

Equality Now calls on Mali to take urgent action to protect girls and women from Female Genital Mutilation

Equality Now welcomes the comprehensive and timely report by CEDAW which declares Mali's failure to criminalize Female Genital Mutilation.

NAIROBI, KENYA, July 14, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- By Flavia Mwangovya, End Harmful Practices Global Lead at international women's rights organization [Equality Now](#)

Equality Now welcomes the [comprehensive and timely report](#) by

the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) declaring Mali's failure to criminalize Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The report also notes the resultant impunity, which denies women and girls legal protection from FGM as a violation of their fundamental rights.

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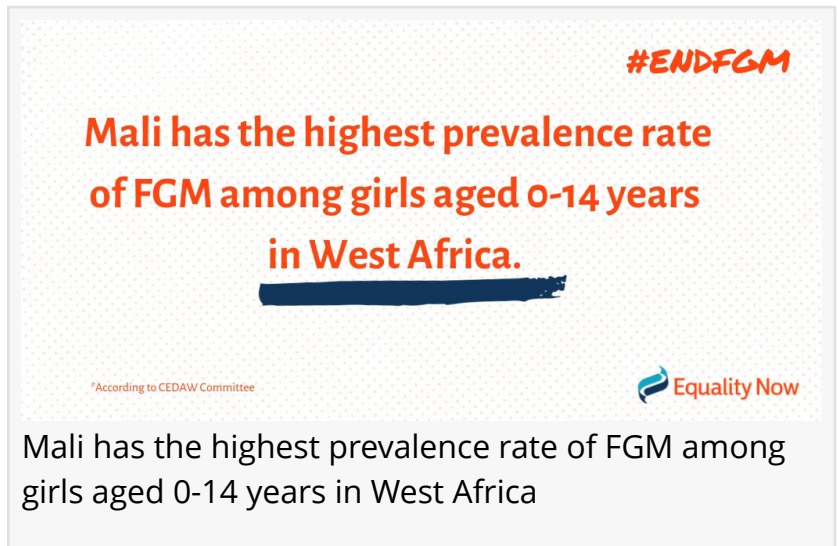
Mali has failed to take a clear stand against FGM and had therefore been unsuccessful in addressing the social, cultural, and religious barriers that impede the elimination of the harmful practice.”

Flavia Mwangovya, Equality Now

We are particularly pleased that the report not only notes the failure of the Malian government to put in place a legal and policy framework against FGM in line with its regional and international obligations but also notes that Mali has not put sufficient efforts in raising awareness on the harmful effects of FGM besides failing to provide victims with remedies and appropriate compensation.

The report was released on June 24, 2020, after the CEDAW Committee visited Mali in December 2018 to conduct a confidential inquiry into allegations by civil society

organizations, including Equality Now, that women and girls in Mali continue to be subjected to FGM, and that there had been little progress in eliminating the harmful practice.



#ENDFGM

Mali has the highest prevalence rate of FGM among girls aged 0-14 years in West Africa.

*According to CEDAW Committee

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The report, further observed that Mali has not criminalized FGM even though it ratified CEDAW without reservations and is therefore obligated to end FGM by enacting the requisite and supportive national legislations. Additionally, the report found that Mali has failed to take a clear stand against FGM and had therefore been unsuccessful in addressing the social, cultural, and religious barriers that impede the elimination of the harmful practice.

The Committee qualifies the violations undergone by women and girls in Mali subjected to FGM as grave and systematic, with at least 76.4 percent of Malian girls having been cut before their 15th birthday while 82.7 percent of women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 have been subjected to FGM causing untold physical and psychological suffering.

The report similarly indicates that Mali has the highest prevalence rate of FGM among girls aged 0-14 years in West Africa. It goes further to sound the alarm on the transnational nature of the practice, noting that girls in neighboring countries, that have laws prohibiting FGM, are taken to Mali where they undergo the cut. The Committee, therefore, urges Mali to take extra measures to collaborate with other countries in the sub-region to eliminate cross border FGM.

This situation has been further aggravated by the fact that since 2012, Mali has had sporadic periods of political and civil unrest. This notwithstanding, the Committee has underscored that Mali has an obligation to uphold and protect the rights of women and girls.

Equality Now strongly urges the government of Mali to urgently take measures to implement the recommendations put forward by the CEDAW Committee which among others include to:

FGM IN MALI

#ENDFGM

Type II FGM (excision) is the most common form of FGM in Mali affecting 48.9 % of women and girls aged between 15 and 49. Type IV (nicking) affects 14.6 % of women and girls and Type III affects 10.6 %.



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End FGM

□ Take immediate steps to criminalize FGM by adopting, without delay, the draft bill on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence and the provision of assistance to victims that criminalizes female genital mutilation;

□ Enhance access to justice by building the capacity of key state actors including magistrates and criminal investigators and ensure women and girls can file complaints and report perpetrators;

□ Provide appropriate specialized care to victims of FGM and strengthen the capacity of relevant actors, such as healthcare providers, who work directly with women and girls;

□ Enhance measures to eliminate gender stereotypes and prevent the stigmatization and discrimination of women and girls who have not undergone FGM;

□ Increase investments towards awareness-raising campaigns against FGM targeting both rural and urban populations and embedded into the school curriculum as a way of fighting stigma and discrimination; and

□ Prioritize and strengthen sub-regional cooperation on ending FGM including through generation of data on good practices to end the practice as well as victim assistance.

Editors' notes:

1. FGM is a human rights violation that involves partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or causes injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is a form of sexual and gender-based violence that is most often carried out on girls between infancy and age 15. However, adult women are also subjected to FGM.

2. There are four types of FGM according to the World Health Organization. Type II FGM ("excision") is the most common form of FGM in Mali affecting 48.9 percent of women and girls aged between 15 and 49. Type IV (nicking) affects 14.6 percent of women and girls and Type III affects 10.6 percent.

3. Furthermore, the report indicates that in 2002, religious leaders blocked the adoption of a bill that would lead to the prohibition of FGM in Mali. Since then, there has been no other attempt by the government to criminalize FGM with the state indicating that a law would make the practice covert.

4. Some people in Mali believe that FGM controls women's sexuality and that uncut women and girls bring shame to their families. It is also believed that having sexual relations with an uncut woman causes impotence.

Equality Now is an international non-governmental, human rights organization that was founded in 1992 to advance the rights of women and girls across the world. The organization holds governments responsible for ending legal inequality, sex trafficking, sexual violence, and harmful practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. While working through various projects, Equality Now champions for legal and systemic change by setting important legal precedents and exposing barriers that hinder access to justice.

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