

AkiDwa statement following FGM trial sentencing

AkiDwa's response statement to the sentencing judgment released on Monday 27th January 2020

In the wake of the news that a married couple has been found guilty of the crime of procuring an act of FGM on their daughter in September of 2016, AkiDwa, an organisation which has been working on the issue of FGM on the island of Ireland since 2001 has said that this is a step in the right direction.

While we are saddened by the circumstances which led to this ruling, the sentencing judgement by an Irish court today has sent a very strong message to anyone who might subject their daughters to FGM in Ireland. This conviction has set a precedent that Ireland does not condone the practice of FGM. AkiDwa's advocacy efforts over the last two decades have mainly focused on prevention and eliminating FGM globally. The hidden nature and the fact that it involves women and girls private body parts make it very hard to detect and control. However, the consequences of FGM are life threatening and they can affect a woman throughout her life. It is also a violation of a woman's human rights because there's no medical justification for this practice. AkiDwa has and will continue to advocate and engage with affected communities as well as raise awareness at all levels of the society.

We believe it is crucial that policymakers show leadership in engaging with affected communities to prevent such a crime from happening to another girl again. The founder of AkiDwa, Salome Mbugua, said "a Government-led National Action Plan and inter agency working group is highly needed in Ireland to ensure effective coordination and monitoring". According to the current statistics on prevalence of FGM Ireland, there are an estimates 5,795 women and girls living in Ireland who have been subjected to FGM, and according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) as many as 1,632 girls in Ireland are at risk of FGM.

About AkiDwa

AkiDwa is a charity formally known as Akina Dada wa Africa (Swahili for sisterhood). Established in Dublin in 2001, AkiDwa has been representing migrant women in Ireland for almost two decades by providing policymakers with the unique perspective of a migrant-led national women's organisation. AkiDwa takes a holistic approach to integration that involves promoting both a migrant and a gender-specific approach to public services and by encouraging migrant women to access mainstream services and initiatives. We promote equality and justice for all migrant women in Ireland by ensuring equal opportunities and equal access to resources for all.

Policy Recommendations for General Election 2020

AkiDwa and members of the National Steering Committee (NSC) on FGM are calling on all candidates of the February 2020 General Election to work to eliminate FGM in Ireland by committing to the following five actions:

1. Establish an intergovernmental working group including the relevant government departments, civil society actors, frontline services and representatives from affected communities.
2. Develop a National Action Plan on FGM as part of the programme for government, which would outline and coordinates response of governmental agencies, funding to support anti-FGM programmes and key targets and indicators to measure progress towards eradication.
3. Establish funding for a network of Community Health Ambassadors who would work with affected communities, including youth and religious groups and men, in order to change attitudes to FGM at a grassroots level.
4. Implement fully Ireland's obligations under the Istanbul Convention, promoting a holistic and integrated approach in relation to violence against women and FGM.
5. Support the training for all professionals and services providers working with FGM-affected communities, including, for example, healthcare professionals, social workers, Gardaí and those working with asylum seekers.

FGM at a glance

Female genital mutilation comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. (Source WHO, 2008)

World Health Organization Classification (2007)

Type I — Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce (clitoridectomy).

Type II — Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (excision).

Type III — Narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and appositioning the labia minora and/or the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation).

Type IV — All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, for example: pricking, stretching, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterization.

NB: These classifications are for medical purposes only and do not indicate level of severity or harm caused. All forms of FGM can have immediate and life-lasting consequences for a girl's health and psychological wellbeing.