

Women and the World

Meredith Ann O'Connell



FGM: When Health and Tradition Collide

Imagine having to undergo a medical procedure for which you did not sign up for, which will not cure any current malaise and in fact almost certainly will cause future complications. This procedure, you are told, is a cultural and religious tradition that must be followed, no questions asked. If this sounds scary to you, it is a reality that over 140 million girls and women alive today have faced.

Most acts of violence against women are perpetrated against adults, but there is one type that is directed exclusively at girls from infancy to their teenage years: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). FGM, a procedure the United Nations describes as "altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons," is said to be a religious and cultural tradition that keeps girls "pure." The side effects range from severe bleeding to maiming, urinary tract problems, cysts, pregnancy complications and even death. Every February 6th, the UN calls for an end to this practice with the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.

FGM is practiced by Christians and Muslims in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and even in Indonesia. FGM is not practiced in Bahrain, nor is there any legislation outlawing it. FGM is commonplace in Yemen, Egypt and Iraq, although Egypt banned it in 2007 and Iraqi Kurdistan's government also prohibited the practice. Although the UN does not officially report its presence, studies in the Gulf have reported FGM in parts of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and also the UAE (where FGM is banned in hospitals). A flourishing market has popped up in the Gulf for girls coming from countries where it is practiced, a trend that has also appeared in European nations with large immigrant populations as well as Australia and even the USA.

Although it predates Islam, and is not mentioned in the Qu'ran, FGM is believed to "reinforce" Islamic values, when what it in fact reinforces is gender inequality. One of the main issues with ending FGM is that it is deeply rooted in "culture" and tradition. What right do outsiders, the common argument says, have to change local culture? In communities where FGM is prevalent, any family which decides to forgo this dangerous tradition on their daughters risks having their daughter branded as an outcast and unmarried, an issue which was tackled in the brilliant Senegalese film *Moolaade*.

It may be tradition, but there is more than just gender inequality at stake: young girls' lives are at risk. Is risking their health and happiness that important?

(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this newspaper.)

Bahrain Polytechnic first semester results approved

Manama

Bahrain Polytechnic Acting CEO Dr Mohamed Ebrahim Al Aseeri has approved the exams results of the first semester 2015-2016.

The results will be available on Bahrain Polytechnic website www.polytechnic.bh.

Bahrain Polytechnic's Manager of Enrolments, Progression and Results Huda Al Halwachi said that the period for submitting complaints ends on Wednesday.

She added that the complaint form is available

at the Student Information Centre, Building 8.

She said the students must pay BD20 before 2:30pm and then submit the application before 3:30pm, stressing that no application will be accepted after the deadline.

The 'add' and 'drop' period for the second semester of academic year 2015-2016 will start on February 10 and end on 25th of the same month, she said, adding that students can add and drop courses through the website.

The second semester starts on February 21, 2016.

Shura dismisses EP statements

EP's interference in Bahrain's domestic affairs condemned

DT News Network
news@dt.bh

Manama

The latest remarks made by the European Parliament (EP) about a recent judicial decision taken by a Bahraini court were rejected by both sides of the Kingdom's legislative authority.

A few days after a resolution was passed by the EP on February 4, claiming that Bahrain sentenced a man to death after torturing him, the two poles of the legislative authority, the Council of Representatives and Shura Council, warned the European body of interfering into the domestic affairs of Bahrain.

After the Bahraini Parliament House said it will "discuss the fallacies in the EP report during their weekly meet tomorrow," Shura Council issued an official statement during their weekly



Shura Council Members during their weekly meet yesterday

session yesterday, rejecting and condemning how "the EP is making blatant interference into Bahraini domestic affairs."

Shura Council yesterday highlighted that the reforms achieved under the rule of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa were recognised by the entire international

community. "How could the European community criticise an independent judicial decision, when harsher verdicts were made within the European Council to tackle terrorism," said the council.

Additionally, the House of Representatives said that it would discuss the "fallacies

mentioned in the report of the European Parliament, which will come under Bahraini MPs' lens during their upcoming weekly meet on Tuesday."

The EP criticised the death sentence slapped on a terror suspect who was apparently involved in the killing of a policeman.

Shura Council Member urges efforts to end Syrian crisis

Muhammad Azam/DTNN

Manama

Syria is already bleeding and we don't have the time to just 'wait and see', Shura Council Member Bassam Albinmohamed warned.

He urged the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to lead a coalition of the willing nations to put an end to the Islamic State (IS) and the Syrian crisis.

He was speaking to *DT News* in the aftermath of the reports that Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Turkey were ready to send ground troops to Syria under the US-led campaign against IS extremists.

However, Bahrain's Ambassador to the United Kingdom Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa has

denied the reports by *Reuters* attributed to him. And there is no official statement by the foreign office of Bahrain.

Meanwhile, Albinmohamed said that not acting is not going to help solve the Syrian crisis, rather it would make the things worse.

"It has now become a humanitarian issue. In the last five years, the Syrian regime has killed almost 250,000 people and displaced millions who fled to neighbouring countries," he added.

He said the GCC should lead the coalition, instead of waiting for the US or any other powerful country.

He also said they need to force the United Nations and the international communities to enforce the



Bassam Albinmohamed

Geneva agreement and other UN resolutions for Syria and Yemen.

Meanwhile, Albinmohamed warned that the security and sovereignty of the region were under threat.

"We can't just watch and do nothing about it," he added.

He also said the things that were once predicted by the late Saudi King Abdullah are coming true.

Late King had once warned the international community and many of the region's leaders that if the Syrian crisis was not solved, it would spill over not only to the region, but also to the rest of the world.

"He had said it would also have serious consequences on the security of the world and that is exactly what the world is witnessing now," he said.

He said that Daesh and Syrian regime of Bashar Al Assad had already done irreparable loss and the things would get worse if the world did not act.

"It is time for the whole world to decide whether they want to continue doing nothing other than giving statements or joining hands with those who are determined to do something about it like Saudi Arabia and its coalition," said Albinmohamed stressing the importance of a specific plan to act.

"The world powers should do something. Otherwise we are ready to bear the consequences as the crisis is going to encircle the whole world," he warned.

On the other hand, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al Moallem said any troops coming to their territory would "return home in wooden coffins."

In the last 5 years, the Syrian regime has killed almost 250,000 people and displaced millions who fled to neighbouring countries," he added