

Alþingi  
Kirkjustræti  
150 Reykjavík

Efni: Umsögn um frumvarp til laga um breytingu á almennum hegningarlögum (bann við umskurði drengja), 148. löggjafarþing, 114. mál.

Ágæta Alþingi / Dear Members of the Parliament,

Dear Honorable Members of Parliament,

I want to express my gratitude for and encourage passage of the proposed bill to protect male children in Iceland from non-therapeutic circumcision. *Every child – male, female, and intersex – needs protection from non-therapeutic genital cutting!*

I am the mother of three circumcised sons (1958, 1961, and 1969), the grandmother of five intact grandsons (born between 1982 and 2015), a midwife, a Registered Nurse, and the Executive Director of Genital Autonomy - America (formerly, NOCIRC, the National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers, the first clearing house for information about circumcision in the USA, which I co-founded in 1985). I first witnessed circumcision as a nursing student in May 1979. As I watched the torture and mutilation of a baby, I burst into tears. The doctor looked at me and said, "There is no medical reason for doing this!" That moment literally changed the course of my life. And, for the past 39 years, I have listened to the complaints of untold numbers of circumcised men (and their sexual partners, too). Anyone who says circumcised men do *not* complain about the harm of circumcision either doesn't listen or doesn't know men who feel comfortable sharing personal information about having a diminished or damaged penis.

Human rights documents, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights (Article 5) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 24.3), protect bodily integrity rights of infants and children, and national laws are in place, too, protecting children from unnecessary physical pain and/or trauma.

Circumcision:

- is a primal wound that is excruciatingly painful;
- interferes with the maternal/infant bond;
- disrupts breastfeeding;
- disturbs normal sleep patterns;
- undermines the baby's first developmental task of establishing trust;
- leaves physical scars, and
- leaves psychological scars, as evidenced by the dramatic response to vaccination pain in 4 - 6-month-old circumcised babies (PTSD), and by the response of men, as evidenced in the "Long-term adverse outcomes from neonatal circumcision reported in a survey of 1,008 men: an overview of health and human rights implications," by Tim Hammond and Adrienne Carmack (*The International Journal of Human Rights*, 2017).

Consciousness is changing about the right of *all* children to bodily integrity and genital autonomy (personal choice). The proposed bill does not outlaw circumcision, it simply allows a child to grow up without the pain, trauma, and harmful physical and psychological consequences of non-therapeutic genital cutting and affords that child the right to personal choice when old to make an informed decision.

If a person agrees to a covenant, that person must be old enough to understand the agreement. Otherwise, it is a forced agreement that violates individual rights and is objected to by many men who did not have a choice! Brit shalom, a naming ceremony of peace (no cutting), is being adopted by Jews who recognize the harm of pain and trauma inflicted on the developing brain of an infant and leave the choice of cutting to the owner of the penis when he's old enough to decide for himself.

At the beginning of life a child learns fear and alienation *or* love and trust. Karl Menninger said, "What is done to children, they will do to society," and Gandhi said, "If we are to have real peace, we shall have to begin with the children." Our organization supports those legislators who vote to protect boys from pain, trauma, and harm and applauds Iceland for leading the way toward creating a safer world into which babies are born.

With appreciation and hope,

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