



## **IHRDA urges stronger action to end female genital mutilation following death of infant in The Gambia**

**Banjul, The Gambia- 12<sup>th</sup> August 2025** - The [Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa \(IHRDA\)](#) has taken note of recent reports of a deeply disturbing case of the death of a one-month-old infant in Wellingara, The Gambia, reportedly caused by implications from Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). While the cause of the death is yet to be conclusively determined pending an autopsy, and some arrests have been made, the case underscores the urgent need to strengthen efforts to eradicate this harmful practice.

FGM is a criminal offence in The Gambia under the Women's (Amendment) Act 2015, and is recognised internationally as a violation of the rights to life, health, and bodily integrity, and as a form of violence against women and girls prohibited under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Despite criminalisation of the practice, strong sentiments remain in some sections of society and violations persist, as exemplified by this case. Currently, the Government of The Gambia, the National Human Rights Commission and other CSOs are actively defending a case before the Supreme Court of The Gambia in which a Member of Parliament is seeking to overturn the 2015 ban on FGM and have the law declared unconstitutional.

IHRDA has supported the National Human Rights Commission in pushing back the retrogressive motion now being litigated before the courts.

Elsewhere, IHRDA has been actively involved in strategic litigation and advocacy to end FGM across West Africa. In Sierra Leone, IHRDA, alongside the Forum Against Harmful Practices (FAHP) and Purposeful, filed a case in 2023 before the ECOWAS Court of Justice challenging the government's failure to criminalise FGM. In July 2025, the Court [delivered a landmark judgment](#) holding that Sierra Leone's inaction violated women's and girl's rights, declaring FGM a form of torture and ordering the government to enact a law banning the practice.

In Mali, IHRDA together with women's rights organisations, brought a case before the ECOWAS Court of Justice in 2021 urging the government to adopt legislation criminalising FGM, arguing that the continued legality of the practice violates regional and international human rights obligations. That case is ongoing with IHRDA continuing to press for legislative reform and public accountability.

IHRDA encourages The Gambian authorities to conduct a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into the circumstances of the infant's death; ensure swift prosecution and maximum penalties for all those found responsible; implement nationwide, sustained public education campaigns to eliminate FGM and address harmful social norms that perpetuate it; and demonstrate zero tolerance for violations of the FGM ban, ensuring consistent and visible enforcement.

IHRDA stands ready to support all stakeholders in ensuring justice for the victims, accountability for perpetrators, and lasting protection for girls from all forms of harmful practices. We continue to work in The Gambia and across Africa to combat FGM through legal action, and policy advocacy.

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