

# Support a Comprehensive Plan to Address FGM

**From: The Honorable Joseph Crowley (D-NY)**

**Date: 5/8/2014**

Dear Colleague,

We urge you to join us on a letter calling for key leaders in the Administration to coordinate a comprehensive plan focused on bringing an end to the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) inflicted on American girls, as well as strongly support efforts to protect girls throughout the world.

FGM is a harmful traditional practice carried out mostly on minors. It is estimated that 125 million girls and women around the world have undergone genital mutilation, and that 30 million more are at risk – including girls here in the United States. By one early estimate, nearly 70,000 women and girls in the United States are in danger of being subjected to FGM. Disturbingly, American girls have been transported abroad to countries where FGM is prevalent and where they are forced to undergo FGM, often during their school summer breaks.

Over the past decade, a number of countries have begun adopting and supporting vigorous, proactive practices to help end FGM, including in the United Kingdom, where a strong effort to protect girls and end impunity for those who carry out or facilitate the practice has included a national hotline for those in danger. Furthermore, efforts to help bring an end to FGM overseas not only protects girls in those countries, but also helps end conditions in places where American girls are sent and subjected to FGM.

A number of leaders and agencies have a role to play in a comprehensive approach to ending FGM once and for all, and we hope you will join our letter urging them to develop and carry out such a plan.

To join the letter, please contact Jeremy Woodrum with Rep. Crowley at [jeremy.woodrum@mail.house.gov](mailto:jeremy.woodrum@mail.house.gov) or Shashrina Thomas with Rep. Jackson Lee at [Shashrina.thomas@mail.house.gov](mailto:Shashrina.thomas@mail.house.gov)

Sincerely,

Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

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May \_\_\_\_\_, 2014

The Honorable Eric Holder  
Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary, U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

The Honorable Rajiv Shah  
Director, U.S. Agency for International Development  
1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20523

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell  
Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Executive Office of the President  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Attorney General Holder, Secretary Kerry, Secretary Sebelius, Secretary Duncan,  
Administrator Shah and Director Burwell,

We thank you for your efforts to promote the rights of women and girls in the United States and globally and urge you to establish and fund a national and international strategy on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). With strong leadership, ending the practice of FGM within a generation is not only a compelling cause, but an achievable goal.

FGM is a harmful traditional practice carried out on an estimated 125 million girls and women around the world. Approximately 30 million women and girls remain at risk of FGM – including girls here in the United States. Specifically, by a now-dated 1997 estimate, nearly 70,000 women and girls in the United States are in danger of being subjected to FGM, and, disturbingly, all too many American girls have been transported abroad where they are forced to undergo

FGM, often during their school summer breaks. We are in contact with young women across the US who have been subjected to FGM and are calling for our help to end the practice.

In recent years, the United States has played an increasingly diligent role in helping to address and prevent FGM globally. This includes the State Department's strong work on the adoption of a United Nations General Assembly resolution that called for countries to develop national strategies to end FGM – including an end to impunity for those who carry out the practice. Recognizing that FGM is an irreparable, irreversible abuse that violates the human rights of women and girls, the UNGA resolution is a groundbreaking move.

Further, Congress adopted the language of the Girls Protection Act, a measure providing legal protections for American girls who could be transported abroad for the purposes of FGM. This new legislation sets an example for other countries and sends a clear message to all that performing FGM on a minor carries serious legal consequences.

Now, we urge you to develop and carry out a comprehensive plan to implement the General Assembly resolution and the Girls Protection Act. This includes educating law enforcement, medical professionals, social workers, teachers and others in contact with girls at risk for FGM so that they are aware of legal protections and supported in their efforts to intervene on girls' behalf. It also includes considering an emergency hotline for girls and their allies seeking assistance in avoiding preventable FGM, as well as a clear and understandable plan of action for girls who may be at risk. And, we ask you to compile data on women and girls in the US that have been subjected to FGM as well as girls at risk of being subjected to FGM.

Just as a comprehensive strategy should make available resources for community members seeking to end the practice, we believe it should include a budget reflecting a plan to end FGM globally once and for all – not only saving the lives of women throughout the world, but helping eliminate the practice in places where American girls are being transported and forcibly subjected to the procedure. Lessons can be drawn from ongoing efforts to stop FGM, including in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, where the government, in collaboration with FGM survivors, is taking strong action.

We believe that your government agencies can contribute to and lead this joint, comprehensive effort. We look forward to working with you and stand ready to lend our assistance in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Cc: Susan Rice, National Security Advisor  
Cecilia Muñoz, Domestic Policy Council Advisor  
Tina Tchen, White House Council on Women and Girls