

**Sulaymaniyah, 13 July 2010**

### **Female Genital Mutilation must be outlawed**

The dissemination of Human Rights Watch report on 16 June 2010 on FGM and the reactions by activists and NGOs to the report initiated a controversy about the issue. Also, in the last couple of days and on 6 July 2010, the Association of Islamic Clerics in Kurdistan issued a “Fatwa” on FGM in which parents [or guardians] of girls were given the choice of conducting FGM to their girls. Following reactions and pressure on Muslim clerics with respect to the “Fatwa”, the Association of Islamic Cleric in Kurdistan issued a clarification which states “No clear text in Quoran stipulates FGM as a duty or Sunna”, however, in paragraph 4 of the same clarification statement says: “The summary of the Fatwa of Kurdistan High Commission of Fatwa believes, parents [or guardians] have the choice to conduct or refrain from conducting FGM, this freedom of choice is not absolute, but conditional until it is proved that FGM causes immediate or long term health damage to mutilated girls, then they may not go ahead with FGM”. While such a “fatwa” or at least the clarification followed were expected to bring about a new view point with respect to FGM, but the “fatwa” and the clarification did not propose anything new as presently, and in the past parents are the ones who take the decision of circumcising girls. Moreover, this “fatwa” is putting scientific reports about the health consequences and damage caused by FGM to circumcised girls under question.

The recent “fatwa” comes while some individuals and organizations believe FGM in Kurdistan is a phenomenon while others think the available information about FGM is exaggerated and incorrect. We believe regardless of both views, no one can deny the fact that FGM exists in Kurdistan and large number of women and girls continue to become victims of this exercise. We therefore believe that views and positions on FGM from all parties concerned must be not vague but straightforward and reflect clearly supporting or condemning FGM.

We believe it is now time to legally prohibit FGM by issuing appropriate laws to ban female genital mutilation and punish anyone, including parents, to conduct this painful mutilation of girls. In the meantime, we call upon civil society organizations in general, and women’s rights groups and NGOs in particular and all relevant government institutions and individuals including MPs, Kurdistan Parliament Presidency to step up efforts to pass and approve the draft Domestic Violence Law in which a special article deals with the issue of FGM.

**Combating Violence against Women**  
**Office : +964 53 318 3149 | +964 53 318 7827**  
**Intl (via US) : +1 206 5484 520**  
**Intl. (via UK) : +44 20 313 32 874**  
**Mobile. : +964 770152 1761**  
**email : [info@asuda.org](mailto:info@asuda.org)**  
**Website : <http://www.asuda.org>**