

What does the law say?

In Switzerland, the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is illegal.

It can be described as severe bodily harm (Article 122 of Swiss Criminal Code), or even an act endangering the lives and health of other persons (Article 127 of the Swiss Criminal Code). Persons who perform FGM incur penalties ranging from six months to ten years imprisonment. Even in cases when FGM is performed in a foreign country, Swiss criminal law does apply under certain conditions.

International conventions condemn the practice of FGM. In some countries of origin of the victims, FGM is prohibited by law.

What to do?

- › Have you heard of FGM within your family?
- › Are you afraid of going on holiday to your home country?
- › Does a girlfriend confide in you about FGM?
- › Are you a health or educational professional confronted to the issue of FGM?

Feel free to contact a specialised service to speak about what you know or to receive information.

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Female genital mutilation (FGM)

What is female genital mutilation (FGM)?

FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Sometimes FGM is called differently.

Who is concerned by FGM?

Girls and women of all ages and backgrounds, from various countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

On the African continent one in every three women is subject to FGM. Because of international migration, FGM also occurs nowadays in Europe. In Switzerland, an estimated 7 000 women are concerned.

What are the origins of FGM?

It is an ancient practice that appeared before all the current religions. Traditionally, FGM is performed to enable women to be accepted into a social group, meet the group's expectations or achieve a certain social status.

Contrary to popular belief, no religion calls for the practice of FGM. It does not increase fertility and may even make women sterile. FGM has no effect on the fidelity or purity of wives.

What are the consequences of FGM?

FGM has serious immediate and medium-term consequences on physical and psychological health.

Women subjected to FMG suffer of severe pain, bleeding, burns and infections. Other negative effects may be psychological distress or physical complications during sexual intercourse or childbirth.

FGM threatens the health of girls and women.