

SOMALIA: First prosecution for female genital mutilation

By Emma Batha

Thomson Reuters Foundation (26.07.2018) – <https://tmsnrt.rs/2v4tfY4>– Somalia's Attorney General Ahmed Ali Dahir announced on Wednesday the country's first ever prosecution against female genital mutilation (FGM) following the death of a 10-year-old girl, an adviser to the government said.

Ifrah Ahmed, who advises Somalia on gender issues, said the attorney general was sending a team of investigators to find out more about the death of the girl, Deeqa, who suffered severe bleeding after her mother took her to a traditional cutter.

The announcement was made at a conference on FGM attended by officials, religious leaders and journalists, which was co-hosted in Mogadishu by the Global Media Campaign to End FGM and the Ifrah Foundation.

"We are ready to take it to court," the attorney general was quoted as saying on Twitter by the organisers.

Deeqa's death has prompted campaigners to renew calls for Somalia to pass a law on FGM, which affects 98 percent of

women in the east African country – the highest rate in the world, according to U.N. data.

“This is really a defining moment for Somalia,” Deputy Prime Minister Mahdi Mohamed Gulaid told the conference organisers in a video posted on Twitter on Thursday.

Somalia’s constitution prohibits FGM, but efforts to pass legislation to punish offenders have been stalled by parliamentarians afraid of losing votes.

Ahmed confirmed news of the attorney general’s announcement to the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from Mogadishu.

“He said they had opened the case in Mogadishu and that they would investigate and deal with the parents,” said Ahmed, whose charity, the Ifrah Foundation, campaigns to end FGM in Somalia.

“He told the conference he would bring the family to justice.”

Global campaigners against FGM, which affects around 200 million girls and women worldwide, welcomed the news.

“This is massive,” said Nimco Ali, a prominent Somali-born British activist.

Somalia does not have a law against FGM, but campaign group 28 Too Many said offenders could still be prosecuted under the country's Penal Code, which makes it a criminal offence to cause hurt to another.

Many girls in Somalia undergo the most extreme form of the ancient ritual in which the external genitalia are removed and the vaginal opening is sewn up.

Deeqa was taken by her mother to a traditional circumciser on July 14 in central Somalia's Galmudug state and died in hospital two days later.

Her father was quoted by international media this week as defending the practice, saying he believed his daughter was "taken by Allah".

Many people believe the ritual is an important part of their tradition and a religious obligation, although it is not mentioned in the Koran.

Organisers said the attorney general had also urged Somalia's religious leaders to use radio and TV to speak out against FGM.

.....

If you want to be regularly informed about different violations of human rights in the world, [click here](#) for a free subscription to our newsletters!

Also:

HRWF database of news and information on over 70 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/womens-rights-gender-equality/>

List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>