



OXFORD INTERNATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

XV ANNUAL CONFERENCE

3RD – 5TH NOVEMBER 2017

**SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND CULTURAL
COMMITTEE (SOCHUM)**

CONTENTS

TOPIC A: MEDIA CENSORSHIP AND THE TREATMENT OF JOURNALISTS 2

TOPIC HISTORY..... 3

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM 6

THE FUTURE..... 7

POINTS RESOLUTIONS SHOULD ADDRESS 8

FURTHER READING 8

TOPIC B: *THE ISSUE OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION* 9

TOPIC HISTORY 11

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM 12

THE FUTURE..... 13

POINTS RESOLUTIONS SHOULD ADDRESS 14

FURTHER READING 15

BIBLIOGRAPHY 16

Topic A..... 16

Topic B..... 18

Committee Directors:

Nathalie Chung
nataliechungyy@gmail.com

Karle De Volder
karledevolder@gmail.com

Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

Topic A: Media Censorship and Treatment of Journalists

Topic B: The issue of Female Genital Mutilation

A Message from your Directors:

Dear Delegates,

A warm welcome to this session of OxIMUN! We are so excited to Chair this edition of SOCHUM and to meet everyone in November!

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee is the Third Committee of the General Assembly, working closely with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Human Rights Council to uphold rights and freedoms worldwide.

With the conference's theme of 'Healing a Fractured World' in mind, we are so excited to be discussing the following two topics: Media Censorship and the Treatment of Journalists and The Issue of Female Genital Mutilation.

We believe both these topics to be of crucial importance in our world today. SOCHUM committees usually tackle issues that affect our daily lives, and the same can be said about the ones that were selected here. Despite the fact that both Media Censorship and Female Genital Mutilation might seem like topics that only affect a certain and 'small' part of the world, the opposite is true. Both these issues are global ones, and they both deserve our undivided attention.

Model United Nations conferences are a perfect place for students to not only practice their public speaking and negotiation skills, but also to discover both new and existing solutions to important problems the world is facing today. We're looking forward to what you'll have in store for us!

Natalie Chung and Karle De Volder, Directors of SOCHUM

TOPIC A: MEDIA CENSORSHIP AND THE TREATMENT OF JOURNALISTS

Freedom of expression and opinion is set out and protected in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly as a common goal for all peoples and nations. With some countries imposing limits on this human right and even incarcerating individuals and/or journalists in their practice of this right, it is imperative to have a discussion on this issue.

Media censorship refers to the suppression of free speech, open public discourse, or any other element of information that is considered objectionable and harmful by the political actors within society, including the Government and various outlets of media, e.g. news agencies¹. Of the Internet users in the world, it is estimated that two-thirds are affected by government censorship³. Throughout the world today, media censorship remains an issue of vast importance, sparking continuous debate since the evolution of modern day societies. The situation is also far from improving, with a think tank study finding that 2016 was the sixth consecutive year where Internet freedom declined³.

The treatment of journalists in various countries across the world from a multitude of news and media agencies is sometimes highly negative, in some instances they are even denied of basic human rights², comprising the right to free speech. Journalists are oftentimes subjected to torture of various forms, including physical and mental², should political actors of the State deem the information they publish “undesirable”. There have been innumerable cases where



Figure 1: Eleanor Roosevelt and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, 1949 (Photo: Virtual Museum of Public Service)

journalists have been imprisoned just for publishing information regarded as “harmful” by the State².

In a joint statement⁵ published on World Press Freedom Day in 2015 by Ban Ki-moon, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, it was stated that “Everyone must be free to seek, receive and impart knowledge and information on all media, online and offline,” and that “Journalism must be able to thrive, in an enabling environment in which they can work independently and without undue interference and in conditions of safety.”

Media censorship has been very common in countries such as China, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, and Iran⁶. In most of these countries the issue of media censorship is entrenched and protected in the constitution and the legislature, or in some cases, not constitutional rights and freedoms guaranteed are undermined by restrictive legislations. In the case of Turkey, the State guarantees freedom of the Press, but is allowed to regulate the media and news agencies by Article 28 of the constitution⁷. Similarly, Article 39 in Saudi Arabia’s constitution permits a similar notion stating that the State must ban anything that may cause disorder, division, or is a threat to national

security⁸. This does however not mean that the media is completely free in all not-mentioned countries. Going against what is considered to be ‘politically correct’ can still cause problems for journalists in Western countries, and the role of the media has also been strongly scrutinized under president Trump in the United States of America.

TOPIC HISTORY

Earliest Forms of Censorship (Before Common Era)

Censorship can be traced back to the time of the ancient Greeks⁹, where even the derivation of the term “censor” comes from an establishment in Rome around 443 BC. This came from the ancient Greek ideals of good governance role in helping mould the morals of the people, earning a honourable reputation for censorship.

One of the most famous cases of censorship would be in 399 BC of Socrates^{9, 10}, a classical Greek philosopher who is recognised as a leader in the rise of Western philosophy, said to have had corrupted the youth in his refusal to conform to the belief and recognition of state divinities while fashioning new deities, punished by drinking poison, which led to his death⁹.

Another important case of censorship in ancient times is believed to have happened in China, with the Chinese Book Burning incident after Emperor Qin Shi Huang unifying China¹⁰. His decision came from advice that unity of thought and political opinion could only come from the suppression of intellectual discourse and also to avoid scholarly comparison of past reigns and his^{10, 11}. This situation was further exacerbated, as it is also believed that scholars who were found with forbidden books were buried alive¹¹.

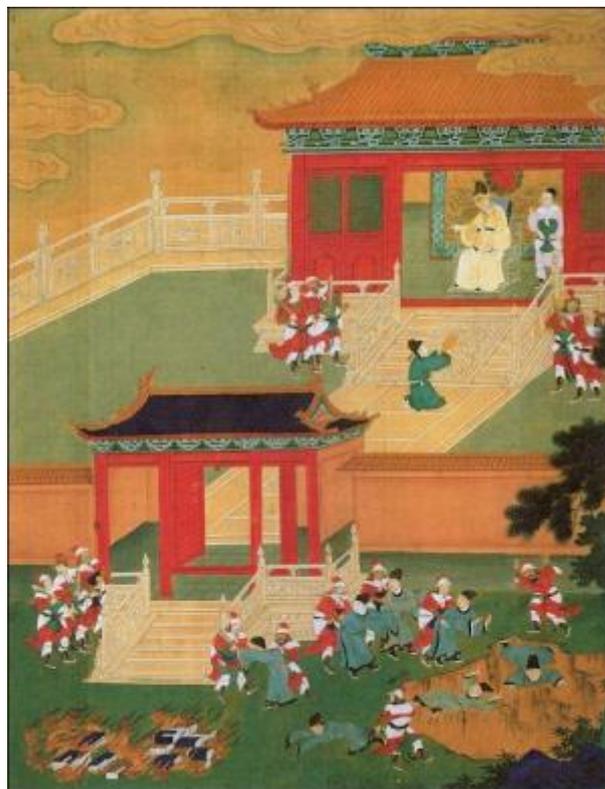


Figure 2: 18th century Chinese painting of the burning of books and burying of Confucian Scholars under Emperor Qin (Source: Factsanddetails.com)

18th Century to the 20th Century

Censorship in this time period experienced many conflicting views. Sweden was the first country in the world to constitutionally abolish censorship in 1766 with the Freedom of the Press Act of 1766, protecting the freedom of information and freedom of the press¹³. Similarly, the United States of America ratified the Bill of Rights in 1791, where the first amendment of the United States Constitution sets out the protection of freedom of speech and the press¹⁴.

However, even though some countries in Europe and the West were liberating press, this was also the age of harsh press censorship on Asian nations such as Japan⁹. The *Yokohama Mainichi*, the first daily newspaper of Japan, was started in 1870, a period in Japanese history where it was a common occurrence for the arrests of journalists and for newspapers to be suppressed⁹.

Colonisation was also at a high point during this period, and colonial governments employed firm

control over the media and publications, especially those associated with politics, in their dominions⁹. An example of this was the British-controlled country of South Africa, where only a small amount of press freedom was obtained in 1828, but was not realistically implemented due to racial divisions, leading to complete suppression of press until the 1990s⁹.

Furthermore, despite the many developments of the limitations of censorship in certain countries, political strife led to much regression of these liberal ideals of limitation of censorship. Perhaps one of the most well known cases of censorship was the Nazi Censorship¹⁰. To gain the trust and support from the Germans, the Nazi's seized the control of all media, including broadcasted and printed media, to eradicate discourse that may impend Nazi beliefs¹⁵. Raids were also eventually carried out to rid libraries and bookstores of books that were deemed to oppose Nazi ideologies by Nazi controlled institutions and organisations¹⁵. These books were then burned in nighttime bonfires¹⁵.

Media Censorship in China

The Chinese Government has long kept a very tight control on all sorts of media agencies including news channels, newspapers, Internet and even social media. Numerous famous bloggers and journalists have been imprisoned and subjected to harsh torture conditions. China's constitution affords its citizens freedom of speech and press, but the opacity of Chinese media regulations allows authorities to crack down on news stories by claiming that they expose state secrets and endanger the country. This is where the clash exists. In China, more than a dozen agencies have the authority to control and regulate the news and Internet¹⁶. Websites that are deemed politically dangerous are often blocked in times of unrest such as the protests in Tiananmen Square. Moreover, social media websites including Facebook and Twitter

are banned throughout China. There have been numerous times when Wikipedia was also banned in China. The most powerful monitoring body is the Communist Party's Central Propaganda Department (CPD). Sources report that more than 100,000 workers are employed by the government in various departments to control the media agencies.

In order to exert its control, the Chinese Government has created a project known as the "Great Firewall" or the Golden Shield project. This is the center of all internet-based censorship in China. The methods used include bandwidth monitoring, throttling and filtering, using various complex algorithms¹⁷.

Reporters without Borders ranks China as 176th out of 180 Countries surveyed in terms of press freedom¹⁸.

Media Censorship is also intensified in regions such as Tibet, where separatist elements exist. Moreover, regions with a larger Muslim population also experience heavier censorship. Google, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter still remain blocked, therefore also censoring social media, and thus contradicting the notion of free speech. Currently 84 Bloggers and 24 Journalists are imprisoned in China¹⁹. Recently, Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau expressed his dissatisfaction over the lack of press freedom in China and their treatment of journalists in Canada over a question asked during a visit to Ottawa²⁰.

Moreover, the Press Regulation agencies in China make sure that the televised News reflecting the Communist Party's ideology in numerous ways²¹.

China has also blocked Google. Instead of using this website the majority of people in China use 'Baidu', which is a heavily censored search engine. However, the censored content is

accessible by using a Virtual Private Network, which the Chinese Government is aware of. Nonetheless, only a small minority of the population uses such means to access the censored information. The justification in this case is to allow access for foreign traders within China especially in the coastal region near Shanghai that is considered more liberal in terms of freedom than the rest of the country²².

Media Censorship in Turkey

Various international and domestic laws regulate Media freedom in Turkey. However, the international laws take precedence over the domestic ones. Article 28 of the constitution allows for the regulation⁷. In its 2017 report, Freedom House ranks Turkey as “Not Free” in both Press and Net Freedom²³, which means that even today harsh censorship laws exist within Turkey. Although Turkey is considered to be an established democracy, the presence of press censorship creates the clash. It has been ranked as 155th out of 180 in terms of Press Freedom¹⁸.

Since 2011, the Justice and Development Party, Turkish *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) Government in Turkey has increased restrictions on news agencies, freedom of Press, internet, right to gather an assembly and television broadcasts²⁴. Political unrest and power struggle between the parties in Turkey can identified as reasons for such harsh censorship. Turkey has also ratified various conventions including the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which allows Freedom of Expression according to Article 10²⁵. Article 301 of Turkish Penal Code has made it a punishable offence to insult the country or any official Turkish institutions²⁶. Article 216 allows for a maximum three-year prison sentence for any information that incites religious hatred²⁶. President Erdogan is known within the masses to have a strict stance against press freedom²⁷.

There have been numerous cases where various high-profile journalists have been imprisoned²⁸. Mr. Can Dunder, a top Turkish journalist, was sentenced to 6 years in prison for publishing details of covert Turkish shipments to Syrian insurgents²⁹.

Following the recent Coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, the censorship measures have significantly increased. Numerous journalists have also been arrested. Exactly a day after the failed coup, Turkey banned more than 18 media outlets. With the additional state of emergency, the Turkish Government banned 131 News outlets, including 3 news agencies, 23 radio stations, 15 magazines, and 45 newspapers³⁰. Social media outlets including Facebook and Twitter were immediately blocked during the unrest³¹. Various news channels including were asked to suspend their services Independent Turkish media outlets also became inaccessible³². This has lead to more protest and opposition against the current government of President Erdogan.

Turkey has faced numerous allegations from various humanitarian organizations including the Amnesty International for its media censorship³³. Moreover, the lack of Press Freedom also threatens Turkey’s relations with the EU and The West, as Turkey is a democracy, member of NATO, and going for a visa-free deal with the EU. EU has now and then criticized Turkey for its worsening Press Freedom Situation. Turkey’s



Figure 3: Turks Protest Internet Censorship (Photo: Binnaz Saktanber via ROARMag)

record on press freedom has raised such concerns among some EU politicians that they question whether it is a suitable candidate for membership. However, The Turkish Govt. has declared these allegations “null and void”. Turkey’s EU Affairs Minister, Volkan Bozkir said these allegations were invalid, while addressing the press at a conference in Vienna³⁴.

International Involvement in Media and Press Censorship

The issue has been often discussed within the UN and by other international organizations. Amnesty International has been a key player in this case. Not only has it often tried to stop journalist imprisonments in countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, and Qatar; it has also forwarded such cases to the UN. In 2013, the UNGA adopted the resolution on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity on its 68th session. The resolution also proclaimed the 2nd of November as the International Day to end Impunity 36.

Although various resolutions have been passed addressing censorship in some way, the implementation still remains a massive problem. Therefore, the delegates in SOCHUM this year must also discuss the implementation of the legislations and resolutions.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

Media censorship and the treatment of journalists is not an insulated issue, but more so of a question of ideology.

An Argument for Rationale

It can be seen that one of the determining factors of whether a country has full freedom of the press is the maturity of the democracy. Countries such as the United States of America

and the United Kingdom have had democratic governments for an extended period of time and the idea of a democratic government is widely accepted. This enables State actors to allow for free press and media, as the influence of the media will not drastically challenge the accepted means of government even with the presence of media bias.

On the other hand, less mature democracies may face a challenge in regards to the full freedom of press and media. This could be due to the notion that their democracies are less well established as they do not have the history of support of a democracy, and so the influence of the press may affect the political stability of the country.

There is also international pressure for some countries to allow for more freedom of the press and media while there is relative consensus within the population that the level of media censorship is sufficient and desired. An example of this would be a decision by State-run libraries in Singapore to remove a children’s book on unconventional families. Although internationally criticised, it is stated, “the overwhelming majority of Singaporeans accept, support teaching children about unconventional families, but not about alternative, non-traditional families”³⁷ showing that the censorship is accepted by the population.

Political Obstacles

One main argument that is expected to surface in the debate is the argument on sovereignty. Most of the countries where heavy censorship exists rely on the argument for the protection of sovereignty of the state and the protection of their political agendas. This is particularly true in countries like China. In this case, the party in power, Communist Party, tries to use media censorship and state-run press to protect its political agenda - the belief that the government has to be considered as the most supreme entity within society. This belief is perpetuated and

widely accepted in China, so much so that it also explains why many of the people are actually content with the current state of press censorship. Any information that may threaten to adversely affect sovereignty is censored. The need of state sovereignty is also essential to make sure that the hold of the Government exists within the country.

Another political obstacle that faces Free Press is the political climate of the country, and the need to ensure stability and peace by limiting the influence of the media in trying to do so following a political crisis such as a military coup attempt. Such was the case in Turkey, for example, where censorship was intensified after the failed coup attempt in 2016. According to the Turkish Government, it was done to make sure that the hold of the Government exists after the coup. According to the Government, they used this measure to protect democracy from military control of a military coup. Perhaps the Government's justification for this was to make sure that the chaos ended immediately and to ensure stability in the country following the end of chaos.

One particular aspect about censorship and freedom of expression that should be kept in mind is the fact that multiple countries, including e.g. Belgium and Australia³⁹, have restricted this freedom when it comes to outings of for example racial discrimination. This can lead to a grey area concerning what is and isn't considered censoring.

A further political obstacle would exist in the religious argument in justifying media and press censorship, particularly in countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. Any information that is deemed as violating the social and religious norms is often censored. This is especially in the case when the Qur'an, the Islamic religious text, acts as the Basic Laws of the country in place or

in addition to a national constitution. The delegates in SOCHUM must debate upon the different opinions that are used to justify the censorship in some cases by the different countries. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the claims should also be discussed, before drafting pragmatic solutions for the issue.

In December 2012, there was a meeting of The World Conference on International Telecommunications, held to facilitate the discussion of Internet governance of 193 nations in Dubai³⁸. An agreement was drawn up to leave "internet governance in the hands of the United Nations"³⁸. However, Western nations, namely the United States of America, was unsuccessful in signing the agreement, citing different views on who should have control over internet policy as the main reason³⁸.

In September 2016, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution designed to protect journalists and necessitated the release of indiscriminately detained journalists. It was expected for the UN high commissioner for human rights to report on the efficacy of existing frameworks in regards to journalist protection³⁸. However, the statistics show that less than half of these requests are eventually answered³⁸.

THE FUTURE

Contributing Factors

With increasing political instability in the world, especially with the recent terrorism threats worldwide, governments might gradually practice media censorship to try to maintain peace, worsening the situation of the lack of free press and media.

POINTS RESOLUTIONS SHOULD ADDRESS

- To what extent is censorship justified?
- To what extent does the State have the right to control the information and the social narrative?
- How much influence should the international community have on domestic laws concerning media censorship?
- What should the ideal policy be against Media Censorship in countries that are currently going through political transition?
- Is there a need to set up a new international body to address the issue?
- What role should NGOs play in facilitating Press Freedom throughout the world?
- How should the safety of journalists be ensured?
- Who is included under the umbrella term of “journalists”?

FURTHER READING

- BBC HARDtalk with the Prime Minister of Singapore on the issue of free speech, media and press. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04v5v32>
- Statistics on the most number of journalists in prison in selected countries. https://www.indy100.com/article/china-the-worlds-biggest-prison-for-journalists--xkmMmNg_tx

- Media censorship situation in Turkey. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2016/07/turkey-media-purge-threatens-freedom-of-expression/>
- The situation of media censorship in Saudi Arabia. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-journalist-sentenced-to-5-years-in-prison-for-tweets-ridiculing-islamic-religious-a6953266.html>

TOPIC B: *THE ISSUE OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION*

Recent calculations show that over 200 million girls and women who are alive today underwent a form of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Most of these girls and women live in around 30 countries located in Africa, the Middle East, Asia¹ and some South American regions². The procedures do, however, take place in other regions, especially on women and girls with a migrant background from regions where FGM is common¹. FGM includes different procedures that mean to alter or cause harm to the female genital organs. The procedure does not have any health benefits and is not done for medical purposes. On the contrary, the procedure entails risks (especially since they're often not performed by medical experts in hygienic surroundings) and the consequences can be highly damaging.

Immediate consequences of the procedure can entail severe pain, excessive bleeding, fever,

infections (including tetanus), urinary problems, shock, and even death. Long term consequences include urinary problems, vaginal problems, menstrual problems (including painful menstruations and difficulties in passing menstrual blood), scar tissue, sexual problems, increased risk of childbirth complications and newborn deaths, psychological problems (including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety) and general health complications¹. Figure 4³ gives more information on how the procedure influence the lives of girls and women (note that the number of women that have been affected has been updated since the creation of this figure).

The different types of FGM can be divided into four groups^{1,4}:

Type I: This type consists of partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or its prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris). This type is also known as a **clitoridectomy**.

Type II: The clitoris and the *labia minora* (the inner folds of the vulva) are partially or totally removed, with or without excision of the *labia majora* (the outer folds of skin of the vulva). Also known as **excision**.

Type III: The most severe form. The procedure consists of narrowing the vaginal orifice with the creation of a covering seal. This can be done by cutting and appositioning the labia minora and/or labia majora, with or without removal of the clitoris. The appositioning of the wound edges consists of stitching or holding the cut areas together for a certain period of time (for example, girls' legs are bound together), to create the covering seal. A small opening is left for urine and menstrual blood to escape. An infibulation must be opened either through penetrative sexual intercourse or surgery. This is known as the infibulation or pharaonic type and is estimated to affect around ten percent of cut women.

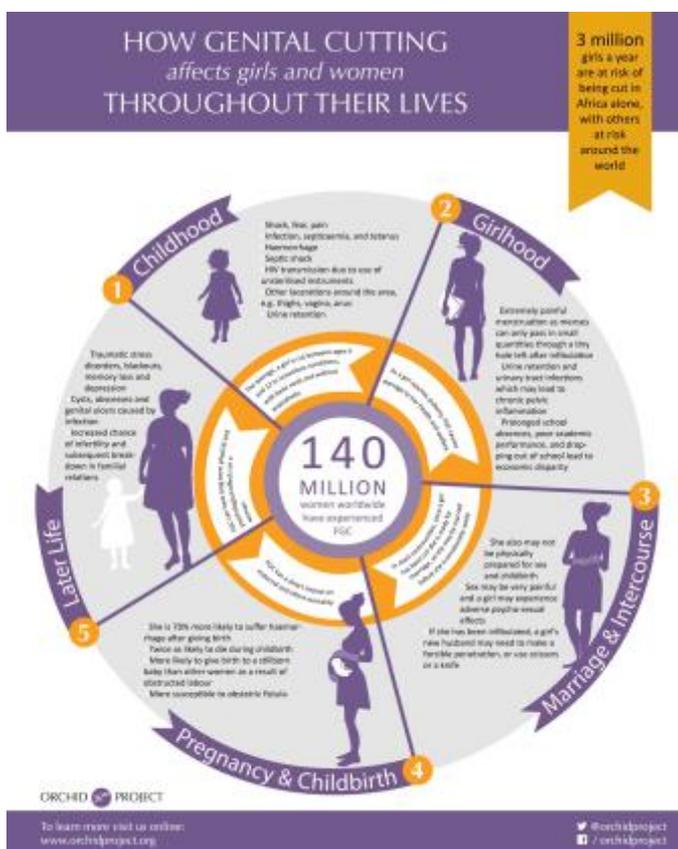


Figure 4: How genital cutting affects girls and women throughout their lives

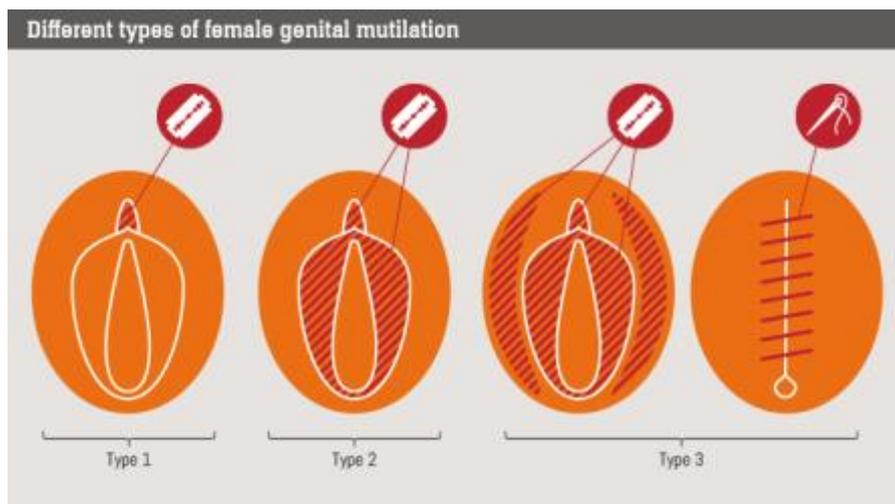


Figure 5: Types of Female Genital Mutilation

Type IV: This type consists of all other procedures to the genitalia of women for non-medical purposes, such as pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterization. These forms are often not considered to be a form of FGM by the ones undergoing it. Types I to III are depicted in figure 5⁵.

FGM is first and foremost a cultural and social phenomenon, more so than a religious one. The performance of FGM is highly related to the community one is living in. It is thus not a homogenous issue in all the countries that are affected by it. In these communities, FGM is often the norm, leading to social pressure to perform the procedure and fear of being excluded for the community if it is not done. The procedure is usually performed either after birth or when the child is a teenager, before the age of 15. It is often considered to be a necessary part of raising a girl, and a way to prepare her for adulthood and marriage. FGM is often motivated by beliefs concerning 'acceptable' sexual behaviour. The procedure is then supposed to ensure premarital virginity and marital fidelity. Many of these communities believe that FGM will reduce a woman's libido, and will therefore help her resist sexual 'temptations'. Type III offers an extra 'insurance' in this case, since it will make it more difficult

for women to hide the fact that they've been sexually active. FGM is also often associated with cultural ideas on what it means to be clean, hygienic and feminine. There are no religious scripts prescribing the practice, but it is sometimes considered to have religious support. Religious leaders are divided on the issue, as are many local political leaders¹. Misinformation about the clitoris leads to many

prejudices and myths, including that the clitoris is a source of sexual promiscuity, that it can cause damage to the baby during birth, that it will continue to grow when it's not cut, and more².

FGM is often considered to be an 'African Problem'. This does however not match with reality. Since, as mentioned above, FGM happens in different regions around the world. This does, however, not mean that all women or girls in all affected regions are cut. It's importance to the culture is shown by the fact that migrants sometimes take the procedure with them to their new destinations, leading to procedures taking place in Europe, Australia and the United States of America^{1,2}. The prevalence of the FGM is shown on figure 6⁶. Studies show that around 180.000 girls and women are at risk of FGM in Europe alone. These women are usually first or second generation migrants. The procedure often takes place during trips to their homeland, especially during the summer holidays. Both France and the United Kingdom have known cases of FGM conducted on their territory. Around 30 lawsuits against those who conduct FGM have taken place in France alone². Women and girls who have been cut and who live in countries where this is not common often face difficulties when looking for help abroad. Doctors do not always recognize the issue, nor



Figure 6: Prevalence of FGM

do they always know how to treat issues related to FGM². FGM is internationally recognized as a human rights violation. It also violates a person’s right to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and in some cases the right to life⁷. All EU member states consider FGM a criminal act⁷.

TOPIC HISTORY

FGM has a long history in many of the discussed regions, but is more recent in Europe, the United States of America and Australia. Its persistence is a result of a complex combination of sociocultural factors.

In recent years different international and local organizations have started to fight against FGM. Building on previous work the United Nations issued a joint statement against the action of FGM in 1997, together with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Since 1997 the United Nations have conducted research, worked with communities, and supported changes in public policy. As a result there is now a wider international involvement to stop FGM, international monitoring bodies have been

conducted and resolutions have been passed condemning the practice. Legal frameworks were revised and political support to end FGM has increased. One example of this is a law against FGM in 26 countries in Africa and the Middle East, as well as in 33 other countries with migrant populations from FGM practicing countries. In 2007 the UNFPA and UNICEF started the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting to accelerate the abandonment of FGM. This was followed by a statement of the World Health Organization (WHO) and 9 other United Nations partners in 2008, indicating the wish to eliminate FGM and to support increased advocacy for its abandonment. This statement was called “eliminating female genital mutilation: an interagency statement”. In 2010 the WHO followed up on this with its publication “Global strategy to stop health care providers from performing female genital mutilation”. Two years later, in 2012, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the elimination of FGM. In 2016 UNICEF launched a rapport documenting the prevalence of FGM, as well as an overview of beliefs, attitudes, trends, and programmatic and policy responses to the practice globally. In this same year WHO

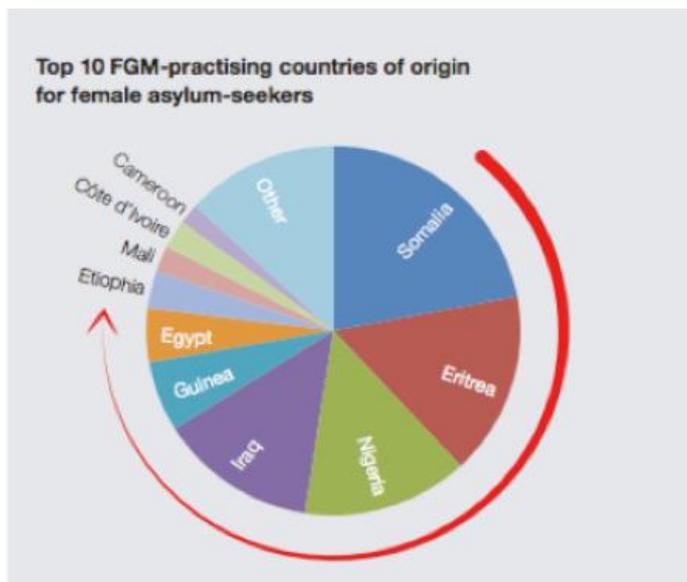


Figure 7: Top 10 FGM-practising countries of origin for female asylum-seekers in the EU

collaborated with UNFPA and UNICEF to launch the first evidence-based guidelines on the management of health complications from FGM¹.

Apart from the United Nations, multiple local and international organizations, often NGO's, have also taken action against FGM or its consequences. These organizations can focus on getting help for cut women, on lobbying for political change, on prevention, etcetera.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

The issue itself

FGM is a violation of human rights and puts women and girls at risk. More and more cases are being discovered in Western countries. Prevention programs are required, as a programs meant to help the women who were cut, both in the West as well as in FGM-practicing countries.

Obstacles

Stopping FGM is harder than it may seem. Women in the community are known to play an

important role in FGM of other women in their community. Men, on the other hand, often play a role by persisting that FGM is a perquisite to marriage². It is important to note that the girls themselves are in some cases known to have asked for the procedure or even to have conducted it themselves after refusal of their parents. This is a consequence of the broader culture they are living in: girls want to belong, believe this to be the only way to a (happy) marriage, or assume that this is more hygienic. It is thus crucial to reach all actors involved, including the girls themselves, their parents and extended family, the local leaders, religious figures, etcetera. The main challenge facing this issue is thus a general change of attitude towards this topic.

When arriving to their new destinations, women from FGM regions often face a lot of stereotypes and other issues, including uninformed healthcare providers or social workers. It is for example often assumed that migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa have been cut, while this is not expected from women from for example Egypt². Other women face shocked doctors or specialists who then react poorly, causing the women to feel shame and stopping them from getting help when they require it. Recently migrated women who have undergone the procedure are often unaware of the fact that this does not happen everywhere, and only start feeling 'weird' about it when they discover that this is not the case. It often takes a lot of research, information and people they trust for them to see why the procedure is problematic.

The issue of FGM in migrants is increasing in importance, in accordance with the rising number of female asylum applicants from FGM-practicing countries of origin⁷. An overview of the asylum seekers from FGM-practicing countries is provided in figure 7⁷. Women and girls might arrive having received FGM before, or they might look to get it done while they are

[My Grandma] caught hold of me and gripped my upper body. Two other women held my legs apart. The man, who was probably an itinerant traditional circumciser from the blacksmith clan, picked up a pair of scissors. [...] Then the scissors went down between my legs and the man cut off my inner labia and clitoris. A piercing pain shot up between my legs, indescribable, and I howled. Then came the sewing: the long, blunt needle clumsily pushed into my bleeding outer labia, my loud and anguished protests. [...] My sister] Haweya was never the same afterwards. She had nightmares, and during the day began stomping off to be alone. My once cheerful, playful little sister changed. Sometimes she just stared vacantly at nothing for hours."

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Somali refugee living in the Netherlands ⁹

in their new country. This could happen while traveling back home, or in their new country itself. Western countries often have difficulties discovering the locations where these actions take place, making action difficult.

Another factor that adds to the complexity of this issue is the neo-colonial debate. Campaigns in the West have been known to depict FGM as a barbaric act or as a sign that parents do not love nor protect their children. It is therefore important to be nuanced and careful when taking action. Women are also often presented as the victims of men, hereby supporting the idea of a sexist and violent society. The issue is however more complex. Still, FGM can not be seen separate from patriarchal societies².

Making FGM a criminal offence, as has been done in multiple countries, can lead to the practice being continued out of the sight of the government. This can cause the procedure to be conducted in less hygienic circumstances. Scared of persecution, family members or others involved will also be more hesitant to bring girls or women to the hospital or a doctor in case something goes wrong. Making or maintaining the procedure a recognized medical one, the other side of the spectrum, can also be risky since the procedure does always come with risks of complications⁸.

Religious leaders could be an obstacle, but they could also be an ally². They can have a lot of influence on communities, and it is therefore important to have them join the fight against FGM.

Many countries do not have an effective national policy on the role of local authorities in tackling FGM. This increases the difficulty for advocacy work done by funded groups⁸.

In order to reach girls living in the West but

originating from FGM-practicing countries, the participation of schools is necessary.

Schools have however been known to express resistance concerning working on this topic. Different schools stated that they did not want to address the issue for fear of stigmatizing certain groups of students. The same issue was addressed in other settings, especially those with a less diverse audience⁸.

THE FUTURE

Promising initiatives

As mentioned above, the fight against FGM has already begun. Apart from action taken by the United Nations and affiliated organs, there are also a number of other noteworthy initiatives.

One of these is a clitoral restoration surgery, also known as FGM repair. The technique for this surgery was developed by a French doctor during the 1980s. The procedure is now conducted in multiple countries. The surgeons hereby move the internal part of the clitoris outwards, reposition it, and repair the nerves. The procedure can help the women regain feeling in the area, but because of its recent development doctors are not yet decided about its long-term advantages for women. The procedure is also not a magical solution for the sexual issues these women can face, nor is it a necessity for cut women to enjoy their sexuality².

Community-based preventive work is showing results, as it seems to be able to increase the rejection of FGM.

Increased funding of anti-FGM projects has led to a larger awareness of FGM and to a better understanding of what works concerning tackling FGM, especially in Europe (which was the focus of the research). It has also led to the maturing of arguments that can be used against FGM in discussions and debates.

Research has shown that a focus on younger women to empower them to speak out has more effect than trying to convince the elder generations. It has however also shown the need for an integral approach. FGM prevention requires multiple stakeholders working together at a local level. The role of community groups should not be underestimated.

Projects have brought together male and female religious leaders and scholars of different faiths to confront them with misconceptions about FGM. This has left us with clear examples of religious leaders dismissing the perceived religious basis for FGM⁸.

Difficulties

Despite promising initiatives, local statutory responses to FGM prevention are largely patchy and inadequate, and do not usually reflect local levels of need. Most project areas had policies in place, but these were not always translated into concrete actions, such as the training of social care or health professionals concerning issues related to FGM⁸.

Another difficulty can be seen in the increase of genital plastic surgery. More and more women undergo genital cosmetic surgery for non-medical reasons. These procedures sometimes look a lot like FGM: the labia majora or minora are reduced in size or the opening of the vagina is made smaller. While the difference might seem

that these women choose this procedure voluntarily, we might question whether this really is the case. Women might feel required to do so as a consequence of societal or peer pressure, thereby visibly reducing the gap with FGM².

A particular difficulty in certain Western countries, e.g. Belgium, is that the laws on genital mutilation are directed only at 'female' children. The Belgian law prohibits non-medical genital procedures. In exceptional cases the gender of the child might however not be clear upon birth. These children might require genital surgery, a surgery that is in that case not legal if the child is considered to be a girl².

In general the difficulty remains to get everyone on board. Up to now this has shown to be an issue, as even areas that have made progress still count people who continue to support FGM, possibly making speaking out against the procedure difficult⁸.

POINTS RESOLUTIONS SHOULD ADDRESS

- What actions can be taken to increase prevention of FGM in the 'traditional' FGM countries?
- Which actions should be undertaken to stop FGM from happening to migrant girls and women?
- What role could religious leaders play in this debate? How can their effect be optimized?
- What initiatives on preventing FGM deserve more support? Are there initiatives that should be stopped?
- Should FGM be criminalized, or is it better to make the procedure legal or at least tolerate it?

- How can we optimize support to women who have already undergone FGM?
 - A/RES/71/168
 - A/HCR/RES/27/22
 - ...
- Should all genital procedures on women and girls be forbidden? If no, how do we make sure that laws conserving genital surgeries are not just targeting those belonging to a certain religious or cultural group?
- Should the West increase its presence 'on the field' in traditional FGM countries? If yes, how should it do so without actions being considered as neo-colonial?
- Should there be more attention to FGM in school curricula and the media? If yes, how would you do this without stigmatizing certain groups?

FURTHER READING

- Female Genital Mutilation & Asylum in the European Union, rapport by UNHCR, 2014:
<http://www.unhcr.org/53187f379.html>
- Good practices in combating female genital mutilation, rapport by EIGE, 2013:
<http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Good%20practices%20in%20combating%20female%20genital%20mutilation.pdf>
- FGM and asylum in Europe, Forced Migration Review, 2015:
<http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/climatechange-disasters/FGM.pdf>
- UN resolutions:
 - A/RES/67/146
 - E/CN.4/Sub.2/RES/2003/28
 - A/HRC/DEC/24/117
 - A/HRC/RES/32/21,

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Topic A

1. The Columbia Encyclopaedia, Sixth Edition (2001)
2. Shaheen, Kareem. "Revealed: the Terror and Torment of Turkey's Jailed Journalists." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 23 Mar. 2017, www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/23/turkish-journalists-solitary-confinement-maltreatment-jail.
3. Toor, Amar. "Two-Thirds of the World's Internet Users Live under Government Censorship." *The Verge*, The Verge, 14 Nov. 2016, www.theverge.com/2016/11/14/13596974/internet-freedom-decline-global-censorship-facebook-whatsapp.
4. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Multilingual Edition)*, Sept. 2016, pp. 1–5., www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf.
5. UN, News Centre. "On World Press Freedom Day, UN Says Free Expression Vital for Global Sustainability." *UN News Center*, United Nations, 3 May 2015, www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50755#.WbjbFsaQ2CQ.
6. "10 Most Censored Countries." *Committee to Protect Journalists*, Committee To Protect Journalists, cpj.org/2015/04/10-most-censored-countries.php.
7. "The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Part II_2." *HR-Net*, Hellenic Resources Network, www.hri.org/docs/turkey/part_ii_2.html#article_28.
8. *Saudi Arabia's Constitution of 1992 with Amendments through 2005*. Authorhouse, 2017, www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Saudi_Arabia_2005.pdf.
9. Newth, Mette. "The Long History of Censorship." *Beacon for Freedom*, www.beaconforfreedom.org/liste.html?tid=415&art_id=475.
10. "History of Censorship Timeline." *Preceden*, www.preceden.com/timelines/174747-history-of-censorship-timeline.
11. "Destroying Most Records of the Past Along with 460, or More, Scholars (213 BCE – 206 BCE)." *History of Information*, www.historyofinformation.com/expanded.php?id=2889.
12. Hays, Jeffrey. "EARLY HISTORY OF CONFUCIANISM." *Facts and Details*, factsanddetails.com/china/cat3/sub9/item89.html.
13. Weibull, Lennart. "Freedom of the Press Act of 1766." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 21 Dec. 2015, www.britannica.com/topic/Freedom-of-the-Press-Act-of-1766.
14. "Bill of Rights." *Bill of Rights Institute*, www.billofrightsinstitute.org/founding-documents/bill-of-rights/.
15. "Nazi Propaganda and Censorship." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007677.
16. Xu, Beina, and Eleanor Albert. "Media Censorship in China." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 17 Feb. 2017, www.cfr.org/china/media-censorship-china/p11515.
17. Shanghai, Orlando Crowcroft in. "How China Is Winning Its War against Internet Freedom." *International Business Times UK*, International Business Times UK, 9 May 2016, www.ibtimes.co.uk/behind-great

- firewall-china-winning-its-war-against-internet-freedom-1558550.
18. "2017 World Press Freedom Index | Reporters Without Borders." *RSF, Reporters Without Borders*, rsf.org/en/ranking.
 19. Staff, RFA. "China Holds 23 Journalists, 84 Bloggers in 2015: Press Freedom Report." *Radio Free Asia*, Radio Free Asia, 21 Apr. 2016, www.rfa.org/english/news/china/china-journalists-12302015120019.html.
 20. Mas, Susana. "Canada Expressed 'Dissatisfaction' over Chinese Minister's Scolding of Journalist, PM Says." *CBCnews*, CBC/Radio Canada, 3 June 2016, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-chinese-foreign-minister-reporter-1.3614476.
 21. Nhan, Vi L. "Media in China: Methods of State Control." *The Orator*, students.washington.edu/nupsa/Docs/Volume3/Vi_L_Nhan_Media_in_China.pdf+.
 22. Denyer, Simon. "China's Scary Lesson to the World: Censoring the Internet Works." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 23 May 2016, www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/chinas-scary-lesson-to-the-world-censoring-the-internet-works/2016/05/23/413afe78-fff3-11e5-8bb1-f124a43f84dc_story.html.
 23. "Turkey." *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House, freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/turkey.
 24. ARSU, DAN BILEFSKY and SEBNEM. "Charges Against Journalists Dim the Democratic Glow in Turkey." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 4 Jan. 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/01/05/world/europe/turkeys-glow-dims-as-government-limits-free-speech.html?pagewanted=all.
 25. "Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights." *Human Rights Documents Online*, www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.
 26. "Penal Code of Turkey." *Criminal Codes - Legislationline*, www.legislationline.org/documents/section/criminal-codes/country/50.
 27. Ellis, Robert. "In Turkey, Press Freedom Has Now Hit an All-Time Low Thanks to Erdogan." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 7 Mar. 2016, www.independent.co.uk/voices/in-turkey-erdogan-has-just-made-sure-that-press-freedom-hit-an-all-time-low-a6917206.html.
 28. Jovanovski, Kristina. "Opposition Journalists in Turkey Face Decades in Jail as Media Crackdown Intensifies." *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 24 July 2017, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/07/24/turkey-opposition-journalists-face-decades-jail-media-crackdown/.
 29. "Turkey Is Sending Its Journalists to Prison." *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, 10 May 2016, www.economist.com/news/europe/21698472-after-forcing-out-his-prime-minister-president-erdogan-muzzles-press-turkey-sending-its.
 30. Sozeri, Efe Kerem. "Turkey's President Ramps up Censorship amid Post-Coup Purge." *The Daily Dot*, 4 Aug. 2016, www.dailydot.com/layer8/turkey-erdogan-coup-censorship/.
 31. Wong, Julia Carrie. "Social Media May Have Been Blocked during Turkey Coup Attempt." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 15 July 2016, www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/15/turkey-blocking-social-facebook-twitter-youtube.
 32. Gumrukcu, Tuvan, and Humeyra Pamuk. "Turkey Suspends 13,000 Police Officers,

Shuts down TV Station.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 4 Oct. 2016, www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-police/turkey-suspends-13000-police-officers-shuts-down-tv-station-idUSKCN12408Z.

33. “Turkey: Journalism Is Not a Crime.” *A Prison of Silence - the Death of Journalism in Turkey*, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/02/free-turkey-media/.
34. Emmott, Robin. “Turkey Failing on Rights, Press Freedoms, European Parliament Says.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 14 Apr. 2016, uk.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-turkey-rights-idUKKCN0XB1RK.
35. Saktanber, Binnaz. “‘Cease and Censor’ in Turkey’s War on Social Media.” *ROAR Magazine*, 11 Jan. 2016, roarmag.org/essays/turkey-social-media-twitter-facebook/.
36. *Single View News | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*, www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/un_general_assembly_adopts_resolution_on_journalist_safety_and_proclaims_2_november_as_international_day_to_end_impunity/#.WAj60uB9600.
37. Hickey, Shane. “Singapore Libraries to Destroy Copies of Gay Penguin Book.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 12 July 2014, www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/12/singapore-libraries-pull-gay-penguin-book.
38. Kravets, David. “Internet Safe From Globalized Censorship as UN Treaty Fails.” *Wired*, Conde Nast, 3 June 2017, www.wired.com/2012/12/united-nations-internet/.
39. Soutphommasane, Tim. “PEN Essay 2014/ Freedom of speech and Australia’s Racial

Discrimination Act.” *PEN Melbourne*, 12 July 2014, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/opinions/pen-essay-2014-freedom-speech-and-australia-s-racial-discrimination-act>

Topic B

1. World Health Organization. Female genital mutilation. WHO. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>. Published 2017. Accessed September 19, 2017.
2. Gezamenlijke Strategie VGV, Gelijke Kansen in Vlaanderen, GAMS Belgique-België. *Vrouwelijke Genitale Verminking. Een Aantal Mythes Onder de Loep.*; 2016. http://www.strategiesconcertees-mgf.be/wp-content/uploads/VGV-eeen-aantal-mythes-onder-de-loep_web.pdf. Accessed September 19, 2017.
3. Orchid Project. How Genital Cutting affects Girls and Women Throughout Their Lives. http://orchidproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/LifeLongEffects_WE_B-01.jpg. Accessed September 19, 2017.
4. End FGM. Types of FGM. <http://www.endfgm.eu/female-genital-mutilation/what-is-fgm/>. Accessed September 19, 2017.
5. Fgm | www.imgarcade.com - Online Image Arcade! <http://imgarcade.com/fgm.html>. Accessed September 20, 2017.
6. UNICEF Global Database 2014, GAMS Belgium. Prevalence of FGM. http://menspeakout.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Carte-MGF_couleurs.jpg. Accessed September 19, 2017.
7. UNHCR. UNHCR - Too Much Pain - A Statistical Update (March 2014). <http://www.unhcr.org/53187f379.html>. Accessed September 19, 2017.
8. Options UK. *Tackling Female Genital Mutilation in the UK: What Works in Community-Based Prevention Work.*; 2013. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/FGM-summary.pdf>. Accessed September 20, 2017.
9. Hirsi Ali A. *Infidel*. Free Press; 2008. https://books.google.be/books/about/Infidel.html?id=a0qTQIxxHaYC&redir_esc=y. Accessed September 19, 2017.