

The Woman Who Suffered Genital Mutilation By Pharoanic Circumcision, ‘Blamed it on Islam’ and Turned “Infidel”

A CASE OF FRIGIDITY, FRUSTRATION AND MISPLACED ANGER

The
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“Brave, inspiring, and beautifully written. . . . Narrated in clear, vigorous prose, it traces the author’s geographical journey from Mogadishu to Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, and her desperate flight to the Netherlands to escape an arranged marriage.”

—*The New York Times*

INFIDEL

AYAAN HIRSI ALI

AUTHOR OF *THE CAGED VIRGIN*

The Scholars of the Muslims on the Harmful Practice of Female Genital Mutilation, An Explanation of the Medical Benefits of Hoodectomy (Khitān) and a Refutation of Ayaan Hirsi Ali Who Suffered Genital Mutilation Due to an Ancient Egyptian Practice and then Blamed Islām For the Harms of Localised Culture

Bismillāh wal-Ḥamdulillāh. We present here a fatwā from the Permanent Committee of Research and Verdicts headed by Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Bāz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) and then offer some notes in explanation of this matter. Through this, we can counter the anti-Islāmic propaganda coming from self-proclaimed “infidels” such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali and her supporters.

THE FATWĀ

Question: “We are Somālī Muslim women who live in Canada. We are suffering severely due to an affair imposed upon us by way of culture and tradition. It is Pharoanic circumcision in which the two smaller (inner) and most of the larger (outer) lips [of the vagina] are removed. This is in essence the removal of the outward reproductive organs of the female which leads to a complete disfigurement of the vagina. After the procedure, the opening is completely sealed via stitching, and it is what is known as *ratq* (fusing, joining). This is then brings about excruciating pains for the women on the night of her marriage and also when giving birth. In many instances, the affair requires surgery, which leads to frigidity. It also causes many medical issues as a result of which a woman loses much of her

life, her health and her ability to have children. I have also attached an excerpt from a medical report which explains that. We desire to know the legislative ruling upon this act. The deliverance of Muslim women in many lands depends on your ruling. May Allāh grant you success, be benevolent to you and make you a treasure for Muslim men and women.”

Answer: “If the situation is just as you have described, then this circumcision is not permissible in the manner described because of the far-reaching harm it causes to the woman. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: *“Let there be no causing of harm, nor reciprocating harm.”* The legislated circumcision is to take a small amount of [the skin] from the prepuce (fold of skin) that is above the vaginal entrance, but not all of it is removed, due to the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ) to the female practitioner of circumcision, while she was circumcising a female: *“Make only a small cut, and do not go to excess for it brings more splendour to her face and makes her more loved by her husband.”* Reported by al-Ḥākim, al-Ṭabarānī and others. And with Allāh lies success, and may Allāh make good mention of our Prophet Muḥammad, his family and his companions and grant them safety.”

The Permanent Committee for Research and Verdicts.

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Member: Bakr Abū Zayd

Fatāwā al-Lajnah al-Dā‘imah (4/44), no. 20118.

Notes:

1. Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a Somali woman, who is a “feminist” and a self-proclaimed “infidel”—she authored a book with this title. At a young age, she underwent **Pharoanic circumcision**—as is typical for Somali women.¹ Similar to the phenomena of “road rage” in which a person whose path is cut off by another driver, loses his rags, becomes enraged and then behaves erratically, it appears this woman has had a similar experience in relation to the cutting and mutilation of her genitals by an ancient Egyptian practice that is referred to as “Pharoanic circumcision”. This is no doubt a barbaric, harmful practice and one can empathise with women who have been put through this horrific experience. However, you cannot go on an “FGM-Rage”, and blame Islām for your harmful, backward culture. Further, one should note that for some strange reason, this procedure has taken the name of one of the greatest tyrants and enemies of Islām to have walked the earth, **Fir’aun**. It is an ancient Egyptian practice brought to the sub-Saharan countries in Africa and predates Islām by well over 1500 years and this is the likely reason it is referred to as “Pharoanic” circumcision.

2. As for circumcision, there are three procedures:

- **Clitoral unhooding** or **clitoral hood reduction**. This is the removal of a part of the layer of skin covering the clitoris, also known as the clitoral prepuce. It is a fold of skin that is equivalent to the male foreskin. This is a beneficial procedure for women with clear benefits that are documented in the scientific literature and there are dozens of surgeries scattered

¹ Ayaan Hirsi Ali: ‘FGM was done to me at the age of five. Ten years later, even 20... I would not have testified against my parents’. Evening Standard Online 14 March 2013.

across the United States (and elsewhere) which specialise in this procedure. The size and shape of the prepuce, or the clitoral hood, varies among females, just as the foreskin does in men. As a result, some women may suffer from any of the following: **sexual health problems including unsightly appearance and lack of stimulation, urinary tract and yeast infections, adhesion which is known medically as phimosis,² sexual pain, and irritation.** There are surgeries that specialise in this procedure of “hoodplasty”, or “clitoral hood reduction” in order to treat these conditions. This procedure is *commended* (and *not* obligatory) for women in Islāmic law and is known as “*al-khitān*”, circumcision for women. An excess of the prepuce can hinder stimulation and gratification. Circumcision by a competent practitioner helps resolve this problem and helps regulate sexual desire by enhancing the gratification of the woman which—as *well as pleasing the man*—does not leave her in want due to lack of fulfilment. Benefits of this practice—**hygiene, beautification of the private part and sexual fulfilment**—have been indicated by Muslim scholars such as Ibn al-Qayyim.³

² See Alei, G. et al. New Approach to Clitoral Phimosis: Hoodplasty. *Journal of Gynecologic Surgery*. Vol. 27, No. 1, March 2011. Research indicates that one in 5 women experience this. Refer to: Munarriz, R. et al. (2002) The Prevalence of Phimosis of the Clitoris in Women Presenting to the Sexual Dysfunction Clinic. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* Vol. 28; Aerts, L. et al. (2017). The prevalence of clitoral adhesions in women presenting to the sexual medicine practice. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. Volume 14, Issue 4, Supplement, Page e110.

³ Refer to Tuḥfat al-Mawdūd (Jeddah: Majma‘ al-Fiqh al-Islāmī), p. 274. See also: Placik, Otto J. et al. *A Prospective Evaluation of Female External Genitalia Sensitivity to Pressure following Labia Minora Reduction and*

- **Excision**, also known as “**clitoridectomy**”. This is the removal of all or part of the clitoris.

- **Infibulation**, also known as “**Pharoanic circumcision**”. This is where the external parts of the female genitalia, as well as the labia minora and the clitoris are removed and then the vagina is stitched together. This is **a barbaric practice and a crime against women**. This action predated Islām and unfortunately, remained a cultural practice in some African lands.

3. Islām did not accept this disfigurement and destruction of the female reproductive organ, and in this respect we find that in Madīnah, the Prophet (ﷺ) came across a woman that would perform female circumcision from prior to Islām and he advised her: “*Do not cut in excess and thereby cause harm...*”—and in a narration, “*make only a small cut*”—“*... for it brings the woman greater attention [from her husband]*”—and in a narration, “*...for it brings radiance to the face*”—“*and it is more loved by the husband.*”⁴ Upon this, Muslim scholars and

Clitoral Hood Reduction. Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery: October 2015, Vol. 136, Issue 4, pP. 442e–452e. Presenting their results, the authors stated: “At 6 months, an increase in the number of sexual relations was observed in 44.1 percent of subjects ($p = 0.011$), an improvement in orgasm frequency was exhibited by 35.3 percent of subjects ($p = 0.013$), and an increase in orgasm strength was observed in 35.3 percent of subjects ($p = 0.006$).” They also concluded that this procedure does not lead to any loss in genitalia sensitivity. Similar results were demonstrated in a much larger study by Alter GJ in *Aesthetic labia minora and clitoral hood reduction using extended central wedge resection*. Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. 2008;122:1780–1789. They reported a significant improvement in self-esteem and sex life among the patients.

⁴ Related by Abū Dāwūd (no. 5271) and declared ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī.

jurists have made it clear that it is the prepuce (qulfah), the fold of skin comprising the hood that covers the clitoris, that is reduced in size according to what is appropriate. From these scholars are **Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī**, (d. 1449) **Abū al-Ḥasan al-Mawardī** (d. 1058), **Ibn Taymiyyah** (d. 1328) and **Ibn al-Qayyim** (d. 1350) by way of example. This procedure is to be undertaken by an experienced specialist as indicated by Muslim scholars and Ibn al-Qayyim also discusses the issue of compensation for malpractice.⁵

4. On a similar and related note, The National Health Service (NHS) in the UK provides information on **Labiaplasty (vulval surgery)**, stating: “A labiaplasty is surgery to reduce the size of the labia minora—the flaps of skin either side of the vaginal opening. Some women consider having a labiaplasty because they don’t like the look of their labia, or because the labia cause discomfort. This is a major decision you should weigh up carefully.”⁶ After providing details about the cost and the process, they make a careful distinction between this procedure and “female genital mutilation”.

As has preceded from the speech of **Ibn al-Qayyim**, adornment and beautification can be considered to be among the aims and benefits of circumcision (unhooding or khitān, in which a small amount of the prepuce skin is removed). He

⁵ Refer to *Tuḥfat al-Mawdūd* (Jeddah: Majma‘ al-Fiqh al-Islāmī), p. 283.

⁶ Refer to <https://www.nhs.uk> in the Health section dealing with cosmetic procedures. **Note:** In UK law, “female genital mutilation” is defined as *the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons*. It is a criminal, punishable offence in the UK to “*excise, infibulate or otherwise mutilate the whole or any part of a girl’s labia majora, labia minora or clitoris*” as stated in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

stated: “And what beautification is better than reducing that from the skin of the prepuce (qulfah) that has exceeded the limit in its length... And alongside this, circumcision comprises **purity, cleanliness, adornment and beautification of form (appearance), and regulation of sexual desire...**”⁷ The Prophetic traditions cited earlier contain a subtle allusion—through the most beautiful and indirect of expressions—of the beneficial effect of “hoodectomy (khitān)”: sexual fulfilment that does not leave the husband or wife in want (which would otherwise make them prone to infidelity) because their desire is “regulated” through adequate fulfilment.

Hence, this type of “female circumcision” with empirically verified and proven medical benefits is a beneficial procedure when carried out by **a competent, certified specialist.**

Conclusion

The self-proclaimed “infidel”, Ayaan Hirsi Ali was welcomed by certain western nations and praised by numerous atheists because her case allowed them to throw the harms of her culture (such as genital mutilation and forced marriage) upon Islām and Muslims. Since there are multitudes of Somali women—and many Christian women from Ethiopia, Eritrea and other sub-Saharan countries—who recognise that this is an ancient practice which predates Islām and is not sanctioned by Islām, then it shows that resentful women like Ayaan Hirsi Ali have other motives for their activism against Islām and it cannot simply be because their genitals have been mutilated or because they were forced into marriages—neither of which are

⁷ Refer to *Tuḥfat al-Mawdūd* (Jeddah: Majma‘ al-Fiqh al-Islāmī), p. 274.

allowed by Islām. Also worthy of note is that in the case of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, she was exposed for telling lies to gain asylum whilst in Holland and this in turn cast doubt about her claims about maltreatment in Somalia.⁸

One should also note that many apostates—especially those who become vocal anti-Islām activists—come from the background of Shī'ism or were Qādīyānīs (who are not considered Muslims), or had some really bad experiences due to culture, oppression from parents, siblings or society. So then some of these people—just like the person who suffers road rage—go berserk with resentment and anger. Then when non-Muslims who hate Islām, and who have their own agendas, see these apostates, they rush to them with aid and support, grant them positions, give them funding and make them spokesmen or spokeswomen. In turn, some of these apostates find an occupation, wealth and riches in the process.

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1 Rabī al-Awwal 1440

8 November 2018

⁸ Refer to “*Critic of Islam to quit Holland after lies are exposed*”. 16 May 2006, telegraph.co.uk. The documentary exposing her lies is available on Youtube titled, “*Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s Lies Exposed*”.