



## **MAY 7<sup>th</sup> 2020 – WORLDWIDE DAY OF GENITAL AUTONOMY**

### **8<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cologne Ruling**

This will be the eighth anniversary of the “Cologne Ruling”. In 2012, for the first time, a court explicitly granted boys the right to genital self-determination by evaluating a medically unnecessary foreskin removal (“circumcision”) of a boy as an offense. This decision has since become a worldwide symbol for the self-determination of children regardless of gender, ancestry or religion.

This year’s main focus is:

### **The History of Education about Genital Self-determination**

Traditional initiatives to protect children, so that they can decide for themselves about their genitals, go back many centuries. The declaration of general human rights and finally the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have provided a basis for developments in recent decades worldwide. WWDOGA will look back, will collect testimonials, and will actively promote child protection in the present and future!

The “World Day of Genital Autonomy” calls for:

- **Adherence to and implementation of the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2 (protection against discrimination); Article 3 (preference of children’s well-being); and Article 24 Paragraph 3 (abolishment of traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children).**
- **Legislative initiatives worldwide that provide for the protection of all children, regardless of gender, from non-therapeutic genital operations.**
- **Protection of children with atypical sex characteristics from genital surgery and intervention without absolute medical indication.**
- **An immediate stop to group or mass circumcision of minor males (boys) for alleged HIV prevention in African countries.**
- **Public research and education on the consequences of non-therapeutic genital surgery on children in its different forms and social contexts.**

Anja Renner  
project consultant of Lessan e.V.  
Jill-Ann Nwosu  
project consultant of „Men  
Standing Up for Gender Equity“:  
*„In Germany, there live about  
70,000 girls and women affect-  
ed by FGM/C, and about 17,000  
are at risk. With our project  
„Men Standing Up for Gender  
Equity,“ we want to involve men  
from affected communities into  
the process of ending violence  
against girls and women. In  
Hamburg, we therefore train  
10 men with a refugee and  
migration background as  
multipliers against gender-based  
violence, especially against  
FGM/C. Subsequently, they  
pursue on their own educational  
and awareness-raising activities  
about patriarchal structures  
and gender-based violence in  
shelters for refugees and mi-  
grant communities. At the same  
time, these men serve as role  
models for a new understanding  
of gender roles. The project is  
joined by our partners Terre des  
Femmes and Femmes Entraides  
et Autonomie.“*

## The History of Education about Genital Self-determination

Initiatives to end female genital mutilation (FGM) go back to Africa at the beginning of the 20th century. The Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC) was founded in 1984. Through the joint efforts of the IAC from the southern hemisphere, and women's and human rights organizations from the northern hemisphere, FGM has been included on the agenda at UN conferences and more and more often at several international conventions on human rights protection. The WHO has advocated for the total abolition of FGM since the 1990s. The book "Desert Flower" by the Ethiopian model Waris Dirie finally attracted worldwide attention in 1998, and was also a great success as a film.

Beginning in the Middle Ages the famous rabbi, doctor, and philosopher Maimonides (12th century) mentioned restrictive consequences for sexuality due to foreskin amputations. In the 19th and 20th centuries a medicalization of foreskin amputations of boys lead to a mass phenomenon, especially in Anglo-Saxon cultures. Since the turn of the millennium, medical associations have increasingly researched and published their findings on the functions and development of the human foreskin, and affected people have increasingly been speaking up.

In ancient times, intersex people were worshiped in some cultures as members of a third gender or even as saints or oracles. By contrast, societies shaped by Abrahamic religions largely introduced a binary human image system, i.e. based on only male and female. Genital-defining operations on intersex young children have been criticized by those affected and by progressive physicians since the 1990s. In many countries there is political and social debate today about enabling intersex people to make their own gender registrations and to prohibit genital-norming operations.

### When will girls finally be protected?

According to the WHO, female genital mutilation refers to all practices in which the outer genitalia are partly or completely removed, as well as to all other injuries to the female genitalia that are not medically indicated. Depending on the motives and category of cutting, the intervention leads to health, psychological, social and economic consequences. The practice is internationally recognized in every form as a serious human rights violation and is still practiced worldwide: in 29 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in South, Southeast and Central Asia, as well as in Europe, the US and Canada. Particularly in Asia, surgeries done by medical staff are increasing, leading to repeated calls for legal acquiescence – which clearly contradicts the WHO.

### Boys own their genitals themselves, too

The trivializing term "circumcision" stands for the amputation of the foreskin of the penis, which involves the loss of approximately 50 % of the entire penile skin – including the parts most sensitive for sexual stimulation - and irreversibly alters the natural physiology of the penis and its appearance. Possible psychological late effects have also increasingly been documented.

Total foreskin removal is medically avoidable except in very rare cases. A snug or non-retractile foreskin does not constitute a medical condition in children and

adolescents if a boy has no painful obstruction, which is a rare condition. Usually the opening becomes wider until the end of puberty. In instances of an actual medical condition, most cases can be treated non-invasively.

## Suffering and trauma of intersex-children due to genital surgery without their own consent

One or two out of every 1000 children are born with "atypical" sexual characteristics. Time and again this leads to early genital operations to "assign" a gender, and to hormonal treatments before capacity to consent. The affected persons often report feeling altered and resentful that their input was never sought about their own sex.

All German paediatric associations currently recommend delaying those measures to an age where the person affected is able to give informed consent. On the international level, also, the technical discussion is moving in this direction. However, physical integrity and self-determination must still be integrated into practice in many places.

For 20 years, people affected have been publicly protesting these surgeries, which they describe in terms of fundamental human rights violations, as being traumatising and as destructive to sexual sensation. These are allegations that are also backed by human rights committees like the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC).

### Discrimination against transsexual people

Trans\* people often want to match their physical characteristics to their true gender by surgery. If a vulva is to be formed from a penis, without the foreskin ideal tissue is missing to a considerable extent.

### The Cologne Ruling

On May 7th, 2012, the Regional Court of Cologne ruled that a non-therapeutic "circumcision" of a boy who is unable to give consent qualifies as an assault. This was logically consistent because, in Germany, children had rights to an unharmed body and a non-violent upbringing – why should these rights exclude genitalia, and exclusively male ones at that?

The German Bundestag decided on 12.12.2012, in a rushed proceeding in response to the Cologne ruling, that parents can assent for any reason to a "circumcision" of their boys. This is a complete contradiction to the full legal protection of children and is discordant with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in multiple ways.

For more information, movies, articles,  
books please visit:  
<https://genitale-selbstbestimmung.de/info/>



Ann-Marlene Henning  
Sexologist:

*"Do the self-test! Foreskin?  
You hardly can imagine what  
it means to cut off this small  
part of the male body? That  
can't matter much - or can  
it? Caress the back of your  
hand, this is similar to the  
sensitivity of the shaft of the  
penis. Now caress the palm  
of your hand, which comes  
very close to the feeling of  
the foreskin. And now, snip,  
snap, off with it. No! The  
foreskin has a function and  
is an erotic organ. It belongs  
to the penis. Unless someone  
decides differently about  
one's own body. And the  
pearl of the clit? It is the most  
sensitive area on a human  
body and needs its foreskin."*

Holger Erb

consultant for sex  
education, AIDS prevention,  
and fundamental issues at  
pro familia Landesverband  
NRW e.V.:

*„We have discussed the  
topic intensively within  
our organization. In the  
end, pro familia NRW  
clearly opposes unindicated  
circumcisions of minor  
boys who are incapable to  
consent. This makes me  
very happy. After all it is not  
communicable that the right  
to physical integrity and  
sexual self-determination  
stops at the foreskin of boys  
and adolescents.“*

Rana Ahmad

board member of Secular  
Refugee Aid e.V.:

*„How dare we to still execute  
rites a thousand years old and  
mutilate children? Culture  
or religion cannot serve as a  
justification for that.“*

# There is no room for hatred and misanthropy!

We urge all participants to clearly distance themselves from generalizations and animosity and to be absolutely clear that this is solely about the well-being, bodily integrity, and right to self-determination of children.

## Appealing for the WWDOGA are (as of april 1st, 2020):

- AKTION REGEN - Verein für Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (Austria)
- Aktion Weißes Friedensband e.V. (Germany)
- Attorneys for the rights of the child (USA)
- Australasian Institute for Genital Autonomy - AIGA Inc. (Australia)
- Bay Area Intactivists (USA)
- Ben Shalem (Israel)
- beschneidungsforum.de - das Forum zum Thema Beschneidung (Germany)
- Berufsverband der Kinder- und Jugendärzte BVKJ (Germany)
- Bloodstained Men & their Friends (USA)
- Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Säkulare Grüne (Germany)
- Canadian Foreskin Awareness Project (Canada)
- Children's Health & Human Rights Partnership (Canada)
- Deutsches Kinderbulletin - jedem Kind eine Chance / Politische Kindermedizin (Germany)
- Doctors Opposing Circumcision (D.O.C.) - Physicians for Genital Integrity (USA)
- Droit au corps (France)
- Facharbeitskreis Beschneidungsbetroffener im MOGiS e.V. - Eine Stimme für Betroffene (Germany)
- Förderkreis AIDS- und FGM-Aufklärung e.V. Feuervogel.Org - Aufklärungsprojekte über Genitalverstümmelung bei Mädchen und Frauen in Westafrika (Germany)
- Foreskin Revolution (Australien)
- Forum Männer in Theorie und Praxis der Geschlechterverhältnisse (Germany)
- Future Choices (UK)
- Genital Autonomy America (USA) (formerly NOCIRC)
- Giordano-Bruno-Stiftung (Germany)
- GSSG: Gemeinnützige Stiftung Sexualität und Gesundheit (Germany)
- GynZone (Denmark)
- HennaMond e.V. - Mut, Rat und Lebenshilfe (Germany)
- Ibn Rushd – Goethe Moschee (Germany)
- IMMA e.V. (Germany)
- Intact Africa (Africa)
- Intact America (USA)
- Intact Denmark (Denmark)
- Intact Iceland (Iceland)
- (I)NTACT - Internationale Aktion gegen die Beschneidung von Mädchen und Frauen e.V. (Germany)
- Intact Kenya (Kenya)
- Intact Nederland (Netherlands)
- Intact Switzerland (Switzerland)
- Intaction (USA)
- intaktiv e.V. - eine Stimme für genitale Selbstbestimmung (Germany)
- JÄ-föreningen, Turku/Åbo, (Finland)
- Jews Against Circumcision (USA)
- Jungs e.V. (Germany)
- KAHAL (Israel)
- LAG DIE LINKE, queer Baden-Württemberg (Germany)
- LAG DIE LINKE, queer NRW (Germany)
- LAG Jungen\*- und Männer\*arbeit Bayern e.V. (Germany)
- LAG Laizismus Bayern - DIE LINKE (Germany)
- Lessan e.V. (Germany)
- Lobby für Mädchen e.V. (Germany)
- Men Do Complain (UK)
- MOGiS e.V. - Eine Stimme für Betroffene (Germany)
- NORM-UK / 15 Square (UK)
- Partei der Humanisten (Germany)
- pro familia Augsburg e.V. (Germany)
- pro familia Bayern e.V. (Germany)
- pro familia Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V. (Germany)
- Pro Kinderrechte CH (Schweiz/land)
- Projekt 100% MENSCH (Germany)
- Protect the Child (Israel)
- Säkulare Flüchtlingshilfe e.V. (Germany)
- Sexpo (Finland)
- TABU International e.V. - Gegen Genitalverstümmelung, für Frauen- und Kinderrechte (Germany)
- TERRE DES FEMMES - Menschenrechte für die Frau e.V. (Germany)
- The VMCC Experience Project (Kenya, Uganda)
- Väteraufbruch für Kinder - Kreisverein Köln e.V. (Germany)
- Verband medizinischer Fachberufe e.V. (Germany)
- Your Whole Baby (USA)
- Zentralrat der Ex-Muslime (Germany)



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