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Muslim Women's Shura Council Declares Female Genital Cutting: Harmful and Un-Islamic

August 13, 2010 – The Muslim Women's Shura Council, a global council of Muslim women scholars, activists, and specialists, has just released a statement condemning **Female Genital Cutting (FGC)** as a **harmful and un-Islamic practice**. FGC endangers the lives of 3 million girls worldwide every year, causing extensive medical, social, and spiritual damage. The Council's statement condemns FGC as a harmful practice that contradicts the spirit and the letter of Islam, violates international laws on children's and women's rights, and endangers populations in need. The statement will serve as a tool for activists seeking to eradicate FGC.

FGC has previously been condemned by religious and political authorities worldwide but the statement is a first coming from a global council of Muslim women. Aisha Rafea, Council member from Egypt and co-leader of the women's group at The Egyptian Society for Spiritual and Cultural Research (ESSCR), explained her vote in favor of the statement as follows: "As a Muslim woman, I do believe that whatever is in the highest good of a human being, physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually, is embraced by Islam." Nadia al-Sakkaf, Council member from Yemen and Editor-in-Chief of *Yemen Times*, concurred: "Such a declaration coming from a respectable platform of empowered Muslim women should be given the significance it deserves, signaling that Muslim women are ready to defend their rights and take matters into their own hands."

The Shura Council statement addresses FGC comprehensively, studying its religious, societal, and medical implications. The Council members consulted the Qur'an, the example and sayings of the Prophet, the objectives and principles of Islamic law, and legal opinions to argue against FGC. Many proponents of FGC try to justify the practice in the name of religion; therefore, the Council believes that the dissemination of authentic religious information on FGC will help eliminate the practice, when combined with context-specific, culturally sensitive, grassroots measures. One example is WISE's successful collaboration with the Egyptian Association for Society Development (EASD), an NGO based in Giza, working to eradicate FGC in the region by providing religious education alongside financial incentives.

Founded by members of Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE) in 2006, the Muslim Women's Shura Council aims to promote gender equality and justice by challenging gross misinterpretations of Islam. WISE is a global program, social network, and grassroots social justice movement led by Muslim women and sponsored by the American Society for Muslim Advancement. WISE is generously funded by the MDG3 fund and Henry Luce Foundation.

To find out more, and to read to Council's statement against FGC, please visit <http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/about/shuracouncil/>