



December 19, 2017

Honourable Ahmed D. Hussen
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
Government of Canada
365 Laurier Ave.
Ottawa ON, K1A 1L1

Re: Discover Canada Guide

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the members of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) I urge you in the strongest possible terms to ensure that the above-mentioned document continues to make it clear that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in Canada. This practice is an egregious example of violence against women and a violation of the human rights of women and girls and must be stopped whether occurring here in Canada or abroad. It must be clear that this practice is punishable by Canadian law and that any Canadian citizen or permanent resident within the meaning of the Immigration Act who commits such an act outside Canada is also punishable by law.

Health and social service professionals are well aware that children and young girls are frequently taken to their parent's home country to be subjected to FGM. This makes it clear that more education is needed to apprise immigrants and refugees of the seriousness of following this practice. Cultural and attitudinal change is needed if the practice is to be eliminated. It should be noted that this is a cultural practice and not a religious imperative.

NCWC voted to adopt policy to denounce the practice as early as 1992 and further in 1996. It is estimated that at least 200 million women and girls worldwide are subject to this violation of their right to control their own bodies and may suffer health related issues as a result of undergoing FGM.

On December 20, 2012 the United Nations General Assembly unanimously passed a resolution banning FGM. This was a significant milestone towards ending harmful practices that constitute a serious threat to the health of women and girls and a violation of their rights. Goal #5 of the Sustainable Development Goals had already called for the end to FGM by 2030.

Without awareness raising, backed-up by services to victims on the ground working with governments, communities and other partners, any aim to eliminate this harmful practice will not be realized.

I would further request that you ensure that your colleague Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau at Global Affairs Canada/ International Development be encouraged to include this issue as a goal of the department's feminist international assistance policy to advance women's equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Sincerely,



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The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) has been the leading national voice of women for the past 124 years. A plaque has been erected in Allan Gardens in Toronto recognizing the establishment of NCWC as a National Historic Event. NCWC's initiatives have contributed significantly to the establishment of Canada's social welfare system, and the Council continues to work to improve the lives of women, children and society.

cc

Maryam Monsef, Minister Status of Women,
Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister for International Development
Michelle Rempel, Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship
Rachael Harder, Status of Women
Ziad Aboultaif, International Development
Senator Marylou Macphedran
CFUW
Zonta
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Paola Loriggio, The Canadian Press
Elizabeth Renzetti, The Globe and Mail