

FEMALE CIRCUMCISION IN MUSLIM AND NONMUSLIM AFRICAN COMMUNITIES: IDEOLOGY, PRACTICE, AND PREVENTION

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ABSTRACT

This article evaluates the ideological and procedural differences and, when appropriate, commonalities of female circumcision in Muslim and non-Muslim African communities. It also considers the way in which these differences determine the efficacy of outreach, advocacy, and preventative initiatives. Since anti-FGM efforts have tended to view the varying traditions of female circumcision as a singular custom, they have often applied a uniformed plan of action across all practicing communities. This monolithic approach has been ineffectual. Recent successes in lowering the rates of female circumcision in North Africa indicate that this damage is not irreparable and that if human rights defenders approach their work with cultural understanding and strategies specifically designed for the community of people with whom they are working, there is hope for eradicating female circumcision in the all of Africa, Muslim and non-Muslim communities alike.