



FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

WHAT IS FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION?

Female genital mutilation is comprised of all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Some cultures consider female genital mutilation to be a natural part of a girl's transition to womanhood.

Female genital mutilation is often performed in unsanitary conditions without pain relief. The procedure can cause permanent psychological damage and serious medical complaints: women who have undergone female genital mutilation sometimes have painful periods and may suffer from urinal and genital infections and even infertility. They may find sexual intercourse uncomfortable, which can affect their relationships. Scar tissue can cause problems during labour and jeopardise the health of both the mother and the baby.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE IN FINLAND

In Finland, female genital mutilation is forbidden by law. Female genital mutilation is considered an aggravated assault, which is punishable by imprisonment. In addition to the person carrying out the procedure, anyone involved in the procedure may also be found guilty of the offence.

If any of the girls or women in a family have undergone female genital mutilation prior to the family's arrival in Finland, the authorities may become concerned about any girls in the family who have not yet undergone the procedure.

After the individual concerned has been granted a residence permit, female genital mutilation can be reversed by an opening procedure to alleviate the related problems and facilitate future childbirth. If the opening procedure is performed during labour, the mother will not be stitched up again afterwards, as this would also constitute an assault. Hospitals can issue written statements indicating that the opening procedure was performed under hospital conditions.

WHAT IF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IS PERFORMED LATER?

If a child who is residing in Finland is found to be at risk of female genital mutilation or if the procedure is performed, for example, during a holiday in the family's home country, child welfare services must be notified and the police will investigate whether a criminal offence has been committed.

If a residence permit was issued to an individual or a family due to the risk of female genital mutilation and the procedure is performed later, the residence permit may be cancelled and those issued with a permit can be deported to their home country.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION MAY HAVE A BEARING ON ASYLUM APPLICATIONS

If you suffer or your child suffers from problems resulting from female genital mutilation, please tell the nurse at the reception centre. The nurse will determine whether a medical report is necessary. If it is, it should be sent to the Finnish Immigration Service before your interview.

The Finnish Immigration Service can only look into your medical history with your permission. The risk of female genital mutilation or serious problems caused by the procedure once it has already been performed can constitute grounds for issuing a residence permit, so be sure to mention this in your interview.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

- Is a procedure performed for non-medical reasons
- Can cause psychological scarring and serious physical problems
- Is considered a form of assault and a matter for child welfare services in Finland
- Can have a bearing on asylum applications