



NETWORK STATEMENT

FGM CONVICTION IN THE UNITED-KINGDOM

1st February 2019

The mother of a three-year-old girl has become the first person in the UK to be found guilty of female genital mutilation (FGM). This is a ground-breaking judicial decision both for the UK and also as a step towards ending female genital mutilation in Europe.

A mother and her partner living in East London were convicted of cutting their daughter in summer 2017. The defendants denied the FGM charge and an additional charge of failing to protect a girl from risk of genital mutilation.

“This decision shows that female genital mutilation is happening in Europe, and that this is an issue we need to deal with urgently. It is thanks to the dedicated work of organisations such as [FORWARD](#) in the UK and our other members around Europe that women and girls have become more aware of FGM, of their rights and of the legal protections available to them”, says Fiona Coyle, Director of [End FGM European Network](#).

FGM is a global issue including in Europe where each year it is estimated that 180,000 girls and women are at risk of undergoing the practice. However, research has shown that there are still many challenges, such as a lack of awareness of professionals or a lack of services for survivors, that need to be addressed to provide for adequate national and European responses to FGM.

For our member [FORWARD](#), *“This means that key professionals should be trained to be able to speak to communities about the real risks of FGM and to be vigilant in protecting girls. At the same time communities should be empowered to take responsibility for protecting their daughters from FGM. For many communities who practice FGM, this is an embedded social norm, which means that families come under huge pressure to continue this practice”.*

The effective implementation of laws is an important part of Ending FGM but it is not enough. FGM will only be ended by engaging with and empowering affected communities to abandon the practice. At least 500,000 women living in the EU have undergone the harmful practice of female genital mutilation.

Ms Coyle added *“Indeed ending FGM should not only be about prosecution but also, and most importantly, about prevention and protection. Our mission is a world free from all forms of FGM. This requires long-term investment and funding to change a deeply ingrained, centuries old, harmful practice. Behavioural change is an extremely difficult undertaking, but by investing in holistic programmes at both grassroots and international level we can end FGM for good.”*

What is FGM?

Over 500,000 women living in the EU have undergone the harmful practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) and close to 180,000 young women are at risk from it every year. Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

The practice is mostly carried out by traditional cutters, who often play other central roles in communities. FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death.

What is End FGM European Network?

The End FGM European Network (End FGM EU) is a European umbrella organisation consisting of 22 national NGO experts on female genital mutilation (FGM), in 12 EU Member States.

<http://www.endfgm.eu> .

For further information please contact the End FGM European Network Communications Officer Ophélie Masson on omasson@endfgm.eu