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PRESS RELEASE

Statement on International Day against Female Genital Mutilation

06.02.2014

6 February is International Day against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The day has been designated by the United Nations to raise awareness amongst the general public about this traditional practice which not only severely violates the human rights of women and girls but is also harmful to their health.

FGM refers to several types of deeply rooted traditional cutting operations performed on women and girls. Often part of fertility or coming-of-age rituals, FGM is sometimes justified as a way of ensuring chastity and genital "purity". Despite the many unfathomable efforts by various organizations and individuals, the practice of FGM still remains alive, causing many women and girls to suffer from the pain.

Despite its small population, Maldives has also experienced its fair share of FGM, which has to a greater extent been buried in the history. Nevertheless, it is with much regret that we have noticed that some religious scholars in the country have been advocating FGM as a religious requirement. In particular, in the evening of 18 September 2011, on a live program of MNBC Radio, an Islamic scholar conversed, encouraging FGM, and recently the statement made by the Vice President of the Fiqh Academy, Dr. Iyaz Abdul Latheef on MvislamQA.com promoting FGM, is deeply concerning.

Since the FGM is a highly debatable topic and there is no uniform understanding among Islamic scholars on the subject, together with research confirming severe threats to women's health, we are deeply concerned by the above statements by Islamic scholars promoting FGM and in particular, the statement made by Vice President of Fiqh Academy which is an institution established for a very noble cause.

Therefore, on the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation, we bring this to the attention of authorities and call for a respective measure against the statement. We take this opportunity to remind the government and all individuals that women should be allowed to participate and vocalize on an equivalent scale as men and that they should not be discriminated on the grounds of opportunity, and that the respective authorities should take appropriate measures against all levels of violence against women and bring justice to those affected.
