



# COUNTRY FOCUS

## CYPRUS

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# COUNTRY CONTEXT

## / FACTS AND FIGURES

Given the current lack of a unified national database on FGM in Cyprus, data for this report were collected from four sources (Future World Centre, the Asylum Service of the Ministry of Interior, the UNCRC's Hope for Children and the Outpatient Department of Makarios III Hospital). Data provided cover the period 2013 to March 2016.

Future World Centre (FWC) has registered the greatest number of cases of FGM in Cyprus via its Unit for Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, which provides psychological support to affected women. The Unit has supported 32 FGM-affected women since 2013, from Somalia (28), Ivory Coast (one), Guinea (one), Sudan (one) and Nigeria (one) (FWC, March 2016). The Asylum Service has identified ten refugee women and four refugee girls as victims of FGM since 2013, from Somalia (eight women and four girls), Sudan (one woman) and Gambia (one woman), while Hope for Children has given support to three teenage migrant girls—two from Cameroon and one from Nigeria. Makarios III Hospital does not collect data regarding cases of FGM. However, its outpatient department reported around three to four cases of FGM a month in the period to 2016, most involving asylum-seekers. A further four cases of FGM-affected women in labour were registered in 2015, and one between January and June 2016. (In all five cases, the women concerned gave birth by caesarean section.)

FGM in Cyprus occurs among first-generation immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. However, there are currently no quantitative or qualitative data available about FGM-affected communities in Cyprus.

01  
Country context

# LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

## 02

Legislative  
Framework

### / INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN CONVENTIONS

Cyprus has ratified a number of conventions on FGM, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2010/C 83/02) (EIGE, 2013). On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2017, Cyprus ratified and voted into Law the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

### / CRIMINAL LAW

FGM has been a specific criminal offence in Cyprus since 2003, although there have been no prosecutions to date.

Article 233A, Section 1, of the Cypriot Penal Code prohibits FGM, defined as “any form of cutting or mutilation of the major or minor lips of the vagina or of the clitoris of the genitalia”.

The provisions of Article 233A apply to the perpetrator of FGM, as well as to those who are an accessory to the act, an adviser to the perpetrator or who induce another to commit FGM. The consent of a woman subjected to FGM is not a defence or mitigating factor in the prosecution of the crime, the maximum penalty for which is imprisonment for five years (Cypriot Criminal Code, CAP 154, Amendment 4, 2011, Provision 233A).

However, Cyprus differs from every other European country surveyed, in that section 2 of the law specifies:

“The actions described in section (1) are not considered illegal if carried out by a doctor where there is need, either for the physical health of the woman on whom it is carried out, or if carried out on a woman in any stage of labour, or after that in relation to labour. The above actions may only be carried out following consultation with two other doctors.”

### / CHILD PROTECTION LAW

The general legislative framework approaches FGM in children as a violation of a girl's human rights, or child abuse. Nevertheless, FGM is not specifically referred to under Child Protection Law (1957).

New legislation regarding children's rights is currently being developed, with a view to updating current law. In the interim, the Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights has stated the right of the Commissioner's Office to intervene to protect a child and represent their interests, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. In addition, the Children's Law, Cap. 352, prohibits cruelty to children under the age of 16. Article 54 defines cruelty as the "wilful assault, ill-treatment, neglect, abandonment [or] exposure likely to cause the child unnecessary suffering or injury to health, including injury to or loss of sight, hearing, limb or organ" (Children's Law, Cap. 352).

## / ASYLUM LAW

A woman or girl who has been subjected to or fears being subjected to FGM on return to her country of origin may apply for refugee status in Cyprus, according to Provision 3(c) of the Asylum Law (L. 6(I)/2000, amended 2009). The law does not specifically refer to FGM, however a woman or girl can claim asylum on the grounds that she belongs to a particular social group that practises FGM. Cypriot asylum legislation is currently being amended in accordance with European directives on international protection, in particular on qualification (Directive 2004/83/EU) and reception conditions (Council Directive 2003/9/EC and Directive 2013/33/EU).

## / PROFESSIONAL SECRECY LAW

Cyprus's general law on professional secrecy and disclosure makes no specific reference to reporting cases of actual or planned cases of FGM. Article 135 of the Penal Code states that all public officers, including medical practitioners, police officers and legal officers are bound not to disclose state or official information. In extreme circumstances, where both advisable and necessary, the disclosure of information is allowed, when authorized. Both Article 135 of the Penal Code and Article 69A of the Public Service Law stipulate that officials are obliged to report any abuse by other public officers.

While there is no evidence that FGM occurs in Cyprus, victims of the practice are resident on the island. However, current law is focused more on the criminalization of the act rather than the protection of victims and at-risk minors.

# POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Cypriot national action plan (NAP) on violence against women does not specifically address FGM. However, it does include a series of measures to tackle gender-based violence in general, including information campaigns aimed at highlighting the law and encouraging the reporting of violent crimes against women, as well as educating police, health practitioners, judges, lawyers and other professionals.

## / OTHER NATIONAL POLICY DOCUMENTS





FGM first emerged as a policy issue in 2003, when the subject was raised in the House of Representatives as one that should be specifically addressed by criminal law.

In 2014, the Ombudsman's Office released a position paper on the legal and institutional framework related to FGM in Cyprus, presenting the practice in terms of violence against women and as a violation of human rights. This paper has served as a useful advocacy tool, outlining relevant legal frameworks in Cyprus and Europe.

The 2014-17 NAP on gender equality released by the National Machinery for Women's Rights (part of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order) encompasses issues of particular relevance to FGM. In particular, the plan calls for the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women (Istanbul Convention) to be incorporated into Cypriot law.

## / MULTIDISCIPLINARY GUIDELINES/PROTOCOLS

There are currently no FGM-specific multidisciplinary guidelines or medical protocols on the protection, support and care of FGM-affected and at-risk women and girls. However, UNHCR Cyprus and the Asylum Service (Ministry of Interior) follow the UNHCR guidelines, in addition to the following EU Directives transposed in Cyprus:

-  EU Qualification Directive (EU Directive 2011/95/EU-recast)
-  EU Reception Conditions Directive (EU Directive 2013/33/EU)
-  European Asylum Procedures Directive (EU Directive 2013/32/EU)
-  EU Directive on the rights of the victims of crime (EU Directive 2012/29/EU)

The EU Qualification Directive has been incorporated in Cypriot Asylum Law (L. 6(l)/2000, amended 2009), while the EU Reception Conditions Directive and the European Asylum Procedures Directive are in the process of being ratified by the House of Representatives. However, the extent to which these directives are implemented has yet to be established.

## / INSTITUTIONAL/CSO INITIATIVES

In addition to the Future World Centre and the UNCRC's Hope for Children referred to above, a number of Cypriot institutions and CSOs are involved in efforts to tackle FGM.

The Cyprus University of Technology is currently coordinating a major EC-funded programme, United to End FGM (UEFGM) - a knowledge platform for professionals involving 12 European partners. The programme builds on an earlier UEFGM project to develop an e-learning tool for health and asylum professionals ([www.uefgm.org](http://www.uefgm.org)), which was led by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) between 2012 and 2016. The online professional development course United to END FGM brought together over 2,000 professionals from around the world, including midwives, gynaecologists, nurses, health visitors, medical/nursing students and NGOs, as well as asylum officers, and reception-centre staff and social workers. The project was funded by the END FGM European Campaign and supported by UNHCR.

MIGS is a founding member of the END FGM European Network ([www.endfgm.eu](http://www.endfgm.eu)), raising awareness of and providing training on FGM for policymakers and professionals in Cyprus and abroad. MIGS also organised professional development training for Cypriot health professionals in 2012. The programme, entitled Female Genital Mutilation: Challenges to Health Care Services in Europe and in Cyprus, was facilitated by expert trainers with the aim of improving the quality and effectiveness of the health support system for women and girls affected by FGM.

MIGS also actively lobbies policymakers on a range of issues related to FGM, including efforts to 'engender' the European Asylum Support Office and the pan-European movement to combat FGM.

In 2015, the Institute organized a roundtable discussion on FGM in Cyprus and Europe, with the aim of promoting dialogue and synergies between relevant government agencies and CSOs, as well as a workshop on integrating efforts to end FGM in development projects. The workshop, entitled Addressing FGM in Development Programmes and Projects, was funded by EuropeAid under the auspices of the Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs and involved participants from various state and non-state actors in Cyprus.

# MILESTONES / PROMISING PRACTICES

- > Legislation passed in 2003, specifically criminalising FGM
- > Istanbul Convention signed in 2015
- > UEFGM e-learning project initiated collaboration between stakeholders from 2012 that continues to date with the expanded UEFGM Knowledge Platform (2015-17).

## / PROMISING PRACTICE

Although FGM has yet to be considered a significant problem in Cyprus, greater action on issues such as domestic violence, gender equality and the promotion of human rights has laid a firm foundation for the development of a more comprehensive policy framework to address FGM.

One of the objectives of the UEFGM Knowledge Platform is to promote interagency collaboration, to raise awareness of at-risk women and girls, train professionals and ensure the mass media are better informed—steps that will also facilitate the development of standardised procedures for data collection, and enrich the knowledge, understanding and skills of Cypriot professionals and society at large with regard to FGM.

Civil society organisations and other actors have begun to play an important role in the dissemination of information on FGM. However additional strategies and tools are expected to emerge alongside a more proactive, FGM-specific, government policy, including projects to involve male members of practising communities, and the development of multi-disciplinary guidelines and protocols.

# ADVICE AND SUPPORT

The following offer specialist FGM services and helplines:



## **Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior**

The Asylum Service was established in 2004 to replace the Refugee Authority, and is responsible for examining asylum applications in the Republic of Cyprus as well as for running the Reception Centre.

T +357 22445245 or 22445265

Email: [info@asylum.moi.gov.cy](mailto:info@asylum.moi.gov.cy)

Website: <http://www.moi.gov.cy>



## **CARITAS Cyprus**

Caritas works to support the poor and the oppressed, with target groups including the elderly, children, migrants, refugees and the handicapped.

Address: 8, Saint Maron Str., Flat 4, Pafos Gate, 1010 Nicosia, Cyprus

T +357 22662606

Email: [caritascy.secretary@hotmail.com](mailto:caritascy.secretary@hotmail.com) / [administration@caritascyprus.org](mailto:administration@caritascyprus.org)

Website: <http://caritascyprus.com/>



## **Commissioner for the Rights of the Child**

The Commissioner is an independent institution whose mission is to protect and promote the rights of the child, representing their interest at all levels.

Address: Corner of Apelli & Pavlou Nirvana Str., 1496 Nicosia, Cyprus

T +357 22 873 200

Email: [childcom@ccr.gov.cy](mailto:childcom@ccr.gov.cy)

Website: <http://www.childcom.org.cy/>



## **Emergency number 112**



## **Cyprus Family Planning Association**

The Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA) is the leading non-profit, non-governmental, voluntary organisation in Cyprus on sexual and reproductive health, established in 1971. CFPA runs a helpline, as well as organising sex education programmes and publishing authoritative information and educational material. The Association is also involved in advocacy, promoting and defending sexual rights, and research.

Address: P.O. Box 25706, 27 Ezekia Papaioannou Str., 1311 Nicosia, Cyprus

T +357 22751093, Helpline: 1455

E-mail: [infor@cfpa.org.cy](mailto:infor@cfpa.org.cy)

Website: [www.cyfamplan.org](http://www.cyfamplan.org)

Advice and Support

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### **Future Worlds Centre (Humanitarian Affairs Unit, Unit for Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture)**

Future Worlds Centre (FWC) is an independent, non - profit, non-governmental organisation, offering free legal and psychosocial support to vulnerable populations since 2006, as well as conducting research, advocacy and community work. FWC's Humanitarian Affairs Unit is the UNHCR's implementing partner in Cyprus. The Unit for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture (URVT) - part of the Humanitarian Affairs Unit - provides multidisciplinary rehabilitation services to refugees and asylum - seekers who have been subjected to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. URVT is currently funded by the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

For more information: <http://www.futureworldscenter.org/>  
[http://futureworlds.eu/wiki/Humanitarian\\_Affairs\\_Unit](http://futureworlds.eu/wiki/Humanitarian_Affairs_Unit)  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Strengthening-Asylum-Future-Worlds-Center/294816963925318>

Address: 5 Promitheos Street, 1065 Nicosia, Cyprus  
T +357 22873820, F +357 22873821  
E-mail: [info@futureworldscenter.org](mailto:info@futureworldscenter.org)



### **Hope for Children (UNCRC Policy Centre)**

The UNCRC Policy Centre Hope for Children is an independent international humanitarian organisation established according to the standards and principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and European Union law, which works to promote and defend children's rights. The centre also offers victims of FGM psychological and medical support.

Address: 75 Limassol Avenue, Office 201, Nicosia, Cyprus  
T +357 22103234  
E-mail: [info@uncrcpc.org](mailto:info@uncrcpc.org)  
Website: <http://www.uncrcpc.org/>



### **Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman's Office)**

The Ombudsman's Office was established in 1991 as the independent authority responsible for addressing individual complaints concerning maladministration, misbehaviour and human rights violations by state officers or authorities. The Office also operates as the independent authority for the protection and promotion of human rights and the rights of the disabled, equality and the prevention of torture.

Address: Era House, Diagorou 2, 1097 Nicosia, Cyprus  
T +357 22 405500/501, F +357 22 672881  
Email: [Ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.cy](mailto:Ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.cy)  
Website: [www.ombudsman.gov.cy](http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy)



### **KISA (Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism)**

KISA is an NGO working to promote an inclusive, multicultural society, free of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, based on mutual respect and equal rights for all, irrespective of race, nationality, ethnicity, colour, creed, beliefs, gender, sexual preference or orientation, disability or any other form of diversity.

Address: Arsinois Street, Nicosia 1010 (P.O. Box 22113, 1517 Nicosia) Cyprus  
T +357 22878181/99098189, F +357 22773039  
E-mail: [info@kisa.org.cy](mailto:info@kisa.org.cy)  
Website: <http://kisa.org.cy>



### **Gynaecological and Obstetric Outpatient Department, Makarios III Hospital, Nicosia, Cyprus**

T +357 2205000 (call centre)/22 405160-38 (Gynaecology & Maternity Clinic)



### **Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)**

MIGS is a non-profit organisation that works to promote and contribute to gender-related projects on social, political, and economic themes, with an emphasis on the Mediterranean region. MIGS is committed to the elimination of discrimination against women, using a combination of research, advocacy and lobbying, as well as trainings, conferences and other activities, adopting a multidisciplinary approach, in collaboration with other institutions.

Address: 46 Makedonitissas Avenue, P.O. Box 24005, 1703 Nicosia, Cyprus  
T +357 22842034-7, F +357 22842050  
Email: [info@medinstgenderstudies.org](mailto:info@medinstgenderstudies.org)  
Website: <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/>



### **UNHCR Representation in Cyprus**

UNHCR was created in 1950, in the aftermath of the Second World War, to help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes. UNHCR aims to ensure that everyone has the right to seek asylum and to find safe refuge in another state, providing critical emergency assistance such as clean water, sanitation and healthcare, as well as shelter, blankets, household goods and sometimes food.

Address: P.O. Box 25577, 1310 Nicosia /2 Demetracopoulou Street, 3rd Floor, 1090 Nicosia  
T +357 2235905743/+357 22660164, F +357 22359037  
Email: [cypni@unhcr.org](mailto:cypni@unhcr.org)  
Website: <http://www.unhcr.org/cyprus.html>

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Last Updated December 2016

