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

European Parliament resolution of 25 April 2024 on the proposed repeal of the law banning female genital mutilation in The Gambia (2024/2699(RSP))

(C/2025/3707)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Samoa Agreement,

— having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,

— having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,

— having regard to Sustainable Development Goal 5, aiming for the global eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM) by 2030,

— having regard to Rules 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the landmark Women's (Amendment) Act of 2015 in The Gambia bans FMG, making it punishable by up to three years in prison;

B. whereas 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;

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

D. whereas FGM is a grave violation of human rights and discrimination against girls and women; whereas it is not justified by any religion or culture, is an abusive, exploitative and harmful practice with severe consequences including irreparable physical, psychological, reproductive and sexual health damage, and can lead to death; whereas it prevents women and girls from reaching their full potential and participating in society;

E. whereas The Gambia has among the highest prevalence of FGM in the world, and according to UNICEF, 76 % of Gambian women aged 15-49 have been circumcised; whereas over 230 million girls and women worldwide are affected by FGM;

1. Urges the Gambian Parliament 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;

2. Urges the Gambian Government to strengthen its efforts to prevent and eliminate FGM through robust enforcement measures and awareness and education efforts to address its root causes; invites the Gambian Government to engage with international partners, notably the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM;

3. 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;

4. Calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service to urgently and systematically address the issue of FGM with the Gambian authorities in coordination with international partners;

5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the Gambian authorities and the African Union.