



**STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS
TO MARK THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL
MUTILATION**

6 FEBRUARY 2021

The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, hereinafter referred to as the Commission, created by Law No. 2004/0016 of 22 July 2004,

Considering the resolution No A/C3/67/21/Rev adopted in 2013 by the United Nations' General Assembly declaring 6 February of every year as the International Day of Zero Tolerance to female genital mutilation;

Recalling that this day was set aside as part of the United Nation's effort to eradicate female genital mutilation by amplifying and directing efforts towards its elimination;

Considering the theme of this year's celebration, **“No excuse for global inaction: unite, fund and act to end female genital mutilation”**;

Bearing in mind that female genital mutilation consist of all procedures that involves altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons;

Mindful of the Preamble to the 18 January 1996 Constitution, which provides that, *“every person has a right to life, to physical and moral integrity and to humane treatment in all circumstances. Under no circumstances shall any person be subjected to torture, to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment”*;

Mindful of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which provides that, *“Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed...without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion...”*

Taking into consideration the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol) adopted on 11 July 2003 and in force since 25 November 2005 and ratified by Cameroon on 28 May 2009 which protects women and girls exposed to harmful practices or other form of violence, abuse and intolerance under article 5;

Considering the Convention on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments adopted on 10 December 1984 and ratified on 19 December 1986 which calls on

State parties to take all possible measures to prevent and repress torture and other inhuman or degrading treatments;

Bearing in mind the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its additional protocol, adopted on 18 December 1979 and ratified by the State of Cameroon on the 23 August 1994 and 1 November 2004 respectively, which recommend that State Parties should combat all forms of discrimination on women and eliminate harmful traditional practices and customs;

The Commission notes that there is a global rate of 1.4 to 20 percent of the practice of female genital mutilation in Cameroon, in areas with high prevalence, notably in some localities of the North West, the South West, the Adamawa, the North and the Far North Regions.

The Commission notes that female genital mutilation is a *violation of the physical integrity and the mental health of the woman and the girl child and is therefore a gross Human Rights violation as it reflects the gross gender inequality.*

The Commission takes note of the World Health Organization's 2020 report on the impact of female genital mutilation on women and economies, which states that treating Female genital mutilation cost USD 1.4 billion globally per year if all resulting medical needs are addressed and this amount represents a near 10-30 percent of the entire yearly expenditure on health for some countries.

The Commission notes the impact of female genital mutilation, which can be:

- Physical, manifested in a high level of infection, shock, pain and excessive bleeding;
- Psychological with a heavy toll on the mental health of victims and long-term consequences for their sexual and reproductive health ;
- Socio economical, as it drains on the countries' vital economic resources. The women workforce is considerably reduced.

The Commission commends National effort to combat this practice with:

- the ratification of all legal instruments to fight female genital mutilation by the Government of Cameroon ;
- the criminalization of this act in Article 277 of the Cameroon Penal Code of 2016 ;
- the design and implementation of the National Action Plan to fight against this practice with the objective of reducing the practice by more than 50 percent in 2020;
- the commitment taken by the Government through the Minister of Women Empowerment and the Family in 2020 to step up the fight against this awful act by setting up monitoring brigades, providing support to survivors and creating partnerships with other stakeholders;

The Commission further observes that with the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic, a lot of funds and attention have been redirected to fight this pandemic to the detriment of *this practice* which has witnessed a rise as a result of lack of funding for awareness raising and trainings.

The Commission also regrets to note that there is neither accurate data nor information on the practice of female genital mutilation in Cameroon and *reaffirms* the need for the improvement of data collection and statistics of female genital mutilation for a more appropriate response.

The Commission recommends that Government and Development partners should step up the fight against this practice by setting up more local committees to discourage excision practitioners and by getting them other income generating activities, which will help them earn a living.

The Commission instantly entreats traditional rulers, administrative, local and regional authorities to be more involved in the fight against female genital mutilation for effective results.

The Commission recalls the Amman Declaration of 2012 and its Program of Action in which National Human Rights Institutions pledged to conduct inquiries into and investigate allegations of violations of women's and girls' rights.

The Commission also recalls the Human Rights Council resolution 44/L.20, which called for developing capacity of National Human Rights Institutions to investigate human rights violation related to the practice of female genital mutilation and to monitor progress in preventing and eliminating this harmful practice.

The Commission strongly reaffirms its engagement to spare no effort in promoting a culture of Human Rights through education, awareness raising, advocacy, self-initiated investigations and the treatment of complaints on allegations of violation of Human and Peoples' Rights.

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Créée par la loi n° 2004/016 du 22 juillet 2004, la CNDHL est une institution indépendante de consultation, d'observation, d'évaluation, de dialogue, de concertation, de promotion et de protection des droits de l'homme.

Created by law n°2004/016 of 22nd July 2004, the NCHRF is an independent institution for consultation, monitoring, evaluation, dialogue, concerted action, promotion and protection in the domain of human rights.