

# Muslim scholars rule female circumcision un-Islamic

Sunday 24 December 2006, by [AP](#) (Date first published: 24 November 2006).

**A Egyptian conference of Muslim scholars from around the world declared female circumcision to be contrary to Islam and an attack on women, and called today for those who practice it to be punished.**

The conference, organised by the German human rights group TARGET, recommended that governments pass laws to prohibit the tradition and that judicial bodies prosecute those who mutilate female genitals.

"The conference appeals to all Muslims to stop practicing this habit, according to Islam's teachings which prohibit inflicting harm on any human being," the participants said in their final statement.

Egypt's two top Islamic clerics, Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, the Grand Sheik of Al-Azhar, the foremost theological institute in the Sunni Muslim world, and Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa, attended the conference, which drew scholars from as far afield as Russia.

Tantawi's and Gomaa's edicts are considered binding.

Female circumcision, which involves cutting the clitoris, continues to be practiced in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa as well as Egypt, Yemen and Oman, despite numerous campaigns against it.

Those men who support the tradition believe it lowers a girl's sexual desire and helps maintain her honour. They also believe it is required by Islam.

The scholars said circumcision inflicts physical and mental harm on women. Furthermore, they said, Islam considers it to be an aggression against women. Those who perform it should be punished.

"The conference reminds all teaching and media institutions of their role to explain to the people the harmful effects of this habit in order to eliminate it," the scholars said in their recommendations.

"The conference calls on judicial institutions to issue laws that prohibit and criminalise this habit ... which appeared in several societies and was adopted by some Muslims although it is not sanctioned by the Quran or the Sunna," the scholars said, referring to Islam's holy book and the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad.

Although many countries have outlawed female circumcision, the law is poorly enforced and prosecutions are rare.

In the 1950s, the Egyptian government tried to stop midwives from performing the custom, while allowing doctors to do so - fearing that otherwise families who insisted on circumcising their daughters would have the operation carried out in unsafe conditions. But in 1996, the health minister imposed a total ban on the practice.

---

**P.S.**

\* From The Age:

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/muslim-scholars-rule-female-circumcision-unislamic/2006/11/24/1163871589618.html>