

Secular Medical Forum challenges Ed Miliband's support for religious circumcision

Posted: Mon, 11th Mar 2013

The Secular Medical Forum has condemned Ed Miliband's recent support for the ritual genital cutting of children and called on the labour leader to rethink his stance on the issue.

On 7 March Ed Miliband told an audience in London that he supports the practices of brit milah – a Jewish religious male circumcision ceremony performed on 8-day-old male infants. In reference to ritual circumcision and kosher animal slaughter, the leader of the Labour party [said](#): "These are important traditions ... ways of life must be preserved".

The removal of a young boy's foreskin is commonly practised in the UK for religious reasons. The Secular Medical Forum (SMF) argues that the operation disregards autonomy and exposes the child to significant risks, including bleeding, infection and death. In a statement, the SMF said it questioned Mr Miliband's support for the "ethically flawed and medically dangerous" procedure.

Anthony Lempert, Chair of the Secular Medical Forum, said; "The first principle of healthcare is 'primum non nocere – first do no harm'. This guidance is disregarded by supporters of ritual circumcision.

"The Secular Medical Forum calls on Mr Miliband to focus squarely on the rights of vulnerable infants and children. Mr Miliband should prioritise the rights of children rather than harmful religious traditions. Mr Miliband should defend the weak, rather than preserve abusive traditions. He should not be misled by misplaced allegations of anti-semitism against those striving to protect children from harm."

In 2012, a German court caused international controversy when it found that parental consent to religious circumcision was in conflict with the best interests of the child, and ruled that parents do not have the right to circumcise their children without a medical reason. Following the court ruling, the government of Angela Merkel introduced legislation permitting the tradition.

A full statement from the Secular Medical Form can be found [here](#).

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