

Press Releases: Observance of the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
February 6, 2018

February 6 marks the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C). The United States stands in solidarity with governments and communities around the world working to end this human rights abuse.

According to UNICEF, at least 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone some form of FGM/C. If current trends continue, an additional fifteen million girls are at risk of being subjected to the practice by 2030. Although it is illegal in most countries, FGM/C is often performed in communities where the value and status of women and girls lags behind that of men and boys.

The United States partners with a broad range of stakeholders—from policymakers and health practitioners to religious leaders and youth activists—to work against FGM/C and to raise awareness of the harm it causes to societies. U.S. Department of State officials continue to engage diplomatically with host governments and through bilateral and multilateral partners to end this practice. In 2017, the Department contributed \$5,000,000 to UN efforts combatting FGM/C, and its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices include country-by-country information on the prevalence of the practice and international efforts taken to combat it.

Building on investments made in previous years to address the problem, we continue to advance initiatives to support survivor-centered programs in countries where FGM/C is most prevalent. The Department's programs promote the abandonment of FGM/C and work with communities and civil society organizations to increase their capacity to implement laws and legislation prohibiting it. This fiscal year, USAID is launching a three-year pilot activity in Kenya aimed at combatting FGM/C and child marriage by tackling the root causes and social motivators that drive these practices, including

women's lack of agency, unresponsive health services, inactive protection networks, and limited economic opportunities for women and girls.

The advancement of women and girls is essential to peace, prosperity, and security. We remain committed in our efforts to combat all forms of gender-based violence, including FGM/C. Today, we renew the call for zero tolerance to end this harmful procedure that affects women and girls in far too many places across the globe.

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