

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **African Women of Faith Network Condemns Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

#### **Preamble**

We, Women of Faith Leaders from 13 countries on this 14th Day of June, 2024 converging under the umbrella of the Africa Women of Faith Network (AWFN) and the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL) have met in Addis Abba, Ethiopia for a 5-day Regional Meeting from the 10th – 15th June, 2024.

Members of the African Women of Faith Network acknowledges the deliberate efforts of Ethiopia for its for variable policies to reduce incidents of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which is a harmful practice with severe and long-lasting repercussions and a form of gender-based violence that is affecting millions of girls and women worldwide. We commit to working with this Government and other African States to collaborate for the full eradication of this the scourge of this practice.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a harmful cultural practice that affects 200 million girls and women globally and is prevalent in approximately 51% of Africa countries (28 countries) This signals a devastating future for girls in Africa and must be averted by concerted efforts of all relevant stakeholders.

Members of the Africa Women of Faith Network acknowledge the deliberate efforts of the government of Ethiopia through its favorable policies to reduce incidents of Female Genital Mutilation. We urge all African countries to emulate Ethiopia to push for a regional decline in the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

The AWFN received with dismay the recent Fatwah issued by the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) to reverse the Policy of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), by upgrading Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) from Sunnah (a recommended practice) to Wajib (obligatory). This contradicts national and international laws and promotes a severe violation of human rights. This Fatwah coming from revered religious leaders and influencers violates human dignity of women and girls which Islam seeks to protect. We wish to submit that FGM is a cultural practice which is not supported by any Qur'anic and Hadith scriptural text. Neither was it practiced by the family of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). We therefore appeal to the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) to re-appraise its position of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) within the context of Maqaasid Sharia, the true intention of Sharia which is to promote the common good of humanity.

The practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has devastating physical, psychological, and social consequences. This includes severe pain, excessive bleeding, infections, increased risk of childbirth complications, long-lasting mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even death. It

perpetuates gender inequality disrupts the education of our young girls, causing prolonged absences and higher dropout rates, which hinder their academics and the future of our communities. The whole practice is counter development and contravenes the Quranic injunction prohibiting causing of harm and changing Allah's creation.

### **Our Appeal**

The African Women of Faith Network stands firmly against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). We condemn this act of human right violation and Gender Based Violation that is done under the cover of religion.

We call; on religious leaders and the EIASC to immediately revise the recent decree and align their stance with the protection of human rights. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is not a religious requirement and should never be endorsed or performed by health practitioners.

We also appreciate; the remarkable progress and steps made by Ethiopia in the last decade to reduce Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) prevalence among girls and women. These efforts are commendable and must continue to ensure the safety and well-being of all Ethiopian girls and women.

We urge; all stakeholders, including religious and community leaders, policymakers, and the international community, to intensify efforts to eradicate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). We must continue raising awareness about the harmful effects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), strengthen the implementation of laws against it, and hold perpetrators accountable.

Additionally, we need to support survivors of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by providing them with the necessary medical, psychological, and psycho-social support.




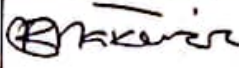
### **Conclusion:**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a violation of fundamental human rights and yet is highly prevalent in approximately 28 of 55 countries. All stakeholders have a crucial responsibility to protect the future for African girls and women.

Together, we must work to end this practice and protect the dignity and well-being of every girl and woman, not only in Ethiopia, but in our African Continent.

Signed on this 14<sup>th</sup> Day of 2024 at Cassiopeia Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Country	Name & Representation	Signature
Cameroon	EBELLE MANDENGUE ETEKI Désirée Cam Women NetWork	
Democratic Republic of Congo	Rev. Thérèse BIMP Coördinatrice de Réseau des femmes de foi	
Ethiopia	Sartu Shehadeh Ahmed Ebise Ashana Leta Eeny DASSA Nejat meshi Oumer Ayantu Taye Abdissa Yemesrach Assafa Bogale Melat Lakew GITSADICK	
Guinea	MARIAMA CONDE	
Kenya	IMMACULATE MUNGAT KENYA WOMEN OF FAITH NETWORK Shamsa Abubakar	
Mali	Djeneba TOURE CIRNADI MAGALE BAYOGO AMA FEP	
Mauritius	Aleeyah Kalemchomad Marilyn Cadet	

Nigeria	① Rev. Sr. Veronica Ifj. Onjeansi Women's Interfaith Council (WIC) ② Halimat Jibnl (African Women of Faith Network / African Council of Religious Leaders)	OLA <del>Ha Onjeansi</del> Jibnl
South Africa	Hailey Fudu Religions for Peace SA	
Tanzania	EDNA MARY R. MOE GWIN INCEP CHAIR PERSON	
Uganda	Dr. Rebecca K. Muryani AMB NAGIEBA HASSAN	
Zimbabwe	REV BEAUTY MAKUVA	
Zambia	REV ANALESS M. CHILOLO CHAIRPERSON MARIAN SHAWA	