



# National Association of Women Lawyers®

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September 9, 2004

H.E. Amadou Toumany Toure  
President  
BJ 1463 Koulouba  
Bamako, Mali

Re: Female Genital Mutulation

Honorable President Toumany Toure:

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL), the oldest association of women lawyers and judges in the United States. NAWL promotes women's rights domestically and internationally. NAWL strongly supports the call of Malian women for a national law which would criminalize the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

We have been informed that the Malian Association for Monitoring and Orientation on Traditional Practices and the Association for the Advancement and the Defense of the Rights of Women have worked since 1994 to raise awareness in Mali of the grave health consequences and the tremendous suffering caused to children and young women by this practice. While some communities in Mali have already ceased to use this practice, there is a strong need for a national law because many communities in Mali still mutilate women and because FGM practitioners from countries that have criminalized FGM (such as Burkina Faso, Senegal and Guinea-Conakry) use Mali as a safe haven in which to mutilate women from their own countries.

Article 1 of Mali's Constitution preserves the right of all citizens to integrity of person and guarantees the protection of all citizens from cruel and degrading treatment. The removal of women's genitals is such a treatment. We commend Mali for its commitment to international law and its ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC). Article 2(f) of CEDAW and Article 24(3) of the CRC obligate Mali to abolish laws, practices and customs which discriminate against women and to take all reasonable measures to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children. FGM is a practice which harms the health of countless children and which discriminates against women as such practices are not carried out on men. We therefore strongly urge you to support the introduction and passage of a national law to criminalize FGM and take all measures necessary to educate the public about the harmful nature of this practice.

Respectfully yours,

Eva Herzer  
Chair, NAWL International Law Committee