



There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God.

MUSLIM SCHOLARS FATWA (RULING) ON FGM

My problem is that I feel angry and get mad at everything other than my three children. I cannot stand to see my husband, who loves me. I cannot stand touch him or to go to bed with him. I cannot stand him. I cannot stand him. I hate men. I hate sex. I find no satisfaction in it whatsoever. I am not moved at all, when I have intercourse with my husband as happens with other couples.[i]

The above quote is from a victim of the appalling practice of Female genital Mutilation which is destroying the lives of many people across the world.

The World Health Organization estimates that between 100 and 140 million women and girls have been subjected to FGM worldwide and that each year a further 2 million girls are at risk. In the UK it is estimated that over 100 thousand women have undergone FGM and that some 25 thousand girls are at risk. More shockingly is that London has become the place where “Girls are being cut”. [ii]

The public health minister, Jane Ellison states that “FGM is child abuse but because of cultural sensitivity we have failed to protect vulnerable young girls”. [iii]

FGM is practiced by community members who are Muslims, Christians, and people of no faith.

Those Muslims who practise FGM rationalise it as a religious obligation in spite of the fact that FGM predates Islam.

Unfortunately, some Muslims and non-Muslims alike are adamant that FGM is part of Islamic practice.

Having seen the brutality of FGM and its devastating effects within Muslim communities here in the UK, The British Arab Federation makes it highest priority to work with all organisations, Muslim organisations in particular to bring an end to this hideous crime of FGM.

This document is one of the many steps taken by this organization towards ending FGM in the UK. The document therefore aims not only to highlight the effect of this appalling practice of FGM but also points out that there is no evidence as far as Islamic sources are concerned requiring, justifying or condoning the practice of FGM.

The document concludes by urging Muslims in Britain to speak with one voice loud and clear against FGM and denounce it as both non Islamic and a crime.

What is FGM?

FGM is described as the act of cutting or removing or cutting off most of the labia majora and the complete removal of the labia minora and the clitoris. According to the World Health Organisation FGM comprises all procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reasons. Dr. Muhammad Lutfi al-Sabbagh provides us with a more horrific picture of the way that FGM is performed. The latter comments that after the cut is done “a match is placed in the labia majora aperture. After the wound has healed, a small opening is left, from which urine comes out. At the age of puberty, menstrual blood is let out of the same opening. At the end of this operation, when the match is already placed, the girl’s legs are tied together for forty days to make sure that the wound heals well”.^[iv]

There are several types of FGM and the above mentioned is only one of many brutal ways of performing this appalling, inhuman and despicable practice. For instance, some forms of FGM involve the removal of the prepuce with removal of part or the entire clitoris^[v]; and other types consist of the removal of the clitoris with partial or total excision of the labia, and it is believed that this type constitutes 80% of female genital mutilation performed.^[vi]

The Effects of FGM

FGM most of the time is performed in small villages in the rural areas by elderly women and sometimes it is even performed by barbers.[vii]

They performed it usually without anaesthetics and with crude instruments such as razor blades, knives and broken bottles. In some communities, affluent families take their girls to medical personnel in an attempt to avoid the dangers of unskilled operations performed in unsanitary conditions.[viii]

The following are some of the appalling effects of FGM:

- A. Surgical shock which result in the sudden drop in all functions of the body. There are many types of shock that produce the same effect, but an external shock is often the result of FGM which is performed most of times without anaesthetics.[ix] Severe pain and shock; bleeding; infection; urine retention; injury to adjacent tissues; immediate fatal haemorrhaging.
- B. Extensive damage of the external reproductive system and uterine, vaginal and pelvic infections. Increased risk of vesico vaginal fistula.
- C. Complications in pregnancy and child birth.
- D. Sexual dysfunction and psychological damage. FGM gives the person a psychologically painful memory that would remain with the person for the rest of her life. It makes the victim afraid of sex and can only regard it as a vice.

Are there any Islamic evidence i.e. Qur'an or Hadith Justifying FGM?

The main sources of Islamic Law (Shariah) are the Qur'an and the authentic Hadith. Though the two mentioned they are not the only but they nevertheless are the most important.

As far as the Qur'an is concerned, which is the very word of Allah; there is no explicit or implicit verse about FGM.

Turning to Hadith, however, we find some Hadith that are 'not authentic' used by those who advocate or practice FGM and hence wrongly justifying it and attributing it to the religion of Islam.

The most quoted Hadith to justify FGM is that of a woman called Umm Attia who was known to practice female circumcision.

It is reported that the Prophet PBUH asked her:

“Umm Attia, restrict yourself to a sniff and do not overstrain ;(this way), it is more pleasant in appearance and more satisfactory to the husband”.

It is very unlikely that the Prophet would ever address a woman using such language and manner.

Moreover Abu Dawood said that this Hadith’s chain of transmitters is weak and hence making this Hadith weak.

Another Hadith associated with FGM is the one in which the Prophet is reported to have said “Circumcision is obligatory for men and a sign of respect in the case of women”.

This Hadith again is known to be weak and falsely attributed to the Prophet according to many scholars including the great Hadith scholar Al-Iraqi; IbnHajar raised concerns regarding the weakness this Hadith.

Also the great Scholar, Imam Al-Baihaqi, states that the Hadith “is lacking in authenticity, with a gap in its transmission”.^[x]

It is important to note that all Hadiths used by those who advocate or practice FGM have flawed or broken transmissions, are unauthentic, and some could have even fabricated and falsely attributed to the The Last Prophet PBUH.

It is important that our Muslim sisters and brothers understand that in some schools of Islamic Law ‘a religious ruling can be deduced only on the basis of authentic text’. Other schools allow juristic opinion, juristic reasoning or a consensus of learned opinion in the development of rulings.

However, in case of FGM there is not Qur’anic proof nor authentic Hadith, nor sound opinion nor reason nor consensus to justify this appalling practice.

Concluding Remarks on FGM

Dear Editor, I do not know the secret why I loathe my husband, the secret of my frigidity when we have intercourse, of my anger and resentment, of my contemplating suicide. Does anybody know? Is there any remedy? I hope so, and I impatiently await your answer.

The above quote is from the lady that we quoted at the beginning of this document. Clearly this lady suffers from the trauma of FGM. As the quote indicates, she is seeking help and sadly

enough there are numerous people here in the UK who are in a similar condition or worse. Frankly speaking none of us would like our daughters, sisters or loved ones to experience the trauma of what the above lady is going through.

Our beloved Prophet PBUH once stated that "None of you is a true believer until he/she loves and desires for his/her brother the same that he/she loves and desires for him/her self".[xi] The Last Prophet PBUH also said that "If anyone of you sees wrong thing let him/her stop it with his/her own hands. If cannot let him/her speak against it....".[xii]

There is no allusion to female circumcision at all in the Qur'an, but there is a well-established tradition of male circumcision in Islam as a "sunnah" act. In the Abrahamic traditions this act is understood as an implementation of a bond with Allah and there are numerous health reasons for this practice of male circumcision.

There is no decree whatsoever for female circumcision either in the Qur'an, the hadith or medical theories.

Female circumcision is not mandated, one tradition of a doubtful authenticity permits (but does not encourage) the removal of a minuscule segment of skin from the female prepuce, provided no harm is done:

A woman used to perform circumcision in Medina [Madīna]. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to her: 'Do not cut severely as that is better for a woman and more desirable for a husband.'

Sunan Abu Dawûd, Book 41, #5251.

One does not want to make too much of this tradition, as it is classified as "weak" by Abu Dawud himself.

However, if we do consider this type of hadith at all, reason demands that if a small cut were more acceptable than unnatural butchery then no cutting is the most acceptable act, more natural and the indicated Sunnah for Muslims to follow.

Tolerating such a ritual constituted an act of patience by Islamic law for pre-Islamic practices at 'that time', and was overruled by the Islamic prohibitions against harmful acts.

Islamic law protects a woman's right to sexual enjoyment, as demonstrated by the fact that a woman has the right to seek divorce on the grounds that her husband does not provide sexual satisfaction.

Islamic law prohibits partial or complete removal of any bodily organ without proven medical need and therefore the removal of the clitoris, excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching/narrowing of the vaginal opening, or any genital mutilation whether or not it harms the woman's health or ability to enjoy sexual relations is forbidden.

Islamic law does not mandate female genital mutilation. It is an unacceptable pre-Islamic custom. People both Muslim and those from the wider communities are often confused by such customs rooted in traditions which our Prophet PBUH invested a great deal of his message confronting and helping to systematically abolish.

Truly they found their fathers on the wrong Path; So they (too) were rushed down on their footsteps! And truly before them, many of the ancients went astray; But We sent aforetime, among them, (messengers) to admonish them; Then see what was the end of those who were admonished (but heeded not), Except the sincere (and devoted) Servants of Allah. (Q37; 69-74)

Therefore:

We state that for those who are Muslims, Female Genital Mutilation also known as Female Circumcision be considered a haraam (prohibited) practice and opposition to it should be part of our ongoing mandate to fight against superstition and oppression not just in this nation (United Kingdom) but worldwide.

Therefore those who wish to carry out Female Genital Mutilation also known as Female Circumcision do so at their own risk and will be held in violation and contempt of the laws of their Religion, Humanity and The United Kingdom (if this is done to a child either in or from the UK). Thus they will be accountable in this world and before Allah swt on Judgement Day for the violence they have inflicted and wrongly claiming it as Islamic.

Those who have committed such crimes against innocents especially in whilst taking the name of Allah (The Most Gracious The Most Merciful) should repent and turn away from error, seeking forgiveness and offering restitution to their victims before turning to Allah (swt) for mercy while they have time.

Hence because of all the damages, the psychological and physical pain that FGM causes, the undersigned of this document wish to clear Islam from the accusation that FGM is part of Islamic tradition and stand against this inhuman and barbaric practice. Most importantly, the undersigned to this document consider it a moral and religious obligation, as argued above, for all Muslims here in UK to denounce FGM with one voice loud and clear; and that FGM is an injustice, that FGM is against the teachings of Islam and that Muslims must act to prevent FGM from happening.

This Document is endorsed by the Following Muslim Scholars and religious Leaders.

Signatories:-

Dr Mamadou Boucom

& Imam Muhammad Amin-Evans

Association of British Muslims

(We will leave the 'signing' open for you to support this fatwa and put your name down, and or support of your organisation)