

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



**LETTER OF
PROTECTION
AGAINST FEMALE GENITAL
MUTILATION**

You should always carry this letter of protection with you when you travel abroad. This allows you to clearly show your family that in Germany female genital mutilation is a crime that can result in a multi-year prison sentence.

The Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

Female genital mutilation is a crime and a grave human rights violation with life-long, serious physical and mental consequences for the girls and women affected. The procedure of female genital mutilation may also directly result in death due to high levels of blood loss or severe infection.

In Germany, performing female genital mutilation is a criminal offence that is punishable with imprisonment of up to 15 years.



Female genital mutilation is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia; in its most severe form, the vaginal opening is sewn closed almost completely.

What do I do with this letter?

You can take this letter of protection with you and show it to your family in your home country. The letter clarifies that performing female genital mutilation is a **criminal offence** in Germany – even if it is carried out abroad. It explains that you face up to **15 years in prison** if you yourself perform female genital mutilation on your daughter or if another person performs female genital mutilation and you do not prevent this from happening or even assist in the procedure. You may also be refused entry to Germany or lose your residence permit.

Criminal offence (section 226a of the Criminal Code)

Under German law, performing female genital mutilation is a criminal offence (section 226a of the Criminal Code). Anyone performing female genital mutilation is committing a criminal offence and faces a prison sentence of up to 15 years.

Female genital mutilation is also punishable if it is performed **abroad** or the person performing it is German, or the girl or woman on which female genital mutilation is performed is German or resides or has their main place of residence in Germany.

Anyone who assists another person in Germany or abroad in performing female genital mutilation is also committing a criminal offence.



Anyone persuading others to perform female genital mutilation is also committing a criminal offence.

This includes parents who do not protect their daughters from undergoing female genital mutilation in Germany or abroad.

The girl or woman on which female genital mutilation was performed is not to blame and will not be punished.

Persons performing female genital mutilation, persuading others to help them or failing to protect their daughters may additionally lose their residence title and they may be refused entry to Germany.



What is female genital mutilation?

Female genital mutilation is a **grave human rights violation** in which some or all of the outer and/or inner labia and the clitoris are removed and (in its most extreme form) the vagina is sewn closed, in some cases leaving only an opening the size of a pinhead. Girls may lose a lot of blood during the procedure or the wound may become infected, which may result in **serious health consequences** and even **death**.

- ❗ **Life-long pain, mental trauma**
- ❗ **Birth complications, chronic infections**
- ❗ **Sensation disorders and pain during sexual intercourse**

Women who have undergone female genital mutilation do not only suffer from **life-long pain, mental trauma and birth complications**. They may also develop chronic kidney infections or bladder infections and often suffer from painful menstruation.

The physical and mental injuries also gravely violate women's and girls' rights to sexual self-determination. Sexual intercourse is mostly extremely painful; sexual sensations are significantly reduced or absent due to the destruction of the nervous tissue.

Once performed, female genital mutilation usually **cannot be undone**.

Where do I get help? What do I do if I suspect FGM will be performed?

If you are concerned that you or someone you know is in danger of being taken to another country for FGM or if there is such danger in Germany, you can contact

- ➔ **the police (phone number: 110) or**
- ➔ **your local youth welfare office.**

The national Violence against Women helpline also offers support via telephone or online chat.



- ➔ Phone number: 08000 116 016
- ➔ www.hilfetelefon.de

08000 116 016

The helpline offers counselling in 18 languages – 24/7, free and anonymous.

If you are abroad and need help you can contact the nearest German diplomatic mission.

German:

www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/ReiseUndSicherheit/deutsche-auslandsvertretungen

English:

www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/laenderinformationen





Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

Lisa Paus

Lisa Paus
Federal Minister for Family Affairs,
Senior Citizens, Women and Youth



Federal Ministry
of the Interior
and Community

Nancy Faeser

Nancy Faeser
Federal Minister of the Interior
and Community



Federal Foreign Office

Annalena Baerbock

Annalena Baerbock
Federal Minister for
Foreign Affairs



Federal Ministry
of Justice

Marco Buschmann

Marco Buschmann
Federal Minister of Justice



Federal Ministry
of Health

Karl Lauterbach

Karl Lauterbach
Federal Minister of Health

Imprint

This letter of protection is part of the public relations work of the Federal Government; it is made available free of charge and is not intended for sale.

Published on behalf of the Federal Government by:

Bundesministerium
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend
Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit
11018 Berlin
www.bmfsfj.de

If you have any questions, call our
service telephone: +49 30 20 179 130
Monday–Thursday: 9 am – 6 pm
Fax: +49 30 18 555-4400
Email: info@bmfsfj.service.bund.de

Public service telephone number for all government agencies
and offices: 115*

As of: January 2023, 4th edition (englisch)

Design: www.zweiband.de

Printer: MKL Druck GmbH & Co. KG

* For general questions to all government offices and agencies, the general public service number 115 is also available. In the participating regions, 115 is open from 8 am to 6 pm between Monday and Friday. Calls to 115 from a German landline and many mobile networks are charged at the local rate and are therefore toll-free for flat-rate holders. Deaf people can access information by dialling the SIP address 115@gebaerdentelefon.d115.de. To find out if 115 is available in your region and for more information on the general public service number please visit <http://www.d115.de>.