

## **TQO Honour Killings**

Honour killings refer to acts of violence, most often murder, committed against individuals, predominantly women and girls, by family or community members who claim that the victim has brought "dishonour" upon the family. These acts are commonly linked to issues such as marriage choices, relationships, dress, sexual orientation, or refusal to comply with social norms. Honour killings are rooted in deeply entrenched patriarchal traditions, gender inequality, and harmful interpretations of culture, not religion. They constitute severe violations of human rights, including the right to life, equality before the law, and freedom from violence.

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):** Affirms the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):** Calls on states to eliminate violence and discrimination against women.

**UN General Assembly Resolutions:** Multiple resolutions have condemned honour killings and urged states to strengthen legal protections.

**UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women:** Has repeatedly addressed honour-based violence and recommended legal reforms.

**Council of Europe Istanbul Convention (2011):** Legally binding treaty to prevent violence against women, including honour-based crimes.

**National Legal Reforms:** Several states have amended penal codes to remove leniency provisions for honour crimes.

**Cultural and Social Norms:** Deep-rooted traditions continue to justify or excuse honour-based violence in some communities.

**Legal Gaps and Leniency:** In certain countries, perpetrators receive reduced sentences due to mitigating circumstances.

**Underreporting:** Fear of retaliation and social stigma prevent victims from seeking help.

**Lack of Enforcement:** Even where laws exist, weak enforcement undermines protection.

**Limited Support Services:** Insufficient shelters, legal aid, and psychological support for at-risk individuals.

**Migration and Diaspora Contexts:** Honour-based violence also occurs within migrant communities, complicating jurisdiction and intervention.

Honour-Based Violence (HBV): Violence committed to protect or restore perceived family or community honour.

Patriarchy: A social system in which men hold primary power and dominance.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Harmful acts directed at individuals based on gender.

CEDAW: A UN treaty focused on eliminating discrimination against women.

Impunity: Exemption from punishment or accountability.

UN Women: Supports gender equality and programs combating violence against women.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Monitors and reports on human rights violations.

Amnesty International: Campaigns against honour killings and advocates for legal reform.

Human Rights Watch: Documents cases and pressures governments to act.

Local NGOs and Women's Shelters: Provide protection, legal aid, and rehabilitation for survivors.

Honour killings represent one of the most extreme forms of gender-based violence and require urgent, coordinated international action. Eliminating this practice demands strong legal frameworks, effective enforcement, education to challenge harmful norms, and protection for those at risk. The international community must continue to pressure states to uphold human rights obligations and ensure that culture or tradition is never used to justify violence.

## **TQO the Rise of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) refers to all procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs, for non-medical reasons. The practice is internationally recognized as a severe violation of human rights and disproportionately affects girls, often before the age of 15. Despite global efforts to eliminate FGM, recent years have seen stagnation or resurgence in some regions due to conflict, displacement, poverty, population growth, and the disruption of education and health services. The continuation of FGM is rooted in harmful social norms, gender inequality, and misconceptions regarding culture, purity, and marriageability.

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):** Establishes the right to life, dignity, and freedom from cruel or degrading treatment.

**Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):** Obligates states to protect children from all forms of harmful practices.

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):** Calls for the elimination of practices that discriminate against women and girls.

**UN General Assembly Resolution 67/146 (2013):** First resolution specifically calling for the global ban of FGM.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5.3):** Aims to eliminate all harmful practices, including FGM and child marriage, by 2030.

**National Legal Bans:** Many countries have criminalized FGM, including states in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

**Deep-Rooted Social Norms:** Community pressure and fear of social exclusion sustain the practice.

**Conflict and Displacement:** Humanitarian crises disrupt prevention programs and increase vulnerability.

**Weak Law Enforcement:** Laws banning FGM are often poorly enforced, particularly in rural areas.

**Medicalization of FGM:** Some health professionals perform FGM, falsely legitimizing the practice.

**Cross-Border FGM:** Families travel to neighbouring countries to evade national bans.

**Lack of Education and Awareness:** Limited access to education perpetuates myths surrounding FGM.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Non-medical procedures that alter or injure female genital organs.

Harmful Practices: Traditional or cultural practices that negatively affect health and human rights.

Medicalization: The performance of FGM by healthcare providers.

Gender Inequality: Social and legal disparities between men and women.

Social Norms: Shared beliefs within a community that influence behaviour.

UNICEF: Leads data collection, prevention programs, and community engagement.

World Health Organization (WHO): Provides medical guidance and condemns medicalization of FGM.

UNFPA: Works to end FGM through reproductive health and education initiatives.

UNFPA–UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM: The largest global program dedicated to ending FGM.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): Including Equality Now and Orchid Project, which advocate for legal reform and survivor support.

The rise and persistence of Female Genital Mutilation represent a critical challenge to global human rights and gender equality. While significant international frameworks and commitments exist, progress remains uneven due to cultural resistance, conflict, and insufficient enforcement. Eliminating FGM requires a comprehensive approach combining strong legal measures, community-led education, protection for at-risk girls, and sustained international cooperation. Ending FGM is essential to safeguarding the dignity, health, and rights of women and girls worldwide.

## **TQO Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services**

Access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services is a fundamental component of public health, gender equality, and human rights. These services include family planning, maternal healthcare, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), safe childbirth services, and comprehensive sexuality education. Despite global progress, millions of people—particularly women, adolescents, and marginalized communities—still lack access to quality SRH services. Barriers such as poverty, cultural stigma, restrictive laws, and weak health systems contribute to preventable maternal deaths, unintended pregnancies, and the spread of STIs. Improving access to SRH services is essential for achieving sustainable development, reducing inequality, and empowering individuals to make informed choices about their bodies and futures.

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo (1994): Established reproductive health and rights as central to development and human rights.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Calls on states to ensure access to healthcare services, including family planning.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) include targets on universal access to SRH services.

World Health Organization (WHO) Global Reproductive Health Strategy: Provides guidance on improving SRH systems worldwide.

UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council Resolutions: Reaffirm the right to sexual and reproductive health.

Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016–2030): Focuses on survival, thriving, and transformation through improved health services.

**Legal and Policy Restrictions:** Restrictive laws on contraception, abortion, and sexuality education limit access in many countries.

**Cultural and Religious Stigma:** Social taboos discourage individuals, particularly adolescents, from seeking SRH services.

**Inequitable Access:** Rural populations, refugees, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ individuals often face exclusion.

**Weak Health Systems:** Shortages of trained healthcare workers, facilities, and essential supplies undermine service delivery.

**Financial Barriers:** High out-of-pocket costs prevent low-income individuals from accessing care.

Humanitarian Crises: Conflict and displacement disrupt health infrastructure and SRH services.

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH): A state of physical, mental, and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system.

Family Planning: The ability of individuals and couples to anticipate and attain desired spacing and number of children.

Maternal Mortality: Deaths related to pregnancy or childbirth complications.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE): Age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Ensuring all individuals have access to needed health services without financial hardship.

World Health Organization (WHO): Sets global standards and guidelines for SRH services.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Leads international efforts on reproductive health and rights.

UN Women: Advocates for gender equality and access to healthcare for women and girls.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Focuses on adolescent health and maternal care.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): Such as IPPF and Médecins Sans Frontières, which deliver SRH services and advocacy.

Improving access to sexual and reproductive health services is essential for advancing human rights, reducing preventable deaths, and promoting sustainable development. While international frameworks have laid a strong foundation, persistent legal, cultural, and economic barriers continue to limit progress. A comprehensive approach—combining policy reform, health system investment, education, and international cooperation—is necessary to ensure that all individuals can access safe, affordable, and high-quality SRH services. Strengthening these services will contribute to healthier societies and greater global equality.