



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

28 May 2024

**Re: Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation
report of the Secretary-General (A/RES/77/195)**

1. We have the honor to respond to your questionnaire concerning female genital mutilation (FGM) in Israel, pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 27/22.
2. The Government of Israel is pleased to inform you that the practice of female genital mutilation, which had been documented in Israel in the distant past, has been eradicated completely in recent years.
3. Female genital mutilation was historically a traditional practice among a small number of Bedouin tribes in the Negev; however, this practice was abolished dozens of years ago. The decline of the tradition was documented in a study published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior in 1995 (Asali A, Khamaysi N, Aburabia Y, Letzer S, Halihal B, Sidovsky M, Maoz B and Belmaker, RH Ritual Female Genital Surgery among Bedouin in Israel, 24:573-577).
4. Following these reports, a study from 2009 examined the changes to the practice of FGM among the Bedouin population in Israel. The study was approved by Helsinki Ethics Committee of the Ben-Gurion University in Israel, and after receiving consent from each patient, Bedouin women under the age of 30 from areas wherein FGM had previously been reported were interviewed and examined for signs indicating female genital mutilation, yet reported no evidence of FGM or minor scarring. The study thus declared that female genital mutilation had been eradicated since the former study.
5. A third study was conducted in 2012 by academics at Ben Gurion University assessing the prevalence of FGM among Israelis of Ethiopian descent. The study found that although FGM was practiced in Ethiopia, the practice was terminated upon the Ethiopian Jewry immigration to Israel.
6. A recent inquiry conducted by different government authorities, including by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs' Unit for the Bedouin community and the Ministry of health, shows that **today, the practice of female genital mutilation has been completely eradicated in Israel.**
7. An inspection by the Ministry of Health with different health facilities in Israel, in particular of health clinics and hospitals in the Negev area, indicates that in the last decade no instances of FGM occurred in Israel. Nonetheless, few cases of FGM were identified during



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the last eight years among Sudanese and Eritrean nationals, which were conducted prior to their entry into Israel.

8. A study that was conducted by Dr. Avinoam Tzabari , Head of Obstetrics & Gynecology Department in Yoseftal Hospital, Eilat, Israel, (A. Tzabari, T.Yampolski, R. Visnovich, M. Grabarnik, S. Raviv, Managing Female Genital Mutilation during Delivery in Yoseftal Hospital), suggests that midwives and obstetricians should be made aware of female genital mutilation issues in obstetrics patients of African descent and the potential complications during delivery. According to this research, making a diagnosis of FGM prior to labor and examining the patients' medical history may significantly reduce the obstetrics complications of Type III FGM.
9. Accordingly, the Ministry of Health is set to conduct training sessions for all medical staff in Israel on the clinical identification of FGM and to train them to examine and identify intentional physical abuse suffered by women, including FGM.
10. Moreover, the Ministry of Health intends to publish updated guidelines and information for medical staff in delivery rooms and Maternal Child Health Clinics, on identifying FGM and emphasizing the importance of early identification, especially before childbirth.
11. Although Israel's *Penal Law 5737-1977* (hereinafter: the "*Penal Law*") does not contain a specific offence of FGM, it provides that committing such an act constitutes harm with aggravated intent according to Section 329(a)(1) of the *Penal Law*.¹ Following a complaint of FGM, the Police would be obligated to initiate an investigation. However, no complaints have been submitted to the Police in the last decade. This crime carries a sentence of up to twenty (20) years imprisonment. Additionally, FGM would amount to grievous harm as defined in Section 34(X) of the *Penal Law*.²
12. A health provider that practices FGM will be subject to the same criminal offence and additionally would be subject to a disciplinary proceeding, in which his/her license to practice medicine can be revoked.

¹ "329. (a) If a person did one of the following with the intention to disable, **disfigure or cause grievous harm to a person**, or in order to resist or prevent his own or another person's lawful arrest or detention, then he is liable to twenty years imprisonment:

(1) he unlawfully wounded or caused a person grievous harm "

² "34(X) "**grievous harm**" - any harm which amounts to dangerous harm, or which seriously or permanently injures or may possibly injure the health or comfort of the person harmed, or which extends to permanent disfigurement or to a **permanent or serious injury to an external or internal organ, membrane or sense.**



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13. In 2019, the High Court of Justice expounded on the issue of FGM, in a precedential ruling which declared that the petitioners, a family of asylum seekers, would be granted refugee status due to their well-founded fear of FGM in their origin country (Rq.Ad.A. 5040/18 *Anonymous v. The Population and Immigration Authority* (10.6.2019)).