



---

## The US End FGM/C Network Statement on the U.S. Department of Justice Decision Not to Appeal Ruling in Female Genital Mutilation Case

Friday April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### For Immediate Release

The US End FGM/C Network, representing over a hundred individual and organizational members, is deeply disappointed at the decision by the US Department of Justice not to appeal *U.S. v. Nagarwala*, the first federal case against Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C), where a U.S. doctor was charged with performing FGM/C on nine 7 year-old girls from Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota at a clinic in Detroit. This case overturned the long standing federal ban outlawing FGM/C in the U.S.

The US defines FGM/C as a form of gender-based violence and child abuse, and an egregious human rights violation. We know that 200 million women and girls live with the health consequences globally. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates over 513,000 women and girls in the United States have been affected by or are at risk of undergoing this practice. So far, only 31 states have laws against FGM/C, and we are concerned that this decision puts many more girls at risk.

*“Although state laws against FGM/C are important, an overarching federal law could prevent families from crossing state lines to have their girls cut. I am disappointed that our country is not unified against this gender-based violence. FGM/C is a human rights offense that must end”* - Renee Bergstrom, FGM/C Survivor and US End FGM/C Network Member

The lack of a federal ban leaves an inter-state loophole that we must urgently close through the following actions:

1. Continue to advocate for anti-FGM/C legislation at the state level
2. Urge Congress to respond swiftly to make the required amendments to ensure federal legislation is valid under both the treaty and commerce powers
3. Insist any new federal legislation protects all girls, including those living in states without laws against FGM/C

*“The movement to end FGM/C continues to gain momentum both domestically and globally. However, this decision sends the wrong message to the various FGM/C practicing communities in the U.S. we are trying to reach, who may perceive this as a constitutional green light to continue this practice. The U.S. will no longer be able to effectively advocate for other countries to ban FGM/C when their own law has been overturned.”* - Dr. Ghada Khan, US End FGM/C Network Coordinator.

For further information, please contact Dr. Ghada Khan at [ghada@endfgmnetwork.org](mailto:ghada@endfgmnetwork.org) or visit [www.endfgmnetwork.org](http://www.endfgmnetwork.org)