

Medicalisation of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

STATEMENT BY FIGO PRESIDENT

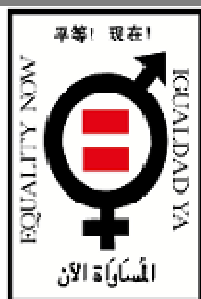
Professor Gamal Serour - FIGO President – is deeply concerned and alarmed at the terrible news that has recently surfaced supporting medicalisation of some forms of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (“FGM/C”). FIGO – an international Federation embracing 124 member societies of obstetricians and gynaecologists in the developed and developing world – strongly condemns all forms of FGM/C, performed by traditional or medical personnels in all countries and all communities around the globe, as they are harmful, unethical, with no benefits whatsoever and are against the code of medical practice.

FIGO strongly condemns all past, present or future calls to medicalise any form of FGM/C. FIGO affirms its firm stance on this issue as outlined in its previous resolution, guidelines, publications and conjoint statements.

FIGO welcomes the withdrawal of the decision of the few organisations who issued or were considering the issue of statements implying the support of any form of FGM/C.

(Attachment: A copy of a recent letter from “Equality Now” acting on behalf of WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNIFEM to The American Academy of Pediatrics (“AAP”) on the subject.)

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EQUALITY NOW

For Immediate Release
May 27, 2010

EQUALITY NOW WELCOMES DECISION BY AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS (AAP) TO WITHDRAW ITS 2010 POLICY STATEMENT ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) THAT ENDORSED PEDIATRICANS' "NICKING" OF GIRLS' GENITALIA

New York - International human rights organization [Equality Now](#) welcomes the AAP's decision to withdraw its ill-conceived revised policy statement on female genital mutilation (FGM) issued on April 26, 2010. The new policy statement essentially promoted Type IV FGM, as categorized by the World Health Organization (WHO), and suggested that federal and state laws might be more effective if they "enabled pediatricians to reach out to families by offering a 'ritual nick'." In a release issued today, the AAP stated that it has "retired" its 2010 revised statement on FGM, is opposed to "all forms of female genital cutting" and "does not endorse the practice of offering a 'clitoral nick.'"

Immediately following the announcement about AAP's new policy statement on April 26, 2010, Equality Now launched a global campaign, which called on its membership of over 35,000 individuals and organizations from 160 countries to put pressure on the AAP to revoke its statement. The outpouring of deep concern demonstrated by several women's rights advocates, human rights organizations, health care providers, and individual members around the world in response to this campaign has been inspiring and overwhelming. A significant outcome of Equality Now's campaign was also a statement jointly signed by WHO and United Nations agencies, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNIFEM, that challenged the AAP's contentions about FGM and the harm any of its forms, including 'nicking', cause girls and women. The WHO/UN statement also confirmed the importance of looking at all forms of FGM as a form of violence and discrimination against women and girls.

"This is a crucial step forward in the movement to continue raising awareness about FGM, especially in the U.S., where it is practiced by some immigrant communities. This campaign has brought to light the importance of identifying FGM as a harmful cultural practice that together we must and can end. The work of the African anti-FGM grassroots movement has finally reached our shores and we hope to move

forward and ensure the protection of girls in the U.S. and elsewhere from the practice," says Taina Bien-Aimé, Equality Now's Executive Director. Ironically, news reports today indicate that the AAP is not isolated in its misunderstandings about FGM and the Royal Australian New Zealand College of Obstetricians is now planning to discuss backing "ritual nicks", a modified form of genital mutilation, next month. Taina Bien-Aimé further warned, "Before heading in the wrong direction on this issue, the Royal Australian New Zealand College of Obstetricians must learn from the experience of the international campaign against AAP, and from the resounding clarification provided in the WHO/UN joint statement."

Equality Now hopes that the momentum built around discussions about FGM continues in the US with the swift passage of The Girls Protection Act (H.R. 5137), a new bipartisan legislation introduced by Congressman Joseph Crowley (D-NY) and Congresswoman Mary Bono Mack (R-CA) that would close the loophole in the federal law prohibiting FGM by making it illegal to transport a minor girl living in the U.S. out of the country for the purpose of FGM. The bill will hopefully also call for the launch of culturally sensitive outreach programs in FGM-practicing immigrant communities in the U.S. to educate parents about the lifelong harms of FGM.

Equality Now is an international human rights organization that works to protect and promote the civil, political, economic and social rights of girls and women around the world. For more information visit www.equalitynow.org.

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