



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

14 February 2005

SEN43336.FE

Senegal: Update to SEN29267.F of 5 May 1998 on excision; the practices and their frequency among women over 21 years of age and among the Fulani (or Peuhl) people; state protection against these practices, especially for Bambaras and Christians (1999-2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Excision is still practised in Senegal, especially among Muslims (United States 1 June 2001) and particularly on girls between the ages of 4 and 12, although it is sometimes also performed on adult women (BBC 23 Sept. 2003). According to a United States Department of State report, excision is performed on girls between the ages of 2 and 5 (1 June 2001). The same report indicates that excision is practised among the Fulani and Bambara people, while it is almost non-existent among Christians (United States 1 June 2001). Although Senegalese law prohibits excision (*ibid.*), no example of a situation in which the state protected a girl or a woman from excision could be found by the Research Directorate within the time constraints for this Response.

Practice/Frequency

An Agence France-Presse (AFP) article indicated that [translation] "according to the official figures in the national action plan for stopping female genital mutilation (FGM), 20% of the female population is excised, with figures as high as 100% in some northern regions of the country" (6 Mar. 2004). With urbanization, excision is becoming less common (United States 1 June 2001). The US Department of State's report indicated that the practice is most common among Muslim groups in the eastern part of the country (*ibid.*).

A BBC article and an article on Surefish.co.uk indicated that excision is common in the following Senegalese communities: Mandingo, Jolla, Jalunge, Jahanga (BBC 23 Sept. 2003), Fulani (*ibid.*; Surefish.co.uk 20 Jan. 2005) and Toucouleur (*ibid.*). According to the US Department of State report, excision is still practised among the Fulani, Toucouleur, Diola, Mandingo, Sarkole, Mande, Tenda and Bambara people (1 June 2001; see also ECOSOC 27 Feb. 2003, para. 490).

State protection and awareness

In January 1999, Senegal enacted section 299 of the Penal Code, prohibiting excision (*Human Rights Tribune* Mar. 2000; see also *Africa Recovery* 22 Apr. 2003; Center for Reproductive Rights Nov. 2004). The punishment for committing a crime under this section is imprisonment for six months to five years for the parents and for the person performing the excision (IPU 3 Mar. 2002; see also *Human Rights Tribune* Mar. 2000; CNN 15 Jan. 1999; United States 1 June 2001). The maximum penalty must be applied when the excision was performed or facilitated by a member of the medical profession (IPU 3 Mar. 2002). When the excision results in a girl's death, or when a person uses his or her influence and abuses his or her authority to encourage excision, the punishment is hard labour for life (*ibid.*).

The first arrest under the new law took place in July 1999 when a mother and grandmother were arrested for ordering the excision of a five-year-old girl (*Human Rights Tribune* Mar. 2000). A report from the Center for Reproductive Rights indicated that arrests and prosecutions for FGM have taken place in several African countries, including Senegal (Nov. 2004). However, according to the US Department of State report, since the law was passed amending the Penal Code, there have been no convictions (1 June 2001).

Given that the practice is usually carried out at a very young age, the girls involved are unable to request state protection (United States 1 June 2001). The US Department of State indicated in its report that it was unaware of any cases in which the state had offered protection against excision (*ibid.*). According to the Regional Counsellor for the WHO (World Health Organization) Regional Office for Africa, the Senegalese law prohibiting excision has "created a more favourable environment and made women feel they are protected" (WHO 1 Feb. 2004). However, according to an article from the Center for Reproductive Rights, "[d]espite legal protections for

women in areas such as female circum[c]ision/female genital mutilation and domestic violence, Senegal must take greater steps to advance women's reproductive health and rights" (10 Aug. 2001).

Since the end of the 1990s, the Senegalese government has sponsored awareness programs through the Ministry of Women, Children and the Family (United States 1 June 2001). In 2002, the Senegalese government launched a national action plan to eradicate excision; the plan involves four components-information, social mobilization, education and institutional frameworks (IRIN 23 Jan. 2002). The government has also tried to help practitioners find other sources of income (United Nations 24 Jan. 2002).

Tostan, a non-governmental organization (NGO), played a crucial role in informing the Senegalese of the dangers of excision (Women's e-News 12 July 2003). The NGO used its awareness programs on health and human rights to encourage discussion on excision in the many communities with which it worked (ibid.; United States 1 June 2001). Since it was created, Tostan has encouraged hundreds of villages to make public declarations against excision (*Africa Recovery* 22 Apr. 2003). Many other NGOs are working to raise public awareness of the effects of excision (United States 1 June 2001)

In some regions of Senegal, such as Kolda, people are more reluctant to abolish the practice because they do not believe in the negative effects of excision on girls and they believe that tradition should prevail over "feminist" interests (AFP 5 Feb. 2003).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Africa Recovery [New York]. 22 April 2003. Nirit Ben-Ari. "Changing Tradition to Safeguard Women: Villagers Join Campaigns Against FGM." (AllAfrica.com) <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200304230409.html>> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2005]

Agence France-Presse (AFP). 6 March 2004. "L'excision au Sénégal - 'un problème d'éducation'." <<http://www.forum.sentoo.sn/read.php?f=7&i=9129&t=9129>> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2005]

_____. 5 February 2003. Coumba Sylla. "Some Villagers in Senegal Say Female Excision is Fine Tradition." (Dialog)

BBC. 23 September 2003. "Senegal Villages Reject FGM." <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3132350.stm>> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2005]

Center for Reproductive Rights. November 2004. "Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Legal Prohibitions Worldwide." <http://www.crlp.org/pub_fac_fgmicpd.html> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2005]

_____. 10 August 2001. "Senegal to Present Women's Rights Record Before the UN." (AllAfrica.com) <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200108130006.html>> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2005]

CNN. 15 January 1999. "Female Circumcision Outlawed in Senegal." <<http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/9901/15/senegal.01/>> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2005]

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). 27 February 2003. *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective*. (E/CN.4/2003/75/Add1) <<http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2003/documentation/commission/e-cn4-2003-75-add1.htm>> [Accessed 14 Feb. 2005]

Human Rights Tribune. March 2000. Vol. 7, No. 1. Ele Kowalsky. "Between Law and Tradition: The Struggle Against FGM in Senegal." <<http://www.hri.ca/tribune/viewArticle.asp?ID=2544>> [Accessed 4 Feb. 2005]

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). 23 January 2002. "Programme to Eradicate FGM." (AllAfrica.com) <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200201230691.html>> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2005]

Inter-Parliamentary Union (UIP). 3 March 2002. "Legislation and Other National Provisions: Peru, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland." <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/fgm-prov-p.htm>> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2005]

Surefish.co.uk. 20 January 2005. "Women Fighting to Stop Female Genital Mutilation in Senegal."

<http://www.surefish.co.uk/news/grassroots/200105_radi_senegal.htm> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2005]

United Nations. 24 January 2002. "Senegal: FGM Prevention Campaign Launched by Government." (Dialog)

United States. 1 June 2001. Department of State. Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues. "Senegal: Report on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Female Genital Cutting (FGC)."
<<http://www.state.gov/g/wi/rls/rep/crfgm/10107.htm>> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2005]

Women's e-News. 12 July 2003. Ginger Adams Otis. "Senegal Program Eradicating FGM."
<<http://womensenews.com/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1630/context/cover>> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2005]

World Health Organization (WHO). 1 February 2004. Vol. 82, No. 2. Judith Mandelbaum-Schmid. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. "Mali Takes Grass Roots Approach to Ending Female Genital Mutilation." (Dialog)

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: *Country Reports 2003*, GTZ, Human Rights Internet, International Planned Parenthood Foundation.

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.