



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Mali - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 19 March 2013**

### **Information on fgm among the Fula ethnic group including legal status; Information on societal pressures to have female children circumcised including options available to parents against this procedure, for example, from NGOs**

A report issued in November 2011 by *Freedom House* points out that:

“Female circumcision affects as much as 90 percent of the female population. To date the government has focused on sensitization campaigns against the practice rather than formal legislation and enforcement” (Freedom House (10 November 2011) *Countries at the Crossroads 2011 - Mali*).

In May 2012 a report released by the *United States Department of State* commenting on events of the preceding year notes:

“FGM is legal in the country and widely practiced across faith and ethnic groups. While the government has taken steps to raise awareness about the harmful health effects of FGM and has successfully lowered the percentage of girls excised in at least one region of the country, it has not criminalized it. FGM was very common, particularly in rural areas, and was performed on girls between the ages of six months and six years” (United States Department of State (24 May 2012) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011/Mali*, Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons/Women/ Female genital mutilation (FGM)).

This report also states:

“FGM was very common, particularly in rural areas, and was performed on girls between the ages of six months and six years. Approximately 92 percent of all girls and women had been subjected to FGM, although a Ministry of Health demographic study in 2006 reported that among girls and women ages 15 to 19, the rate was 85 percent. The practice was widespread except in certain northern areas, occurred among most ethnic groups, and was not subject to class boundaries. Some Malians erroneously believe the Koran prescribes the practice. There are no laws specifically prohibiting FGM; however, a government decree prohibits FGM in government-funded health centers. Government information campaigns regarding the dangers of FGM reached citizens throughout the country, and human rights organizations reported that FGM decreased among children of educated parents” (ibid, Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons/Children/Child Abuse).

A report published in August 2012 by *Social Institution and Gender Index* states:

“Most women in Mali have been subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM). Estimates as to the exact number of women range from 85.2% to 91.6%... There is no law in place banning FGM, although it is illegal for the procedure to be carried out in government-run health centres... To date, the government has not put forward any legislation to prohibit FGM. The practice persists in both rural and urban areas, but beyond that, there is significant regional variation: in Kayes and Koulikoro districts,

over 97% of women have undergone the procedure, while in Gao and Kidal fewer than 2% have done so...Prevalence rates are high among all religious groups – 85.5% of Muslim women and 67.9% of Christian women are estimated to have undergone the procedure...There also appears to be little correlation between level of education and acceptance and prevalence of the practice: 85.4% of women who had no education had undergone the procedure, as had 83.7% of women who had secondary education...In 2002, the government launched a national programme (Programme National de Lutte contre la Pratique de l'Excision) to encourage the cessation of the practice...To date, there has been no decline in the prevalence of FGM; 78.3% of women questioned in the 2006 DHS who had undergone the procedure indicated that they had already subjected at least one of their daughters to the practice, and overall, 76% of women who knew about FGM felt the practice should continue... Social recognition was cited as the most common reason to continue the practice (36.8%), indicating that FGM is closely linked to dominant ideas about acceptable femininity in Mali" (Social Institution and Gender Index (9 August 2012) *Mali*).

This document also notes:

"Women's rights NGOs are active in campaigning against FGM and other harmful practices, such as early marriage, as well as providing support services to women in need" (ibid).

A report issued in November 2012 by the *United Nations Human Rights Council* states:

"According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the prevalence of FGM was, in 2009, 91 per cent in the north and 87 per cent in the south. Certain ethnic groups did not practise FGM. UNICEF and UNFPA highlighted that while Mali did not yet have any law banning FGM, some progress had been registered such as the adoption of the Personal and Family Code" (United Nations Human Rights Council (9 November 2012) *Compilation : [Universal Periodic Review] : Mali / prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21*, p.7).

*Radio France International* in February 2013 points out that:

"In Mali nearly 86 per cent of girls have undergone some form of FGM" (Radio France International (7 February 2013) *Warning West Africa - Female Genital Mutilation Is Dangerous*).

A report published in 2009 by the *United Nations Population Fund* states that:

"Other organizations were using community media to disseminate information about FGM/C and advocacy tools to end the practice, including the Association for the Protection and Advancement of the Rights of Malian Women (APDF) in Mali..." (United Nations Population Fund (2009) *Global Consultation on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*, p.64

This report also notes:

"In Mali, where an anti FGM/C law does not exist, Equality Now partnered with AMSOPT, the coordinator of the Social Development and Health coalition in Mali and APDF. Both organizations were working towards getting a law enacted. AMSOPT

worked in collaboration with the Malian Women Lawyers' Association (AJM) and the National Committee for the Abolishment of FGM/C, which hosted a regional workshop bringing together organizations from several countries" (ibid, p.65).

No further information on these issues could be found among sources available to the RDC.

## References

Freedom House (10 November 2011) *Countries at the Crossroads 2011 - Mali*

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=4ecba6492f>

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Radio France International (7 February 2013) *Warning West Africa - Female Genital Mutilation Is Dangerous*

[http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/legal/results/docview/docview.do?docLinkInd=true&risb=21\\_T16956889224&format=GNBFULL&sort=BOOLEAN&startDocNo=1&resultsUrlKey=29\\_T16956889228&cisb=22\\_T16956889227&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=8320&docNo=6Thi](http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/legal/results/docview/docview.do?docLinkInd=true&risb=21_T16956889224&format=GNBFULL&sort=BOOLEAN&startDocNo=1&resultsUrlKey=29_T16956889228&cisb=22_T16956889227&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=8320&docNo=6Thi) This is a subscription database

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Social Institution and Gender Index (9 August 2012) *Mali*

<http://genderindex.org/country/mali>

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United Nations Population Fund (2009) *Global Consultation on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*

[http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2008/fgm\\_2008.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2008/fgm_2008.pdf)

Attachment not included due to IT limitations

Accessed Tuesday 19 March 2013

United States Department of State (24 May 2012) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011/Mali*

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

## Sources Consulted

Amnesty International  
BBC News  
Electronic Immigration Network  
European Country of Origin Information Network  
Freedom House  
Google  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
International Crisis Group  
IRIN News  
Lexis Nexis  
Minority Rights Group International  
Online Newspapers  
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library  
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Reliefweb  
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United Kingdom Home Office  
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