

# UN urges renewed fight to end female genital mutilation as populations grow in countries where practice occurs

6 February 2017 – Female genital mutilation denies women and girls their dignity and causes needless pain and suffering, with consequences that endure for a lifetime and can even be fatal, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has said, stressing that the UN Sustainable Development Agenda promises an end to this practice by 2030.

“On this Day of Zero Tolerance, let us build on positive momentum and commit to intensifying global action against this heinous human rights violation for the sake of all affected women and girls, their communities and our common future,” the Secretary-General said in a message on the International Day, marked annually on 6 February to strengthen momentum towards ending the practice of female genital mutilation, globally recognized as a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

Despite a significant overall decline in the prevalence of the practice, widely referred to by the acronym FGM, the United Nations warns that this progress is likely to be offset as the population grows in countries where female genital mutilation is practiced, and without beefed up efforts to eliminate it, more girls will be cut.

In a blog post on the occasion of the International, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of UN Women, wrote: “The cutting and sewing of a young child’s private parts so that she is substantially damaged for the rest of her life, has no sensation during sex except probably pain, and may well face further damage when she gives birth, is to many an obvious and horrifying violation of that child’s rights.”

“It is a kind of control that lasts a lifetime,” she continued. “It makes a mockery of the idea of any part being truly private and underlines the institutionalized way in which decisions over her own body have been taken from that girl – one of some 200 million currently.”

The main reason that FGM continues – as it does in some 30 countries across three continents – is out of a desire for social acceptance and to avoid social stigma, according to a 2016 report by the Secretary-General .

“The hidden nature of the support for ending the practice slows down the process of abandonment,” the authors wrote.

***World must speed up progress to end female genital mutilation by 2030***

Underlining that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 and now heading their second year of implementation, recognized the close

connection between FGM, gender inequality, and development and reignited global action to end the practice by 2030, heads of UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN Population Fund (UNFPA) called for faster action to achieve this commitment.

It means creating greater access to support services for those at risk of undergoing FGM and those who have survived it, said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake and UNFPA Executive Director Babatunde Osotimehin in a joint statement.

It also means driving greater demand for those services, providing families and communities with information about the harm FGM causes and the benefits to be gained by ending it, they added.

Calling on governments to enact and enforce laws and policies that protect the rights of girls and women and prevent FGM, they urged everyone to make this the generation that abolishes FGM once and for all and in doing so, helps create a healthier, better world for all.

UNFPA, jointly with UNICEF, leads the largest global programme to accelerate the abandonment of FGM. The programme currently focuses on 17 African countries and also supports regional and global initiatives.

The theme of the 2017 edition of the International Day is: 'Building a solid and interactive bridge between Africa and the world to accelerate ending FGM by 2030.'

#### ***Colombia: Bringing a hidden practice to light***

In Colombia, for example, some members of the Emberá, a historically impoverished and marginalized indigenous group, continue the practice.

The practice is done quietly, so there are few reliable statistics. The Colombian National Indigenous Organization (ONIC) estimates that two out of three Emberá women have been cut, according to information used by the UNFPA.

But in 2007, after two girls died from infections caused by FGM, some women tribal members began being more vocal about the practice.

In the beginning, it was really difficult, Solani Zapata told UNFPA. Nobody wanted to talk about the subject.

Slowly people began to open up, leading to conversations about related issues, including gender-based violence.

Girls who undergo the practice are less likely to finish school, have limited formal employment prospects and are more likely to be married to an older man and become pregnant early in life.

The practice has since been abandoned in many communities.

We don't do it here anymore, said Amanda Guasiruma Gaisama, in Valle del Cauca. The adults know that if it's done here and something

happens to the girl, there are consequences... We know it is not normal for a girl, even if it's part of a tradition.&#8221

To raise awareness about the negative impact of FGM, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is holding Facebook Live programming all day today. Watch live at [facebook.com/UNFPA](https://facebook.com/UNFPA).

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## **UN Middle East envoy 'concerned' over scheduled vote on Israel's settlement regularisation bill**

6 February 2017 – The top United Nations Middle East envoy today expressed concern about the scheduled vote by the Knesset, Israel's legislative body, on a bill that would &#8220legalize&#8221 Israeli settlements on privately-owned Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank.

&#8220I am concerned by the scheduled vote on the so-called 'Regularisation Bill' as it would enable the continued use of privately-owned Palestinian land for Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank,&#8221 said the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, in a statement.

&#8220If adopted into law, it will have far reaching legal consequences for Israel and greatly diminish the prospects for Arab-Israeli peace,&#8221 Mr. Mladenov added, noting that the bill has been deemed unconstitutional by the Attorney General of Israel and is in contravention of international law.

&#8220I urge Israeli legislators to reconsider this move,&#8221 he stated, stressing that all core issues should be resolved between the parties through direct negotiations on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions and mutual agreements.

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## **Violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state could amount to crimes against humanity – UN special adviser**

6 February 2017 – The scale of violence against the Rohingya community in Myanmar's Rakhine state documented in a recent United Nations human rights

report is a level of dehumanization and cruelty that is revolting and unacceptable, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide said today, underlining the Government's responsibility to ensure that populations are protected.

In a statement, Special Adviser Adama Dieng said the flash report issued last week by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) gave further credibility to allegations that security forces were committing serious human rights violations against civilians in northern Rakhine state from the very beginning of the recent escalation of violence, which was precipitated by attacks on border posts in early October 2016 and the ensuing operations by those forces.

According to the findings contained in the OHCHR report, human rights violations committed by the security forces include mass gang-rape, extra-judicial killings including of babies and young children, brutal beatings and disappearances.

If people are being persecuted based on their identity and killed, tortured, raped and forcibly transferred in a widespread or systematic manner, this could amount to crimes against humanity, and in fact be the precursor of other egregious international crimes, said Mr. Dieng.

This must stop right now! he declared.

***Current panel not a credible option to undertake new investigation***

Mr. Dieng also expressed concern that the commission previously appointed by the Government to investigate the allegations and which, despite having unhindered access to the region, found no evidence, or insufficient evidence, of any wrongdoing by Government forces.

[However,] OHCHR, which was not given access to the area, found an overwhelming number of testimonies and other forms of evidence through interviews with refugees who had fled to a neighbouring country, the Special Adviser added. The existing Commission is not a credible option to undertake the new investigation.

I urge that any investigation be conducted by a truly independent and impartial body that includes international observers, he noted, welcoming the Government's commitment to open an immediate probe.

If the Government wants the international community and regional actors to believe in their willingness to resolve the matter, they must act responsibly and demonstrate their sincerity, Mr. Dieng said.

There is no more time to wait. All of this is happening against the background of very deeply rooted and long-standing discriminatory practices and policies against the Rohingya Muslims and a failure to put in place conditions that would support peaceful coexistence among the different communities in Rakhine state, he concluded.

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## Plane strikes sky lantern, resulting in airport delays

A Kongming lantern, or sky lantern, caused delays at the Beijing Nanyuan Airport on Saturday night after becoming stuck in the engine of an airplane, the airport confirmed on Sunday.

Information about the incident was first released on the Sina Weibo account of a civil aviation maintenance forum on Saturday night, posted along with a photo showing a broken sky lantern on the engine vane of an airliner at the airport.

The airplane eventually took off after checks revealed there was no damage to the aircraft.

With the Lantern Festival approaching, the airport has warned people not to release Kongming lanterns or drones near its runway clear zone.

A Kongming lantern is a small hot-air balloon made of oil paper, which rises into the air due to a small flame warming the air inside and thus lowering the density of the lantern. People release the lanterns to make wishes, especially during the Mid-Autumn Festival and Lantern Festival celebrations.

An aviation professional who declined to be named told Beijing News that sky lanterns, drones and kites pose safety risks to aircraft in runway clear zones, as they can interfere with a pilot's vision or come into contact with aircraft.

Changshui International Airport in Kunming released a statement on Sunday, saying that it had experienced numerous cases involving illegal unmanned flying objects in the airport's runway clear zone recently, adding that its public security department is conducting an investigation into the issue.

According to Legal Evening News, an unmanned drone entered the runway clear zone at Mianyang Nanjiao Airport in Sichuan province on Feb 2, causing three airliners to be diverted and five flights to be delayed. The airport resumed regular services two hours later.

Meanwhile, unmanned flying objects caused delays to departures and arrivals at Shuangliu International Airport in Chengdu on May 28 and Aug 2 last year, the paper reported.

According to China's Civil Airport Regulation, it is illegal to release birds or fly unmanned balloons and other flying objects in an airport's runway clear zone.

Many provinces and regions, such as Yunnan and Beijing, have released

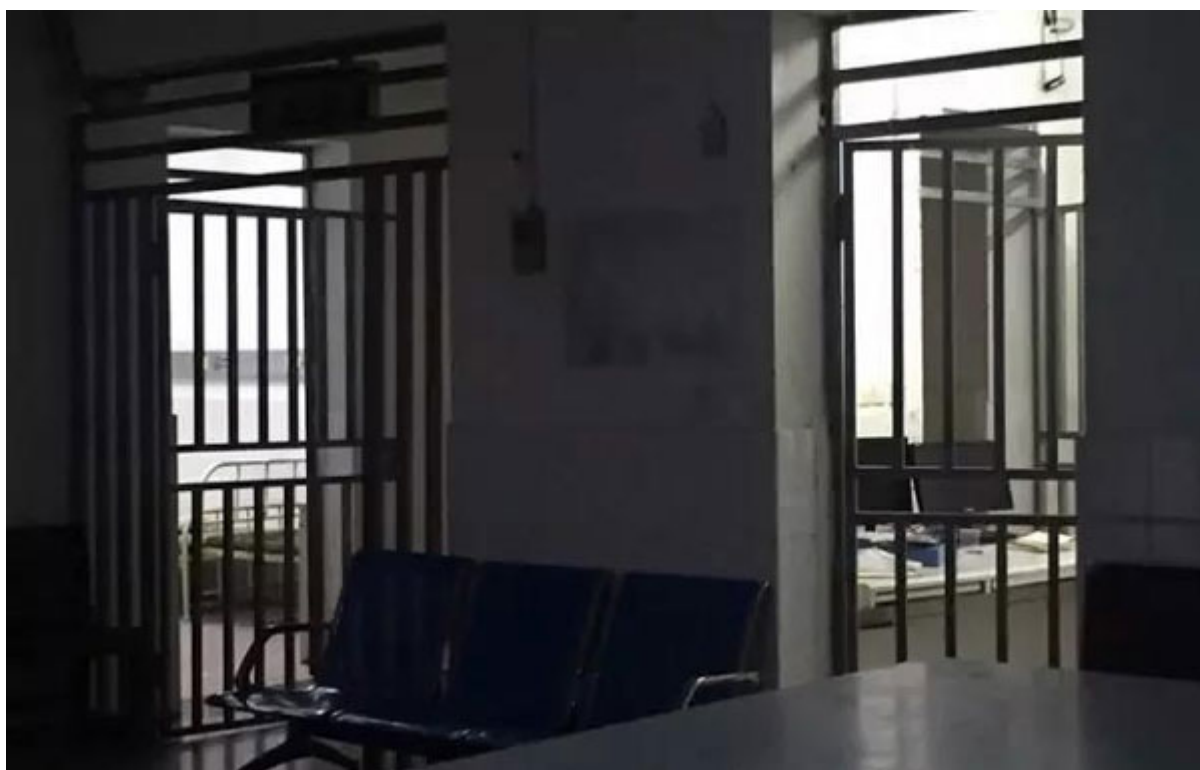
detailed aviation regulations banning the launching of fireworks or the flying of drones and balloons in airports' runway clear zones. Those who violate laws may be fined between 20,000 and 100,000 yuan (\$3,000 and \$15,000).

In January, the Ministry of Public Security released a draft regulation to punish those who violate public orders, which states that those who ignore State regulations on flying all-purpose aircraft, including drones and powered paragliders, or other objects such as balloons, will be taken into custody for five to 10 days. In cases of gross violations, offenders will be taken into custody for 10 to 15 days.

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## [Psychiatrists jump ship along with patients](#)

The Chinese community has been shocked by an outrageous case of psychiatrists "running away" from a hospital, along with 64 patients over the weekend.



File photo of Guihang 300 Hospital. [Photo : cgtm.com]

The Guihang 300 Hospital released an announcement on its official website Saturday, declaring that 64 patients being treated at the hospital had left, led by the director of psychiatry, Yang Shaolei, without informing the patients' families or going through any formal procedures. Meanwhile, 11

other staff members of the psychiatry department had quit before getting official approval by the hospital, the announcement said.

The hospital immediately reported the incident to the police and later confirmed that the psychiatrists and patients had been transferred to Guiyang No.6 Hospital, according to the announcement.

“The hospital believes this is a planned incident that severely infringes on the patients’ guardians’ right to know and choose, maliciously offends the professional integrity of the medical staff, and tramples industry rules for healthy competition...” the hospital said, and it will “hold the involved medical staffers accountable according to the law”.