

Resolution on the proposed repeal of the law banning female genital mutilation in The Gambia

2024/2699(RSP) - 25/04/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 535 votes to 1, with 1 abstention, a resolution on the proposed repeal of the law banning female genital mutilation in The Gambia.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR and The Left groups.

The Gambia has among the highest prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the world, and according to UNICEF, 76 % of Gambian women aged 15-49 have been circumcised.

The landmark Women's (Amendment) Act of 2015 in The Gambia bans female genital mutilation (FMG), making it punishable by up to three years in prison.

On 18 March 2024, a proposed law to repeal the ban passed the second reading in the Gambian Parliament and has now been referred to a parliamentary committee that will take at least three months to examine it before returning to parliament for a third and final review.

The Gambia risks being the first country in the world to reverse legal protection against FGM. This risks encouraging a similar weakening of the rights of women and girls in the region.

Parliament urged Gambia to:

- demonstrate its commitment to international human rights law and multiple international and regional agreements to which The Gambia is a signatory, to protect the rights of women and girls, and therefore to reject the proposal and uphold the criminalisation of FGM;
- strengthen its efforts to prevent and eliminate FGM through robust enforcement measures and awareness and education efforts to address its root causes;
- engage with international partners, notably the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM.

Parliament stands ready to support the government and civil society organisations in community engagement, including with religious, traditional and community leaders, in combating FGM, and to support survivors and women's rights defenders.

The Commission and the European External Action Service are called on to urgently and systematically address the issue of FGM with the Gambian authorities in coordination with international partners.