



SERAT* CANADA

With diaspora communities from across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, it is estimated that there are thousands of women and girls living with the effects of FGM/C in Canada.

“ I was born in Somalia. When I was three, my aunt, who had moved to Canada a few years earlier, persuaded my mother I would have a better life if I went with her. I grew up with my aunt in rural Ontario, but I never forgot my mother.

When I was 13, my aunt and I traveled to Somalia to see her again.

Early one morning, three village women burst into the hut where I was sleeping. My mother had summoned them when she learned that I hadn't undergone the traditional Somali rite of circumcision. I started screaming and tried to run.

The women caught me, pinned me down, spread my legs, and, after administering a local anesthetic, cut off the tip of my clitoris. Then they sewed part of my labia shut over the cut. I could see blood gushing down my thighs, then I passed out.

*Name has been changed.

When I recovered consciousness, my legs were tied together. I stayed like this for a week, in constant pain. It was really hard to pee.

They took away from me what was rightfully mine.

When I returned to Canada a few months later, my aunt told me to accept what had happened and move on. I couldn't. I felt incomplete, ashamed and devastated.

I didn't speak about it to anyone else for over a decade. Who could I talk to? There's a complete wall of silence around this issue here.

People keep their hands off, saying, 'That's their tradition,' and that attitude is wrong, wrong, wrong. That's why FGM has survived hundreds of years. ”



Giselle Porteneier from the End FGM Canada Network interviewed Serat to document her story. The End FGM Canada Network is a non-partisan group of individuals and organizations advocating to end female genital mutilation in Canada and abroad. Serat's story was originally published in the [Ottawa Citizen](#).

For Serat's full story head to equalitynow.org/Serat

FGM/C IS GLOBAL
but so is the
movement to end it