

Banjul Declaration - Gambia 1998

on violence against Women

We, the participants at the symposium for Religious Leaders and Medical personnel on FGM as a form of violence, organized by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional practices (GAMCOTRAP) held in Banjul, The Gambia, July 20-23 1998; declare as follows:

- Having examined and appreciated the health and human rights implications of violence against women and girls, particularly female genital mutilation;
- Having recognized that in Africa over 100 million women and girls are victims of FGM;
- Having confirmed that FGM has neither Islamic nor Christian origin or justifications;
- Seriously concerned by the incorrect interpretations and misuse of Islamic teachings to perpetuate violence against women, particularly FGM;
- Upholding the principle of equality and justice for all, without discrimination between men and women;
- Reaffirming the universality of human rights principles and their indivisibility;
- Hereby strongly condemn the continuation of female genital mutilation;
- Prohibit the misuse of religious arguments to perpetuate FGM and other forms of violence;
- Commit ourselves to clarify the misinterpretation of religion and to teach the true principles of Islam and Christianity with regard to violence against women, including FGM;

Propose:

The setting up of a network of religious leaders and scholars to support the IAC in its campaign against:

- Harmful traditional practices.
- The establishment of family tribunals, comprising men and women, to settle family disputes.
- Family laws to be reviewed in the light of Christian and Islamic principles and human rights.
- Legislate against the continuation of the practice of FGM, stipulating penalties for offenders.
- Call on religious leaders to spare no efforts to enhance the campaign aimed at freeing women from all forms of violence, including FGM.

Banjul, 22 July 1998

The Participants

Recommendations

We, the participants at the symposium for Religious Leaders and Medical Personnel on FGM as a form of violence, organized by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices/GAMCOTRAP, held in Banjul, the Gambia, July 20-23 1998.

Having exhaustively discussed and debated different forms of violence against women with emphasis on FGM, we the Islamic and Christian leaders here present arrived at a consensus, and reaffirm our conviction that FGM is not a religious injunction and therefore constitutes a grave violation against the rights of women.

We recommend as follows:

To all Religious Leaders and Scholars:

- To confirm and support the fact that Female Genital Mutilation is not an injunction either in the Holy Koran or in the Holy Bible.
- To undertake and support action aimed at eradicating violence against women, particularly FGM.
- To condemn all attempts to impede the fight against FGM.

To Governments:

- That Governments uphold and enforce all international and regional conventions relating to the rights of women and children.

To Women:

- To learn and understand the divine principles of religion in order to defend their rights and that of their children.

To Men:

- To strictly observe the religious teachings based on love, equity, mutual respect and partnership.

To Doctors and Health Workers:

- That there should be no medicalisation of FGM, under any circumstance.

Banjul, 22 July 1998

The Participants