

FACT SHEET ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION OR CUTTING (FGM/C)

WHAT IS FGM/C?

The Department of State defines female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) as all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM/C is typically carried out on young girls between infancy and adolescence, and occasionally on adult women. FGM/C is a human rights abuse and form of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The practice has no health benefits and can lead to both immediate and long-term physical and mental health problems. It is estimated that FGM/C has affected more than 200 million women and girls alive today. The reasons for practicing FGM/C differ from region to region and include a mix of sociocultural factors within families and communities.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF FGM/C?

Immediate effects may include blood loss, severe pain, fever, shock and sometimes death. Long-term health problems can include urinary or other infections, infertility, painful menstruation or sexual intercourse, and possible need for later surgeries. In addition, women and girls who have experienced FGM/C are significantly more likely to experience difficulties during childbirth and their babies are more likely to die as a result of the practice. Finally, the practice can leave girls and women with long-term psychological challenges, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, or other challenges.

WHAT IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S VIEW ON FGM/C?

The U.S. Government opposes FGM/C, no matter the type, degree, or severity, or the motivation for performing it, whether for cultural, religious, or other reasons. The U.S. Government considers FGM/C to be a human rights abuse, and a form of VAWG and child abuse.

WHY IS THE UNITED STATES PROVIDING THIS FGM/C NOTICE?

The United States is committed to ending FGM/C to protect the health and well-being and advance the rights of girls and women globally. The United States is working at home and abroad to prevent and respond to FGM/C and to help raise awareness about the serious, damaging effects of FGM/C on women and girls.

WHAT ARE THE CRIMINAL CONSEQUENCES OF PERFORMING OR ASSISTING IN FGM/C?

It is against U.S. law to perform, attempt to perform, or conspire to perform FGM/C on a girl under the age of 18, or to send her outside the United States for the purpose of FGM/C (18 USC § 116). It is also against the law for a parent, guardian, or caretaker to facilitate or to consent to

FGM/C. Violation of the law is punishable by up to 10 years in prison, fines, or both. There is no exception for performing FGM/C because of religion, custom, ritual, tradition or standard practice. Additionally, 41 states have laws criminalizing FGM/C and FGM/C constitutes a form of child abuse, which is prohibited in every state.

WHAT ARE THE IMMIGRATION CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATING THE LAWS AGAINST FGM/C?

Violating the laws against FGM/C – even without a criminal conviction – may have significant immigration consequences, including making one inadmissible to or removable from the United States, as well as ineligible for some immigration benefits.

HAVE WOMEN AND GIRLS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE FGM/C BROKEN ANY LAWS?

An individual who has undergone FGM/C is not at fault. They have not violated any U.S. laws by undergoing the procedure. Eligibility for travel to or for immigration benefits from the United States is not negatively affected by the fact that a person has undergone FGM/C. An individual who has undergone FGM/C may be eligible for certain immigration benefits and should consult with a qualified attorney or accredited representative if they have questions about immigration relief options.

WHERE CAN ONE FIND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES?

If you believe you are at risk of FGM/C or have undergone FGM/C, have questions about FGM/C, have information about someone who is performing FGM/C in the United States, or know of someone who may be at risk of having the procedure done here or outside the United States, please contact 800-225-5324 (FBI), 866-347-2423 (DHS ICE Homeland Security Investigations), 800-4-A-Child (800-422- 4453), or U.S. End FGM/C Network (endfgmnetwork.org). If you are or know a US citizen overseas at risk of FGM/C, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate or the U.S. Department of State, Office of Overseas Citizens Services, at (888) 407-4747 (from the U.S. or Canada) or (202) 501-4444 (from overseas). For more information, please visit <https://www.uscis.gov/FGMC>.