

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Forced Marriage: **SERVICES AND ADVOCACY**

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING (FGM/C)

FGM/C is a term used to describe practices that involve the complete or partial removal of, or other injury to, the external female genitalia. These procedures have no health benefits, and the United Nations and the World Health Organization classify FGM/C as a human rights violation.

FORCED MARRIAGE

A forced marriage is a marriage to which one or both parties do not, or cannot, consent and in which one or more elements of force, fraud, or coercion are present. Forced marriage can impact individuals of any age, gender, socio-economic status, national origin, and ethnic or religious background.

INTERSECTION OF FGM/C AND FORCED MARRIAGE

While not all individuals who face forced marriage are also at risk of FGM/C, and not all survivors of FGM/C will experience forced marriage, the two harms can intersect in several ways:

- FGM/C is often considered a prerequisite for getting girls ready to marry—so risk/experience of FGM/C may also indicate risk of future forced marriage.
- Likewise, forced marriage can at times precipitate FGM/C—some individuals may be at imminent risk of FGM/C in preparation for a marriage that they do not want.
- A victim or individual at risk of forced marriage may have already experienced FGM/C in her lifetime and require specialist health services with respect to medical or mental health problems she's experiencing due to the FGM/C.
- A survivor of FGM/C may be in a forced marriage and in need of specialized social or legal services with respect to abuse or other problems she's experiencing in the marriage or for help to leave the marriage.
- In the United States, both types of harm often have an overseas dynamic. Individuals at risk may be taken overseas for the purposes of FGM/C, forced marriage, or both, making it difficult to access help—particularly for those under 18.

Forced Marriage Initiative

HOW WE ASSIST INDIVIDUALS FACING FGM/C AND FORCED MARRIAGE

The Tahirih Justice Center provides free and confidential legal and social services to women and girls facing gender-based violence. We can help with:

Immigration Legal Assistance

- Our offices in Atlanta, Baltimore, Greater D.C., Houston and San Francisco provide free legal services to immigrant women and girls who are at risk of or survivors of FGM/C, forced marriage and other forms of violence.
- Clients receiving immigration representation from Tahirih may also be eligible for social services and family law services.
- Individuals that wish to access Tahirih's services should contact their local office for a screening call.

Forced Marriage Protection

- Our Forced Marriage Initiative (FMI) provides support to individuals from anywhere in the United States that are facing forced marriages, either domestically or overseas.
- Direct legal representation and case management is available to individuals in our local services areas.
- The FMI also provides technical assistance to service providers working with forced marriage survivors. We can assist with risk assessment, safety planning, relocation and preparing for or avoiding imminent travel overseas.
- On a case-by-case basis, the FMI may be able to help individuals from the U.S. that are facing FGM/C even when there is no forced marriage threat. Where we cannot directly assist, we can connect service seekers with other specialist agencies.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For general information and research on FGM/C in the U.S. and around the world:

World Health Organization (www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation)

For U.S. based resources and information on FGM/C:

End FGM/C U.S. Network (www.endfgmnetwork.org)

For Forced Marriage Referrals or Technical Assistance:

571-282-6187 or FMI@tahirih.org

