

Let the boys decide on circumcision

Joint statement from the Nordic Ombudsmen for Children and pediatric experts

Circumcision, performed without a medical indication, on a person who is incapable of giving consent, violates fundamental medical-ethical principles, not least because the procedure is irreversible, painful and may cause serious complications. There are no health-related reasons for circumcising young boys in the Nordic countries. Circumstances that may make circumcision advantageous for adult men are of little relevance to young boys in the Nordic countries, and on these matters the boys will have the opportunity to decide for themselves when they reach the age and maturity required to give consent.

As Ombudsmen for Children and pediatric experts we are of the opinion that circumcision without medical indication is in conflict with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which addresses the child's right to express his/her own views in all matters concerning him/her, and Article 24, point 3, which states that children must be protected against traditional practices that may be prejudicial to their health.

In 2013, The UN Human Rights Council also encouraged all countries to ban harmful practices that compromise the integrity and dignity of the child and are prejudicial to the health of boys and girls.

We see it as fundamental that parents' rights in this context do not prevail over children's right to bodily integrity. The best interests of the child must always be a primary consideration, even if this can reduce the rights of adults to perform religious or traditional practices.

The Nordic Ombudsmen for Children in conjunction with pediatric experts therefore wish to work towards a situation where circumcision without medical indication may only be carried out if a boy, who has reached the age and maturity required in order to understand the necessary medical information, chooses to consent to the procedure.

We would like to see a respectful dialogue between all involved parties on how to best ensure that boys will be able to exert their influence on the issue of circumcision. We also encourage our national governments to inform about the rights of the child and the health-related consequences of the procedure. We request our governments to take necessary measures to ensure that boys are given the opportunity to decide for themselves whether or not they want to be circumcised.

Oslo, September 30th 2013

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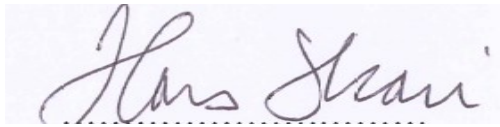


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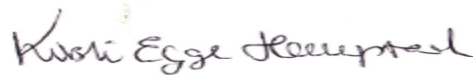
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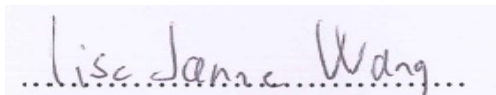
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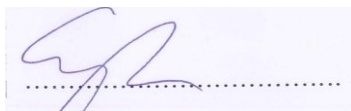
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