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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis
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Dear Sir,

Non-therapeutic circumcision of male minors

I lead the political party **Justice for Men & Boys (and the women who love them)** – ‘J4MB’. We are the only political party in the English-speaking world campaigning for the human rights of men and boys, which have long been assaulted by the actions and inactions of the state, not least in relation to male circumcision. Our 2015 election manifesto covered this area (pp 9,10) and 19 others.¹

Female circumcision – or as it’s more commonly termed these days, ‘female genital mutilation’ (FGM) – has been illegal in the UK since the passing of the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985. However, there is no legislation proscribing non-therapeutic male circumcision, which, by the same measure, is clearly male genital mutilation (MGM). Our legal advisors inform us that practitioners of MGM are committing crimes against the person, under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, and we recently publicly challenged Alison Saunders, Director of Public Prosecutions, and Theresa May MP, Home Secretary, on their position on this, asking why practitioners of MGM are not being prosecuted.^{2,3}

There is incontrovertible evidence that MGM leads to physical and mental health problems in men, and there are no health benefits for either the male who has had the operation, or others with whom he may later come into contact sexually. Should anyone doubt either of these assertions, we invite them to read an article by William Collins.⁴ An extract from the section ‘The real reason for MGM’ in his article:

‘This is how Moses Maimonides, the Jewish intellectual and physician, expressed it as early as 1135:

“With regard to circumcision, one of the reasons for it is, in my opinion, the wish to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question, so that this activity be diminished and the organ be in as quiet a state as possible. It has been thought that circumcision perfects what is defective congenitally... How can natural things be defective so that they need to

¹ <http://tinyurl.com/pusyfmt>

² <https://j4mb.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/150615-v2-open-letter-to-alison-saunders.pdf>

³ <https://j4mb.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/150714-open-letter-to-theresa-may.pdf>

⁴ <http://mra-uk.co.uk/?p=519>

be perfected from the outside, all the more because we know how useful the foreskin is to that member? In fact this commandment has not been prescribed with a view to perfecting what is defective congenitally, but to perfecting what is defective morally. The bodily pain caused to that member is the real purpose of circumcision. None of the activities necessary for the preservation of the individual is harmed thereby, nor is procreation rendered impossible, but violent concupiscence and lust that goes beyond what is needed are diminished.

The fact that circumcision weakens the faculty of sexual excitement and sometimes perhaps diminishes the pleasure is indubitable. For if at birth this member has been made to bleed and has had its covering taken away from it, it must indubitably be weakened. In my opinion, this is the strongest of the reasons for circumcision. Jewish men, sexually subdued and readily controlled by their wives, don't stray into mischief. The power of his member has been diminished so that he has no strength to lie with many lewd women."

No one has said it more clearly. The purpose of MGM is to ameliorate male sexual function.⁷

Quite apart from the issue of physical and mental health problems that can result from MGM, and the amelioration of later sexual function, MGM raises profound ethical issues. By definition, male minors cannot give informed consent to the excision of healthy flesh from their genitalia, and practitioners of MGM – including the parents or legal guardians of the minors concerned – are undoubtedly abusing their positions of trust.

In an age of gender equality, we must ask how can it be equitable that FGM has been illegal in the UK for the past 30 years, yet MGM – which is undoubtedly illegal – hasn't been specifically legislated against, nor any practitioners charged with their crimes? A common response is that FGM is more damaging than MGM, but this is open to question, as both procedures exist in a variety of degrees of severity. The outcome is what matters, and we refer you to a rational comparison between MGM and FGM in a video.⁵

Working with other organizations also campaigning in this area, we shall be organizing protests including one outside the Conservative party conference on Sunday 4 October, and possibly on later days during the conference. We shall be calling upon the government to introduce legislation to give male minors the same legal protection as that enjoyed by female minors for the past 30 years. We aim to see the practice of non-therapeutic MGM made illegal at the earliest opportunity.

We call upon your organization to publicly accept that on the basis of gender equality, as well as moral, ethical, and medical considerations, non-therapeutic circumcision of male minors must be halted forthwith. This is an overarching moral and ethical social imperative, whose direction of travel is inevitable. We shall be making the same call to other leading Jewish and Muslim organizations, and writing letters to both Jewish and Muslim newspapers. We should appreciate a considered response at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Buchanan
PARTY LEADER

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98f3IavuEgQ>