Abandoning Female Genital Mutilation

GUIDE TO PREACHING AND A MODEL SERMON
The guide to Preaching

This guide to preaching is neither an address nor an unchangeable model sermon. It is a tool for planning a sermon or any other communication based on religious or other precepts

1. to explain the position of Islam regarding female circumcision,

2. to encourage people to act together to abolish this practice, and

3. to create solidarity for this cause.

The first objective is based on the need for believers to be aware of the law applying to an action before engaging in it. As the writer al-Akhdâri said, “the adult Muslim (al-Mukallaf) must not do anything without being aware of the divine law pertaining to it.”

The second and third objectives follow from the teachings of the Quran that invite us to act in the knowledge that Allah is witness to our actions, as are the Prophet and the believers. “Strive hard, for Allah will see your deeds, as will His Messenger and the believers.” It is also a positive response to the Prophet’s exhortation to transform evil to good through our deeds and speech.

This guide provides a suggested framework for preparing an address on the subject and is in no way intended to be prescriptive. It is merely an example, which may serve as a guiding light to those who seek it.
The framework is composed of three elements:

1. An introduction to the historical context of female circumcision and to how it is currently practised
   a. Giving a succinct definition of female circumcision.
   b. Placing it in the historical and geographical context.
   c. Talking about the harmful consequences and damage caused by female circumcision.
   d. Drawing attention to religious teachings about all aspects of life, by emphasising Islam’s attachment to ‘the five principles’ known as “al-kulliyât al-Khams.”

2. Islam’s position on female circumcision
   a. Does Islam accept the practice or refute it?
   b. Quoting examples from the Fiqh (jurisprudential texts).
   c. Quoting the opinions of legal and religious experts, about abandoning female circumcision.
   d. Adding to these arguments the general medical opinion to illustrate the risks, which on the legal level justify its abandonment.

3. The call to action and to solidarity
   a. Exhorting those who practise female circumcision to abandon it, relying on arguments drawn from the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah.
   b. Inviting Muslims to exercise solidarity by applying the principle that requests us to take care of believers’ affairs.
Model sermon on the issue of female circumcision

The first khutbah

Praise to Allah, we seek aid and we repent before Him, we ask His guidance and protection against our own evil and our own sinful actions. He who is guided by Allah is well guided and he who has strayed from the path finds no guide whatsoever. We attest that our Lord Mohammed is His Servant and His Messenger, peace and salvation be upon Him, on His family and His companions and on those who have followed in their footsteps in charity until the Day of Judgement. That having been said:

Servants of Allah! We now live in a global era and are exposed to all sorts of issues which we have little control over. Today, our modern societies are faced with a problem - a problem as ancient as the world, but which has reappeared in a new form in our daily lives. It has implications for our health, our life and our traditions. Our religion speaks of it: We find some hadiths, considered by our scholars to have little authority and others which are authentic, but which do not speak clearly on the issue. We are going to analyse them objectively, in a scientific manner.

We are talking about the practice of female circumcision, which is widely debated throughout the world, especially by civil society, including Muslim organisations and other non-Muslim organisations. This debate is based on medical evidence as well as the opinions of experts and scholars.

We cannot find any text relating to the practice within the Quran. According to the Sunnah here are the hadiths which deal with the issue:

The first hadith is that of 'Oumou Atiya of Jâbir b. Zayd. It is a hadith mawquf (the own statement of a Companion
of the Prophet); the Prophet is supposed to have said to the circumciser of women: “O Oumou Atiyah, touch and do not abuse what is more favourable to the pleasure of the woman and more agreeable for the man.” Khafd is the circumcision of girls, al-Ishmam is taking a little, and al-Inhak is ablation. Although this hadith is best known as the hadith of Oumou Atiya, Al-Hâkim, al-Bayhaqî, and AbuDawud report it in similar words. However, all these sources have little authority, as al-Hâfiz Zeinndine al-Irâqî remarks in his commentary to the book Ihyâ ‘Ulûm al-Dîn.

The second hadith: “circumcision is a sunna for men and a makruma (meritorious act) for women”, was written by al-Hâfiz al-‘Irâqî in his commentary of the book Ihyâ ‘Ulûm al-Dîn, which has little authority, but was reiterated by al-Hâfiz ibn al-Barr and al-Bayhaqî.

The third hadith: “when the two circumcisions come together bathing is obligatory” is an authentic Muslim hadith. However, it is not clear whether it comes from an authoritative source. Here, “the two circumcisions” is an example of the Arabic style of writing, when two different things are referred to as one. For example, when one refers to “the two Omars” instead of Omar and Abubakr, or “the two moons” instead of the sun and the moon, “the two ‘ishâ” instead of twilight and the ‘ishâ, “the two Zuhr” instead of the zuhr and the ‘açr, and “the two seas” referring to the salt water sea and the fresh water river.

The fourth hadith states that “the hygiene of the body consists of five things: circumcision, cutting pubic hair, cutting facial hair, trimming nails, and shaving hair from the armpits”. This is an authentic hadith, but it is specific to men and male circumcision, whereas khîfa (female circumcision) is only referred to in customary law. Therefore this hadith cannot be used in support of female circumcision.
The ulamas have expressed differing opinions on this issue. To summarise:

- **The Shafi’i** and those who share their point of view claim that this is an obligation for both men and women.

- **The Maliki** and their supporters consider it a sunna for men and a makruma for girls - in other words, permitted but not obligatory.

Some contemporary ulamas have also put forward opinions on the issue. For example, one can cite:

**Sayyid Sâbiq**, the learned jurist who clearly states that it is not obligatory for girls to be circumcised, and it is not a sin for a girl to remain uncircumcised. Neither the Book of Allah nor the Sunna of the Prophet refer to circumcision as an obligation. Everything that was attributed to the Prophet on the issue has been declared to be of little force by the ulamas and therefore cannot be considered reliable.

**Sheikh ibn al-Mounzir**, one of the great scholars of the Fiqh and the hadith, states in the Shafi’i doctrine: “on the issue of female circumcision there is no valid teaching which we can refer to, nor is there a sunna to follow”.

Historically, female circumcision pre-dates the Pharaohs. It was practised by polytheists long before Islam adopted the practice.

With regard to the circumcision of men, there is a sunna referring to the circumcision of our father Ibrahim at the age of 80. It is also known that the Prophet circumcised his grandsons Hassan and Housseyn, whereas it is not specified whether he had his daughters or the daughters of the orthodox caliphs circumcised, even though they were required to follow the path to which he had guided them.
May Allah count you and us amongst those who adhere to the sunna at the moment of the deterioration of the ummah and amongst those who hear the Word and follow the best of the Word.

The second khutbah

Praise to Him who merits it, peace and salvation on His Messenger, His family and His companions and on those who follow them in charity until the Day of Judgement. On this:

Having listened to the legal arguments and the opinions of the ulema and the imams, our religion and our Sharia determine what gives us life. Allah, the Almighty has said: “Oh you who believe! Answer Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to what will give you life” (Surah ‘The Spoils of War’, verse 24). He said also: “Do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you and whoever commits that through aggression and injustice, we shall cast him into the Fire, and that is easy for Allah” (Surah ‘The Women’, verses 29/30). He also declared: “do not throw yourselves into destruction, and do good. Truly, Allah loves those who do good” (‘The Cow’, verse 195).

It is well known that the Prophet, peace be upon Him, said “do not do harm and do not let yourself be harmed”. He also said “carry the good news and do not let yourself be discouraged”, and declared that “the end of the world is more bearable for God than the fact of killing a believer”. He also stated that “the Muslim is at ease in the bosom of his religion as long as he has not committed an unlawful act”.

God says, “if you differ on these questions, turn to Him”. He has declared “If you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Prophet” (Surah ‘The Women’, verse 59).
Allah asks us to turn to learned people who have experience of resolving controversies, and to turn to Allah and to the Messenger. The Almighty said “ask those who know the Scripture, if you do not know” ('The Honey Bees’ verse 43).

We have delivered the arguments of Islamic jurisprudence, the point of view of the fuqaha of the past and of the present. As to the medical point of view, here it is, listen to it, understand it and be aware of it, pass it on, for it comes from a far more eloquent messenger than the one speaking to you today.

The doctors are all agreed, Muslims and non-Muslims, on the serious consequences that female circumcision has on the lives of girls, both immediately and for their future. It causes serious damage to the body and to the mind - for example haemorrhages, which can be fatal, incontinence, and even death during childbirth. Such consequences should serve as a warning, especially since we can find no justification for promoting this practice, either in the Sharia or in medicine. We are left solely with the knowledge that it is a tradition whose harmful consequences are obvious. We must abandon this practice, and turn away from it forever.

As for those who link female circumcision to chastity, this virtue comes about and is achieved through Islamic education, ethics, and morality, and by distancing ourselves from what is unequivocally forbidden by Allah.

I make these remarks and I ask Allah to pardon me, just as you and all Muslims invoke His forgiveness. It is He who forgives, the All-Merciful. Peace and salvation be upon the noble Prophet, on His family and his companions.

May God pardon us and all Muslims. Stand up for the prayer.
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