

## **P7\_TA(2012)0261**

### **Female genital mutilation**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 14 June 2012 on ending female genital mutilation (2012/2684(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the reports submitted under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol thereto, and to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
  - having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2009 on combating female genital mutilation in the EU<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the report of the UN Secretary-General of 5 December 2011 entitled ‘Ending female genital mutilation’,
  - having regard to the EPSCO Council Conclusions of 8 March 2010 on the eradication of violence against women in the European Union, which call for an international approach to fighting female genital mutilation,
  - having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 12 April 2011 on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence,
  - having regard to the EU Guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them, adopted by the General Affairs Council of 8 December 2008,
  - having regard to its resolution of 5 April 2011 on priorities and outline of a new EU policy framework to fight violence against women<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 18 April 2012 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World and the European Union’s policy on the matter, including implications for the EU’s strategic human rights<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 110(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas female genital mutilation is an irreparable abuse that intentionally alters or causes injury to female genitals for non-medical reasons, with irreversible consequences which affect 140 million women and girls alive today, and whereas a further three million girls are at risk of undergoing the procedure each year;
- B. whereas at least 500 000 women and girls in Europe are living with female genital mutilation and an estimated 180 000 girls are at risk, according to the WHO; whereas,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 117\_E, 6.5.2010, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0127.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0126.

according to experts, these figures are underestimated and do not take into account second-generation or undocumented migrants;

- C. whereas any form of female genital mutilation is a harmful traditional practice that cannot be considered part of a religion, but is an act of violence against women and girls which constitutes a violation of their fundamental rights, particularly the right to personal security and integrity and physical and mental health, and of their sexual and reproductive health, while also constituting child abuse in the case of girls who are minors; whereas such violations can under no circumstances be justified on grounds of respect for cultural traditions of various kinds or for initiation ceremonies;
  - D. whereas, as well as being in itself a violation of human rights, female genital mutilation causes very serious and irreparable injuries in the short and long term to the physical and mental health and rights of the women and girls who undergo it, constituting a grave assault on their person and integrity, and in some cases can even be fatal; whereas the use of rudimentary instruments and the lack of antiseptic precautions have further harmful effects, such that sexual intercourse and childbirth may become painful, the affected organs are irreparably damaged and there may be complications such as haemorrhaging, shock, infection, transmission of the AIDS virus, tetanus, benign tumours and serious complications affecting pregnancy and childbirth;
  - E. whereas female genital mutilation is an expression of unequal power relations and a form of violence against women, alongside other serious forms of gender-based violence, and whereas it is absolutely necessary to embed the fight against female genital mutilation in a general and coherent approach to combating gender-based violence and violence against women;
1. Welcomes the decision of the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women of 8 March 2012 that the issue of female genital mutilation should be taken up by the United Nations General Assembly at its forthcoming 67th session;
  2. Calls upon the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution at its 67th session with a view to ending female genital mutilation worldwide – as requested by the African Union Summit on 1 July 2011 – by harmonising the action taken by member states and issuing recommendations and guidelines for the development and strengthening of regional and international legal instruments and national legislation;
  3. States that, since female genital mutilation is mostly performed on young girls between infancy and 15 years of age, it constitutes a violation of the rights of the child; reiterates that all 27 Member States have committed themselves to protecting children's rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
  4. Calls on the Member States to continue to ratify international instruments and implement them through comprehensive legislation that prohibits all forms of female genital mutilation and provides for effective sanctions against the perpetrators of this practice; notes that legislation should also mandate a full range of prevention and protection measures, including mechanisms to coordinate, monitor and evaluate law enforcement, and should improve the conditions permitting women and girls to report cases of female genital mutilation;
  5. Calls upon the relevant UN entities and civil society, through the allocation of appropriate

financial resources, actively to support targeted, innovative programmes and to disseminate best practices that address the needs and priorities of girls in vulnerable situations, including those subjected to female genital mutilation, who have difficulty accessing services and programmes;

6. Requests the UN Secretary-General to ensure that all relevant UN organisations and bodies, in particular the UN Children's Fund, the UN Population Fund, the World Health Organisation, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the UN Development Fund for Women, the UN Development Programme and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, individually and collectively, incorporate the protection and promotion of the rights of girls not to be subjected to female genital mutilation into their country programmes, as appropriate, and in accordance with national priorities, in order to step up further their efforts in this regard;
7. Emphasises the need to support members of civil society, in particular women's organisations, working within their communities to end violence against women, including female genital mutilation;
8. Urges the Commission to ensure that measures aimed at combating gender-based violence and promoting the empowerment of women are mainstreamed in all EU development policies and programmes through its 2010 Gender Action Plan; stresses the importance of awareness-raising, community mobilisation, education and training, and of involving national, regional and local authorities and civil society in partner countries; points out that efforts to eliminate attitudes and harmful practices that negatively affect girls will succeed only with the full involvement of all key actors, including religious and community leaders and those working directly with girls, including parents, families and communities;
9. Urges the Commission to give specific attention to female genital mutilation as part of an overall strategy for combating violence against women, including joint action against female genital mutilation;
10. Urges the Commission to make it a priority to end violence against women and girls and, through the allocation of appropriate financial resources, to support targeted and innovative programmes both within the EU and in third countries;
11. Urges the Member States to take firm action to combat this illegal practice;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the UN Secretary-General and the Member States.