

# Protect all children from genital cutting, international NGO urges

Posted: Thu, 5th May 2022

An international council of experts has called on the United Nations to protect all children from religious and cultural genital cutting.

In a [report](#) supported by the National Secular Society, the International NGO Council on Genital Autonomy (INGOCA) has called on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to work towards "full, equal protection of all minors" from non-therapeutic genital cutting until they are able to make their own decisions about their bodies.

Both female genital cutting (FGM) and male circumcision are frequently performed for religious reasons.

The report said legal measures against genital cutting upon children have "not happened uniformly" and leave large populations of children "wholly unprotected". While it is generally accepted in legislation that genital cutting of girls is unacceptable in all circumstances, circumcision of male children is "almost wholly unrestrained", it said.

The report said the view that genital cutting of a child is a legitimate exercise of parents' religious freedom is a "misconception", as it violates children's own rights to bodily autonomy and freedom to choose a religion or belief identity. It also said the right to manifest beliefs is qualified, and should be restricted if it violates the rights and freedoms of another person.

The report highlighted the many possible harms resulting from circumcision, including pain, trauma, sexual dysfunction and serious complications including death. It added that male circumcision "provides no benefits sufficient to justify it under normal circumstances."

It said all medically unnecessary child genital cutting "violates several provisions" of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, including the right to protection from all forms violence, the elimination of traditional practices harmful to children, and the child's own right to freedom of conscience, belief and religion.

INGOCA's recommendations to the CRC included:

- Recommending state parties to the Convention "adopt or amend legislation" with a view to eliminating child genital cutting.
- An inquiry on all forms of medically unnecessary genital cutting of children and "means to eradicate these practices".
- A resolution that non-therapeutic genital cutting is a breach of children's rights under the Convention, and that member states which permit male genital cutting on children while taking steps to eliminate FGM and intersex genital cutting "breach the male child's right to

freedom from discrimination".

- Giving priority to regular data collection on medically unnecessary genital cutting.

Report co-author Dr Antony Lempert, who is also chair of the NSS Secular Medical Forum, said: "Genital cutting causes often permanent damage to the genitals, violates the child's right to freedom of religion and belief, and fails to extend to the child the minimum personal rights afforded to adults. As such, it constitutes a harm that is neither justifiable within a modern human rights framework, nor authorised by any qualified rights of the parents.

"The disparity in the legal approach to female and male genital cutting is, from a rights and ethical perspective, an unsatisfactory situation, resulting in unequal treatment of vulnerable citizens, discriminatory legislation offering unequal gender protection, and serious breaches of the rights of millions of children annually.

"We therefore urge the CRC to work to ensure all children, whatever their sex, are equally protected from all forms of non-therapeutic genital cutting, whatever the religious or cultural justification".

The NSS is holding a free online event on June 8 to mark the launch of the report – [find and more and book your place.](#)

## Notes

- INGOCCA was established to "promote the consistent application of existing human rights principles that every child is an independent holder of rights, and that all children everywhere should be equally protected from medically unnecessary genital cutting to which they are incapable of consenting."
- INGOCCA includes representatives from four nations and works collaboratively with major national and international human rights NGOs. NSS is a member organisation.

Image: [esudroff, Pixabay.](#)

## Genital cutting and children's rights

Free online event on Wednesday 8 June 2022, 18:00-19:00

- [Book your place for free](#)
- [Find out more](#)

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Genital cutting](#)

## Related Campaigns

- 

### [End forced genital cutting](#)

No child should be subjected to unnecessary genital cutting.

[Read More](#)

## Related Articles

### [NSS address urges UN to call for government action on human rights](#)

Religious privilege is undermining rights of UK citizens, NSS tells UN committee. [Read More »](#)

### [Protect human rights from religious imposition, NSS urges UN](#)

NSS tells UN Human Rights Committee religious privilege is undermining rights in education, healthcare and around free speech. [Read More »](#)

### [Religion should not be a roadblock to child safeguarding in healthcare](#)

A new paper highlights barriers to reforming guidance on non-therapeutic circumcision. The author, Dr Antony Lempert, explains why religion is one of the biggest barriers of all. [Read More »](#)

### [NSS defend mayor ousted for questioning religious circumcision](#)

The National Secular Society has teamed up with a men's health charity to raise concerns after a mayor was ousted... [Read More »](#)

## **NSS speaks out at pro-genital autonomy event**

The National Secular Society has called for an end to all forms of non-consensual religious genital cutting at the... [Read More »](#)