Joint Statement on the Preventable Death of a Newborn Girl Following Female Genital Mutilation in Senegal

24 November 2026

The End FGM European Network (End FGM EU) and our partners of the Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C is deeply shocked, angered and heartbroken by the preventable death of a newborn baby girl in Sadatou, in the Tambacounda region of Senegal, following female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). She was born on 11 November 2026. According to media reports, she was allegedly subjected to FGM/C (excision and infibulation) the following day. She suffered severe bleeding and died on 13 November while being taken to the regional hospital in Tambacounda for emergency care. **She was just two days old.**

The gendarmerie of Dianké Makha has opened an investigation into female genital mutilation resulting in death. According to press reports, several people have been arrested and brought before the judicial authorities, and an autopsy was ordered at the regional hospital in Tambacounda. The investigation is ongoing.
We extend our deepest condolences to her mother, her family and her community. We stand in solidarity with Senegalese survivors, activists, and women's rights organisations who have worked for decades to protect girls' rights and prevent such tragedies, and who are once again raising their voices, including FENOPAME and the Collectif des Féministes du Sénégal.

FGM/C is a form of gender-based violence and a grave violation of the rights of the child. No child should lose her life to a human rights violation that Senegal has prohibited by law for more than 25 years.
We call on the authorities to conduct the investigation with rigour and transparency, in full respect of due process, and to keep the public informed of its findings. She deserves justice.

A law is only as strong as the protection it delivers

Senegal criminalised FGM/C in 1999 through Law No. 99-05 of 29 January 1999, punishable by up to five years' imprisonment, and by up to life imprisonment when it results in death. Senegal has also committed, under Article 5 of the Maputo Protocol and Article 21 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to eliminate harmful practices, including female genital mutilation that affects the welfare, health, integrity and dignity of girls. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, every decision that concerns a girl must put her best interests first. The State has a duty to protect her from all forms of violence and to end traditional practices that harm her health (Articles 3, 19 and 24(3)).

Senegal has made real progress towards ending FGM/C, thanks to the work of affected communities, survivors, civil society and public authorities. That progress is precious. It must never become an excuse for complacency. The existence of a legal prohibition does not, in itself, guarantee that girls are protected. Criminalisation must be matched by effective prevention, accessible protection mechanisms, timely intervention and accountability. This baby's death shows the gap that remains between the law and the protection girls receive in practice, especially where FGM/C continues in secret. While communities play a critical role in prevention, the State remains the primary duty-bearer responsible for protecting every girl from violence.

Legislation alone cannot dismantle the social and gender norms and power structures that sustain FGM/C. As the Collectif des Féministes du Sénégal has rightly emphasised, the law alone is not enough to challenge the power relations that perpetuate this violence. FGM/C is rooted in gender inequality, patriarchal norms and harmful social expectations surrounding girls and women, including around marriage and the control of girls' bodies and sexuality. Addressing these root causes must be central to prevention.

"It is with deep sorrow that I bow before the memory of this innocent soul, whose life was so tragically cut short in Sadatou. Behind every case of FGM there is a life, a future and rights that deserve protection. Senegal's 1999 law is clear, yet in remote areas the practice persists, increasingly in hidden forms such as cutting girls in the cradle. That is why Eusobul, working with young people and health centres, has developed a newborn sponsorship scheme: from birth, a young community sponsor supports the family, follows the child's vaccination schedule and raises awareness of the dangers of FGM. Protecting a girl begins in the very first days of her life. No child should be sacrificed in the name of tradition." - **Fatou Mandiang Diatta (Sister Fa), survivor and activist, founder of Eusobul, Senegal.**

Child protection begins at birth

This tragedy reminds us of the death of a one-month-old baby girl following FGM/C in The Gambia in August 2025, on which the Global Platform issued a joint statement. These two cases, separated by national borders and fifteen months, reflect a reality documented by UN agencies: girls are being subjected to FGM/C at ever younger ages. In its 2024 global report, UNICEF warned of "a worrying trend that more girls are subjected to the practice at younger ages, many before their fifth birthday", which further reduces the window to intervene. The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme has also documented that, despite progress in legislation, FGM/C persists in diverse and often covert ways, as families seek to avoid detection and sanctions. This preventable death of this newborn girl underscores the urgent need to ensure that child protection systems recognise and respond to the risk of FGM/C from the very first days of a girl's life.

These deaths are the visible part of a violence that, for most girls, never makes the news. Protecting babies requires strong child protection systems and a coordinated, multi-sectoral response. **Ending FGM/C must be recognised and acted on not only as a gender equality issue, but also as a child protection, health and sexual and reproductive health and rights issue.** *Maternity and postnatal services, community health workers, social services, child protection actors, local authorities and civil society must work together to identify girls at risk early and to support families before harm is done. This requires clear referral pathways, accessible reporting mechanisms, adequate training for frontline professionals and coordinated action between health, social and child protection services. Prevention must go beyond general awareness-raising. It requires sustained, targeted engagement with families and communities, particularly in areas where FGM/C persists, to challenge the patriarchal norms and social expectations that continue to justify the practice in the name of tradition, marriage or control over girls' sexuality. Traditional and religious leaders, local elected representatives, administrative authorities, community organisations and civil society must be meaningfully involved in prevention efforts and supported to drive lasting social change.*

"The silence surrounding female genital mutilation, forced marriage and girls' right to stay in school remains deeply worrying. On the ground, no one talks about it openly, and news often reaches us only through the press. This is the silence that Senegalese organisations are calling on us to break: to free people to speak, to raise awareness within communities, and to promote girls' rights and education."– **GAMS Sénégal.**

Protecting girls cannot rest on individual women and families alone. It is a collective responsibility that requires political leadership, effective public services and well-resourced, community-led action.

Standing with Senegalese organisations and turning calls into actionand turning calls into action

In response to this tragedy, the Fédération nationale des organisations pour la promotion de l'abandon des mutilations génitales féminines (FENOPAME) has issued a strong statement condemning the death of the newborn girl and calling for justice and urgent action. On 16 November, the Collectif des Féministes du Sénégal also published a press release denouncing the patriarchal norms that make this violence possible.
The Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C endorses these calls. We stand alongside our Senegalese partners and support their demands for justice, effective protection, the transformation of the norms that sustain FGM/C and its definitive abandonment. Their calls must be translated into concrete action at national, regional and international levels.

1. We support FENOPAME's calls to:

- **Establish the full circumstances of the baby's death,** *through a thorough investigation that establishes the facts and ensures accountability.*
- **Enforce Law No. 99-05 effectively and rigorously**, *ensuring that those found responsible are held accountable, in full respect of due process and judicial procedures.*
- **Strengthen vigilance and collective responsibility across society,** *involving parents, community and religious leaders, administrative and local authorities, health professionals, community-based organisations and civil society.*
- **Break the silence surrounding FGM/C and strengthen reporting mechanisms**, *enabling communities to alert the competent authorities immediately to any act of FGM/C, attempted FGM/C or situation placing a girl at risk.*
- **Sustain collective mobilisation towards the definitive abandonment of FGM/C in Senegal, t***hrough continued cooperation between public authorities, technical and financial partners, civil society organisations and communities.*

2. We also join the call of the Collectif des Féministes du Sénégal to:

- **Address the patriarchal structures and gender norms underpinning FGM/C,** *through sustained, targeted programmes with families and communities that challenge justifications based on tradition, marriage and the control of girls' sexuality, while promoting girls' bodily autonomy, dignity and rights.*

These calls converge with those the Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C made after the death of a baby girl in The Gambia in 2025 (read the statement). From Banjul to Tambacounda, the movement's message is the same. Building on those calls, we add two further demands to the Senegalese authorities:

- **Protect newborns and young girls by integrating the identification of girls at** *risk into pregnancy, birth and postnatal care, as well as child protection systems.*
- **Guarantee holistic, survivor-centred care and support,** *while ensuring sustained resources for prevention, survivor-led initiatives and community awareness on the health risks and human rights violations caused by FGM/C.*

We call on the Government of Senegal and all relevant national and local authorities to respond to these demands with concrete measures, adequate resources and sustained political commitment.

'' I'm heartbroken, furious and deeply disappointed that we are writing yet another statement after the death of a baby girl. FGM is sexual violence against children. How many times do we have to say it before governments and funders act with the urgency girls deserve? I stand with the Senegalese organisations demanding justice. Every girl deserves to be safe and to feel protected. She needs to know who she can turn to, that she'll be believed, and that adults will act to keep her safe. That means funding the local organisations already doing this work and making sure families can reach safe, confidential support before another girl is harmed.'' **- On behalf of the Global Platform for Action to END FGM/C, Dr Leyla Hussein, FGM Survivor, Psychotherapist.**

3. The Global Platform calls on the international community to:

- **Collectively commit to ending FGM/C and its harmful consequences** *by publicly condemning this death and reaffirming that FGM/C is a grave violation of human rights and of the rights of the child.*
- **Strengthen the enforcement of existing conventions,** *including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Maputo Protocol and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and hold States accountable for non-compliance.*
- **Partner with the Government of Senegal and relevant stakeholders, including grassroots activists,** *to strengthen the enforcement of Law No. 99-05 and increase investment in community dialogue, survivor-led advocacy, and comprehensive education and awareness programmes on the severe health risks and human rights violations associated with FGM/C.*
- **Demand increased accountability from all those who allow girls to be harmed by FGM/C,** *including those who carry out this act of violence, community leaders who support its continuation, and governments that fail to protect women and girls through inaction.*
- **Provide urgent resources, diplomatic support and protection for survivors and frontline movements** *who dedicate their lives to ending FGM/C in Senegal and in other countries where it persists.*
- **Dramatically increase funding and resources for prevention and for survivor services,** *to close the severe funding gap that exists for ending FGM/C globally.*
- **Closely monitor developments** *and provide support to strengthen the enforcement of the law banning FGM/C in Senegal so that national commitments translate into effective protection for every girl.*

4. As the End FGM European Network, we call for:

- **The EU Ambassador to Senegal,** *Ms Aude Maio-Coliche, to publicly condemn this tragic and preventable death.*
- **The European Union to use its leverage as a key partner of Senegal,** *including in the negotiations on a new EU-Senegal partnership, to ensure accountability and prevention.*
- **The European Commission to support and work closely with Senegalese civil society and authorities** *for the collective, community-led design and implementation of prevention, education, protection and support measures, and to ensure that EU funding reaches the organisations working on the ground.*
- *The European Parliament to adopt an urgency resolution condemning this death, calling for accountability and for the protection of children at risk of FGM/C in Senegal and across the region.*

The calls of FENOPAME and the Collectif des Féministes du Sénégal must not remain words on paper. They must translate into justice, effective protection, sustained prevention and a lasting transformation of the patriarchal structures and power relations that sustain FGM/C. Her name may never be known to the world, but her death must not fade into another forgotten headline. It is a stark reminder of the human cost of inaction, and of the shared

responsibility of governments, institutions and communities to protect every girl. Protecting girls from FGM/C is a question of children's rights and human rights, and a legal obligation for every State.

We stand with our Senegalese partners in demanding that every girl is protected, that every attempt to subject a girl to FGM/C is taken seriously, and that no family or community is left without the support it needs to abandon this gross human rights violation. No girl should have to die for the world to act. Care must become action now, for a future free from female genital mutilation.