FGC in Asia and the Middle East

Female genital cutting is a global issue. Whilst it takes place in 27 countries across Africa, girls and women in parts of Asia and the Middle East are also subjected to the practice. It is a taboo and under-researched issue but has been shown to exist in the countries highlighted below.

Drivers that perpetuate FGC include tradition, culture, social pressure and religion. Although FGC pre-dates Islam, it is not mentioned in the Qur’an and is not practised by the majority of Muslims worldwide. FGC is often believed to be an Islamic imperative in some places.

Iraq
FGC is legal in Iraq which has a national prevalence of 8%. FGC is illegal in Iraqi Kurdistan where in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah ~50% of women have been cut. In 2012, Iraqi Kurdistan set up the first hotline in the Middle East for cut women.

Iran
FGC is legal in Iran where small studies in regions bordering Iraq and in the South found 40-85% of women have been cut. In 2009, high ranking clerics issued Fatwas banning FGC.

India and Pakistan
FGC is legal in both countries. Whilst there have been no studies, opinion suggests ~50% of Dawoodi Bohra women undergo FGC (known as Khatna), explored in the documentary “A Pinch of Skin”. The anti-Khatna movement has grown following an online petition in 2011.

Malaysia
One small study of Malay Muslims in five rural villages in north Malaysia found 93.5% of women had undergone FGC. The Ministry of Health called for a need to standardise the procedure, contradicting its own ban on doctors performing FGC.

Indonesia
Small studies find prevalence rates of 70-92%. The top Muslim clerical body (MUI) ruled FGC is not mandatory but “morally recommended”. Despite banning FGC, the Ministry of Health released guidelines advising how to cut. These were apparently revoked in 2014 after international outcry, but the government’s position is unclear.

Oman
A small study found that 78% of women were cut. There is a high rate of approval of FGC from both sexes. Anecdotally, FGC appears to be common in the North and South.

United Arab Emirates

Saudia Arabia

Yemen

Jordan

India

Pakistan

Maldives

Singapore

Brunei

Thailand

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