

## MANIFESTO TO END FGM IN THE UK BY 2030

Female genital mutilation (**FGM**) is a global health problem affecting millions. It has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and must be tackled as urgently in the UK as across the world.

### The scale of the problem

Defined as a human rights abuse by the UN, FGM constitutes one of the most extreme forms of violence against women and girls, causing trauma and harm that can be lifelong.

UNICEF and the World Health Organisation estimate that over **200 million** women and girls alive today have undergone FGM; **30 million** more will be subjected to it in the next decade.

An estimated **137,000** women and girls with FGM were living in England and Wales in 2011; **60,000** girls under the age of 15 had been born to mothers with FGM.

### FGM and its consequences

FGM is the medically unnecessary partial or total removal of the female external genitalia, infibulation or other injury to the genital organs. The 'procedure' is carried out for the first time mostly on minors – usually without anaesthetic or a doctor present - and may be repeated multiple times during a person's lifetime.

The medical consequences can be severe. They include: haemorrhage, acute pain, difficulties with urination and menstruation, cysts, infections, sexual dysfunction, depression, PTSD, and even death. A survivor may require invasive surgeries throughout her life as a result; chronic illness is not uncommon and mortality of mother and infant during childbirth may also occur.

FGM is part of a continuum of violence against women and girls, which the UK cannot allow to persist. Research shows that FGM survivors are more likely to suffer other forms of violence during their lifetimes, including domestic abuse, rape and harmful practices such as breast ironing, forced marriage and related forms of 'honour-based abuse' (**HBA**). Tackling FGM provides the pathway to eradicating these other forms of gender-based violence.

### What needs to be done

The law criminalises FGM but with just four prosecutions and one successful conviction in the UK, since the first enactment of legislation in 1985, this is clearly not enough. Legislation cannot be meaningful without adequate resources to address the wider issues, does little to help survivors and does not address the general lack of awareness of FGM and its consequences.

The state has a fundamental duty to safeguard, and eliminate violence against, women and girls. We view the implementation of the following to be of fundamental importance in the fight against FGM and HBA:

- Explicit inclusion of FGM and HBA in the ministerial portfolios of the Ministry of Health and Social Care, Ministry of Justice and Department for Education to ensure survivor-centred prevention and co-ordinated response across all relevant sectors;
- All women and girls to be asked about FGM and family history of FGM at every GP surgery across the UK – regardless of ethnicity or background. This will help identify survivors, individuals at risk and avoid the unintentional stigmatisation of particular communities or ethnic groups;
- Mandatory FGM and HBA training for all staff with a responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, with the prioritisation of education, law enforcement, health and social services;
- Increased investment in specialist healthcare, social and psychological support services for survivors;
- A budget to aid and protect potential victims/witnesses who might not otherwise report such matters and to reduce the severe risks faced by an individual filing an FGM or forced marriage protection order; and
- Standardised data collection and enhanced information sharing across public service providers.

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The signatories below call on the government to implement these recommendations as a matter of urgency in order meet the UK's pledge to end FGM by 2030.



**ACTION:FGM**  
United Against Harmful Practices



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