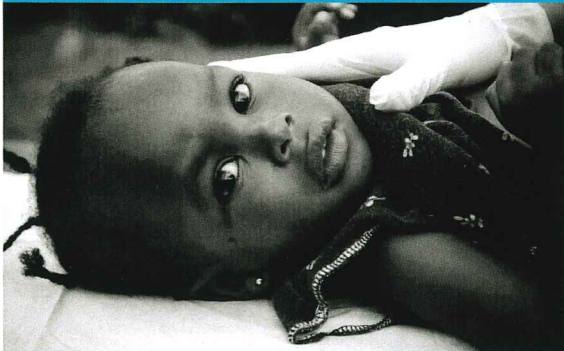


Breaking the Silence. Protecting Liberty. Celebrating Dignity.

Working to End Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Child Marriage, and Honor Violence in the U.S.



ahafoundation



ISSUE BRIEF: Female Genital Mutilation in the U.S.

FGM is a harmful traditional practice that is internationally recognized as a violation of women's and girls' fundamental human rights. The practice of FGM is generally motivated by beliefs about what is considered proper sexual behavior and cultural ideas of femininity and modesty.

This dangerous procedure has no health benefits and has lifelong health and psychological consequences. Immediately following the procedure, girls are at risk for severe pain, shock, bleeding, bacterial infection, and injury to nearby tissue. In the long term, girls and women

who have suffered this procedure are at risk for recurrent bladder and urinary tract infections, cysts, infertility, and complications during intercourse and childbirth.

The threat of female genital mutilation is a reality for a significant number of girls in the United States. While many think of this as a custom that only occurs in foreign countries, research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found in 2016 that approximately 513,000 women and girls in the U.S. had either been subjected to female genital mutilation or were at risk.

FORCED AND CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE U.S.

Forced marriage is when an individual is forced, coerced, threatened, or tricked to marry without her informed consent. A woman or girl may suffer honor violence if she resists or refuses a forced marriage. Forced marriage differs from arranged marriage because victims are non-consenting. It is estimated that there were as many as 3,000 known or suspected cases of forced marriage within immigrant communities in the United States between September 2009 and September 2011.

Child marriage, or a marriage involving a minor, often occurs in conjunction with forced marriages. Children are often forced into marriage due to strong traditional practices and are left trapped in a dangerous situation, with little to no resources for help. Child marriage has serious negative consequences, such as increased risk of divorce, a higher chance of living in poverty, discontinuing education prematurely, and physical and mental health consequences. Between 2000 and 2010, it is estimated that nearly 250,000 children were wed in the U.S.



HONOR VIOLENCE

Honor violence against women and girls occurs when actual or perceived behavior is deemed to be shameful or violates cultural or religious norms within their family and community. Conduct such as resisting a forced marriage, seeking a divorce, having friends of the opposite sex, dating someone not accepted by her family, violating restrictive dress codes, seeking out employment or education opportunities, or non-normative sexual orientation may result in honor violence.

Typically seen in the form of physical or emotional abuse, rape, or kidnapping, honor violence also includes harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced marriage. In extreme cases, honor violence can lead to murder. In sharp contrast with domestic violence, honor violence is often condoned by families and communities, making it particularly difficult to identify and stop. While the exact number of women and girls in the U.S. who have suffered or are at risk of honor violence is unknown, estimates have shown that honor violence is on the rise.



AHA FOUNDATION: WORKING TO END HONOR VIOLENCE IN THE U.S.

AHA Foundation Provides Resources and Protection

■ AHA Foundation worked with the Department of State to bring home Salma, who was tricked by her mother to travel to the West Bank, her family's place of origin, to be forced into an unwanted marriage. Today, Salma is living safely in the U.S., and has re-enrolled in college. The AHA Foundation continues to work with her to ensure she is receiving appropriate services and has a smooth transition back to life in the U.S.

Discreet Text Line for At-Risk Women

■ AHA created a "text line" that offers women and girls facing honor violence or forced marriage immediate access to discreet help and emotional support.

Advocacy Campaigns

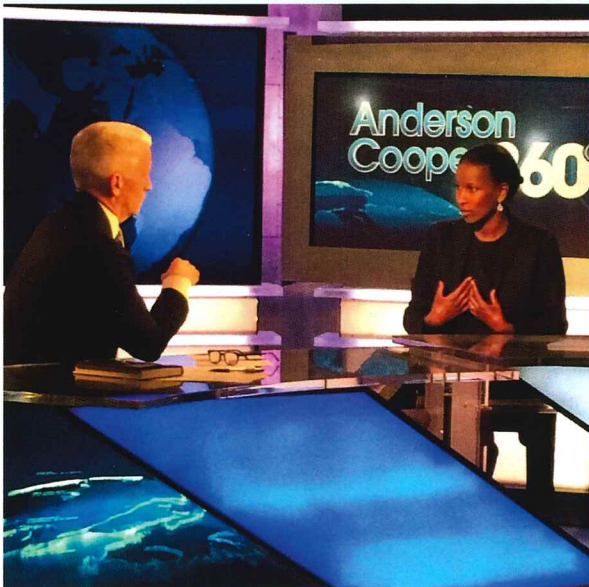
■ The AHA Foundation works at the federal and state level to pass legislation that aims to address harmful cultural practices in the U.S. This year, the AHA Foundation has supported successful efforts in Arkansas, Idaho and Utah to pass legislation to address FGM. Arkansas and Utah join Michigan in passing the most comprehensive anti-FGM laws in the U.S.

Training Law Enforcement and Service Providers

■ Service providers and law enforcement often lack the knowledge and resources to properly identify and respond to cases of honor violence. The AHA Foundation has trained more than 2,700 law enforcement officials and other professionals most likely to encounter women and girls facing FGM, forced marriage, child marriage, and honor violence on how to react and respond to such issues.

SUPPORTING LEGISLATION TO END FGM IN KENTUCKY

■ **The AHA Foundation urges Kentucky lawmakers to pass comprehensive anti-FGM legislation in the state that would ban the practice, support survivors, and work towards ending this form of child abuse.** Such legislation would send an important message that FGM is a serious crime and will not be tolerated in Kentucky. According to the Population Reference Bureau, 1,845 women and girls are at risk in the state of Kentucky. A strong anti-FGM law would have a significant deterrent effect and would protect little girls from this dangerous practice.

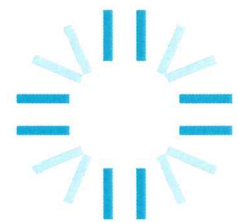


ABOUT THE AHA FOUNDATION

Our Mission Statement

The AHA Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, founded in 2007 by human rights activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali, that advocates liberty for all by championing human rights and individual liberties above cultural, social or religious imperatives. The Foundation places a significant focus on championing the rights of women and girls and protecting them from violence and harmful traditional practices.

There
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*aha*foundation

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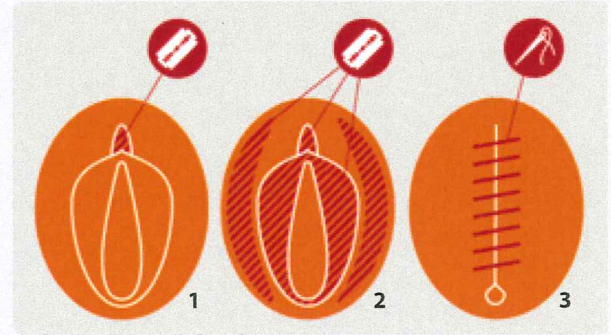
The Grim Reality of Female Genital Mutilation



FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) includes all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other forms of harm that **intentionally alters, injures, or violates female genitalia for non-medical reasons.**

There Are Four Major Types of FGM According to the World Health Organization

- 1 Clitoridectomy:** Involves the removal of the clitoris and or clitoral hood, an otherwise normally functioning body part that is sliced off and thrown away.
- 2 Intermediate infibulation:** As much of the clitoris as possible is removed and the labia minora cut, often times the labia majora as well to narrow the vaginal opening.
- 3 Vaginal fusing or total infibulation:** Total infibulation includes the clitoris and the inner labia being removed and the outer labia cut or scraped, then sewn together. Vaginal fusing is the most severe form of FGM which includes all aspects of total infibulation, as well as the inner walls of the vagina scratched to cause bleeding and sewing again. The girl's feet are then tied together in an effort to fuse the two sides of the vagina with scar tissue to close it up.
- 4 The 'nick':** Involves pushing a girl's legs apart and using a needle to prick her clitoris, typically to draw blood. This can sometimes include cutting, scraping or cauterizing the girls genitals.



INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE

FGM IS A DEEPLY ROOTED, CULTURALLY-BASED ABUSE grounded in outdated patriarchal norms and is not particular to any religious group nor prescribed by any major religion. It is an internationally condemned form of gender-based violence that is recognized as a severe violation of women's and girls' fundamental human rights.



Typically carried out on girls between the ages of 4 and 14, FGM is performed in order to reduce a girl's libido and decrease the physical pleasure she derives from sex.

The practice is driven by preconceptions regarding appropriate female sexual conduct and is used as a means to preserve virginity before marriage, prevent infidelity, and maintain sexual purity throughout a woman's life.

NO HEALTH BENEFITS - JUST HARM

FGM IN ALL ITS FORMS IS A DEGRADING AND DANGEROUS PROCEDURE that should never be tolerated, not even when performed by a healthcare professional. Even seemingly less invasive forms can produce lifelong injuries.

According to the World Health Organization:

Immediate Risks Include: Severe pain, shock, bleeding, bacterial infection, and injury to nearby tissue.

Long Term Risks Include: Chronic bladder and urinary tract infections, cysts, infertility, and complications during childbirth.

Psychological Consequences Include: Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), loss of trust, betrayal, depression, anxiety, guilt, and suicidal thoughts.

Social Condemnation: Women and girls who have resisted FGM may face social alienation, shame, accusations of being "unclean," and may be at risk of familial and community-sanctioned violence in an attempt to regain or preserve family honor.

Risk of Death: For some women and girls, preventing FGM could be a matter of life and death. Immediately after an FGM procedure, excessive blood loss or infection may prove fatal. Later in life, FGM-related complications at childbirth could result in death of the mother or infant — possibly both.

ZERO TOLERANCE OF FGM is the ONLY SOLUTION



LEARN MORE AT:
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