

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Statement on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

February 5, 2016

Thirteen years ago tomorrow, four first ladies in Africa came together and declared an International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C). They knew that by targeting and holding back girls, this practice harms and holds back entire communities. Since then, countless others—from the Middle East to South Asia to here in the United States—have joined these women to say that FGM/C has no place in any community and undermines our efforts to celebrate and empower women and girls.

Some people say that FGM/C is a rite of passage, something families do to help prepare girls for adulthood or marriage. In my travels last year, I made clear my view that "there's no reason that young girls should suffer genital mutilation." Just because this is a tradition in some places does not make it right. This practice is harmful, and therefore wrong, wherever it occurs. That is why we have funded programming to combat FGM/C in places like Guinea, just as we have launched a range of actions here at home to stop the practice. In the United States, we have criminalized the transport of girls to undergo FGM/C, worked with religious leaders and community-based organizations to raise awareness—especially in some immigrant communities, where the pressures to engage in this practice remain—and provided grant opportunities for domestic NGOs implementing innovative prevention strategies.

Today we stand with communities here and around the globe working to prevent FGM/C. We call on girls and their families, teachers, health workers, community and religious leaders, and government officials to act together to make a difference. It's time to put an end to this harmful practice and to allow communities everywhere to meet their full potential by enabling women and girls to meet theirs.

NOTE: The statement referred to the late former First Lady Stella Obasanjo of Nigeria; former First Lady Chantal Compaore of Burkina Faso; former First Lady Henriette Conte of Guinea; and former First Lady Touré Lobbo Troaré of Mali.

Categories: Statements by the President : Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, International Day of Zero Tolerance for.

Names: Compaore, Chantel; Conte, Henriette; Troaré, Touré Lobbo.

Subjects: Civil rights : Female genital mutilation, prevention efforts; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; Holidays and special observances : Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Day, International.

DCPD Number: DCPD201600055.