



March 20, 2018

Alþingi
Kirkjustræti
150 Reykjavík

Efni: Umsögn um frumvarp til laga um breytingu á almennum hegningarlögum (bann við umskurði drengja), 148. löggjafarþing, 114. mál. nefndasvid@althingi.is

Ágæta Alþingi / Dear Members of the Parliament:

The Children's Health & Human Rights Partnership (CHHRP) is a dedicated not-for-profit partnership of Canadian medical, legal, and ethics professionals working collaboratively towards ending forced non-therapeutic genital cutting of children in Canada. Our work is in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international human rights law.

We write today to respectfully request your support for the proposed restrictions on non-therapeutic male infant circumcision in Iceland. Our hope is that you will take a strong stand in favour of allowing males—when there is otherwise no immediate medical need—to decide upon and consent to circumcision at an age when they can fully understand the consequences. Such a stand would be consistent with the international movement of child protection advocates, especially paediatric and medical societies and children's ombudspersons in Nordic countries, who recognize this issue as an important human rights concern.

Child Rights International Network have noted in their recent 2018 report "What Lies Beneath"

With the exception of female genital mutilation, which is rightly one of the most widely recognised and challenged harmful traditional practices, there are a number of other procedures that involve irreversibly altering children's genitals through

surgery for no justifiable medical reason. These are: sex assignment of intersex children, forced sterilisation of children with learning disabilities, and routine male circumcision, all three of which remain legal in most countries around the world when performed on children. (p. 21-22)

Full Document

https://www.crin.org/sites/default/files/crin_report_2018_edition.pdf

We wish to refer you to the 2012 report from the International NGO Council on Violence against Children. This groundbreaking report identifies numerous harmful practices based on tradition, culture, religion or superstition that violate the rights of children and the Council explicitly includes male circumcision as one of these practices.

It is difficult to argue that circumcision of otherwise healthy children is not a medical, cultural or religious tradition and that many parental motivations for requesting infant or child circumcision can be considered superstitious or based on fear of the unknown. The International NGO Council on Violence against Children (2012) explained that these practices are “perpetrated through false beliefs about child development and the cause and treatment of ill-health. These may stem from religious edict or belief, or from tradition or superstition or in some cases be promoted by health practitioners” (p. 7). The latter is certainly the case in North America, where paediatric societies take ambiguous stands and fail to firmly reject any medical justification for newborn circumcision and who issue statements that ignore the functions, benefits, and natural development of the foreskin, while failing to identify the newborn’s inherent right to bodily integrity.

In specifically identifying by male circumcision as a traditional practice that violates the rights of male children, the International NGO Council on Violence against Children (2012) stated that “non-consensual, non-therapeutic circumcision of boys, whatever the circumstances, constitutes a gross violation of their rights, including the right to physical integrity, to freedom of thought and religion and to protection from physical and mental violence” (p. 22).

The International NGO Council on Violence against Children advised that circumcision and the other identified harmful practices

...should be effectively prohibited, when necessary explicitly, with particular attention to ensuring there are no provisions enabling parents or others to consent to/authorise such harmful practices; that prohibition is upheld explicitly in states with multiple legal systems including customary and/or religious law; that prohibition extends effectively not only to direct perpetrators but to those facilitating, arranging or offering the child for these practices. (2012, p. 46)

Full Document

http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/documents/docs/InCo_Report_15Oct.pdf

It has become increasingly clear that Nordic countries are taking seriously their pledge to protect children as well as their international treaty commitments regarding this group of vulnerable citizens. Their medical associations, child welfare agencies, and some legislative bodies reject the promotion of circumcision of otherwise healthy children, especially when such promotion is done by medical professionals and associations. We at CHHRP believe that your duty to children extends to the introduction of Icelandic law that explicitly identifies the right of all children to physical integrity and eventual self-determination and prohibits all forms of non-therapeutic genital cutting.

CHHRP has learned that there may have been attempts from one or more representatives of the United States of America government to influence the Icelandic Althingi on this issue. We are deeply concerned by this allegation, in light of the fact that the United States is the only nation in the world which has refused to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Furthermore, the United States' national paediatric medical organization, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), was publicly condemned by international paediatric authorities for its shoddy 2012 statement that failed to recognize the functions of the foreskin, the medical ethics involved in non-therapeutic circumcision, and the important human rights that are violated by those who circumcise otherwise healthy

children. We direct you to one such rebuke signed by 38 physicians from 16 European nations as well as Canada.

Full Document:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2013/03/12/peds.2012-2896.full.pdf+html>

SUMMARY

Iceland has always been a leader in the international arena when it comes to recognizing human rights — in some cases long before many other nations. We look forward to seeing this trend continue with the enactment of legislation that ensures that all Icelandic children are protected from non-therapeutic genital cutting.

Respectfully submitted,

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