

# FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

*Patrons: Alice Walker, Lord Kennet, Skin (Skunk Anansie), Baroness Gould*



*Promoting Change,  
Well-Being and  
Human Dignity*

## **A Call for Increased Mobilisation to End Female Genital Mutilation: Let Us Ensure that a Little Sudanese Girl did not Die In Vain.**

**A message from the Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development (FORWARD).**

Dear sisters and all those committed to the elimination of gender based violence and the fulfilment of the universal human rights of girls and women worldwide.

As you may or may not be aware, recently on December 6<sup>th</sup>, another innocent little girl lost her life to the brutality of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The victim was four year old Enaam Abdelwahab from Abu Deleeg in Sudan. The Doctor who was on duty at the hospital to which she was admitted reported that her death was caused by excessive bleeding and blood poisoning resulting from FGM. In a statement to the press he strongly condemned the practice of FGM which resulted in the death of the little girl and said that she had died because: "someone committed [what should be classified as] a criminal act against her, which has nothing to do with culture, religion or tradition".

Whilst sadly such needless deaths are by no means uncommon occurrences, the fact that the incident was widely reported in the Sudanese press is unusual. The pictures circulated of the little girls body, with her pale face contrasting sharply with the red henna on her hands – a sign of celebration for her subjection to FGM, have shattered, at least for the time being, the vicious silence that usually prevails in relation to the issue of FGM. As a result, on December 14<sup>th</sup> a group of Sudanese civil society organisations led by the Sudanese Nurses Union took to the streets in Khartoum to protest against Enaam's death. They marched from the hospital in which she died, to the Ministry of Justice, in order to demand a law specifically banning all forms of FGM in Sudan, a country where an estimated 89 per cent of all women and girls are subjected to FGM, and commonly the most severe form - type 3 which is known as 'Pharonic Circumcision'.

FORWARD commends these organizations for these actions and calls on other groups and individuals in Sudan and elsewhere in their world to demonstrate their solidarity and support and keep up this momentum by making efforts to compliment these actions to eliminate all forms of FGM in Sudan. By working together and acting now we must keep the pressure on the Sudanese government to enact anti-FGM legislation and ensure that little Enaam did not die in vain.

FORWARD asks you to write to the Sudanese Ministry of Justice and the Sudanese Embassy to demand that they pass and enforce a law prohibiting *all* forms of FGM. Remind the Sudanese government of its responsibilities to protect the human rights of girls outlined in numerous International Declarations and Conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Demand that the Government of Sudan lives up to its international obligations and also call upon it to take immediate action to

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ensure that adequate care and support is provided to girls and women who have undergone FGM, and that the necessary steps are taken to protect those who are at risk of FGM.

The requisite 15 African countries have now ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (please can we have a link to this at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2003/20030031.htm>) which has now entered into force. The Protocol affords a historic opportunity for the realization of African girls' and women's human rights, particularly in relation to all forms of gender based violence, and explicitly prohibits FGM. However, the Sudanese government has failed to become party to the Protocol so steps must be taken to encourage the Government of Sudan to take this important step towards the elimination of gender discrimination. Please also write to the Sudanese Embassy in the UK to make these demands and urge them to take a stand against all forms of FGM.

Whilst FGM is internationally recognised as a form of gender based violence and a fundamental abuse of women and girls' human rights, this atrocity continues to be practiced in over 28 countries, and amongst their immigrant populations in other countries. It is estimated that by the year 2010 nearly 210 million women will bear the scars, traumas and risks resulting from FGM. If in Sudan we strike now whilst the issue is still in the public light, this could start a tidal wave of change with other countries in which FGM is practiced acting to protect girls from such a violent assault on their personal freedoms and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Let us bring an end to the death and suffering of girls and women in the name of tradition, culture, religion and 'honour'. Let us make it clear to practicing communities, their national governments and the international community that Female Genital Mutilation can, and must, be stopped NOW.

For your convenience please find attached sample letters with which to write to the Sudanese Ministry of Justice and the Sudanese Embassy, to use if you wish<sup>1</sup>. In order for us to have maximum and immediate effect, please post a hard copy of your letter to the names and addresses on the letters provided, as well as email a copy to the following email addresses:

Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan: [admin@sudanembassy.co.uk](mailto:admin@sudanembassy.co.uk)  
Sudanese Ministry of Justice: [info@sudanjudiciary.org](mailto:info@sudanjudiciary.org)

Please circulate this email to your networks and all those committed to the fulfilment of the human rights of girls and women.

May we take this opportunity to thank you for your time and efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including FGM.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Please send FORWARD a copy of your responses so what we can monitor these lobbying efforts.