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## Female Genital Mutilation

- Started 1000s of years ago and attached itself to religion
- This occurs mainly in Africa
- Happens in both Christian and Muslim nations. However, the media mainly depicts it as a predominantly Islamic practice
- Urinary tract infections, growth of cysts, hemorrhaging and clinical shock are usually effects of the procedure.

#watch “Rezla Aslan – Does Islam promote violence?” Video

### Motivations/Motives for FGM

- Usually, after the mutilation there's a stitching. This is important to the family and the husband. Why? Because it means the woman is a virgin. This is important because it allows the society to marry endogamously (among the same culture) and not practice exogamy (marrying
- If a woman does not participate in FGM, then no one is going to marry her. She could also be stigmatised against or exiled. This is because the society stresses the importance of marriage
- Another motive for it is that it is fitting the honor code which is virginity.
- Many feminists believe it is a way to control women.
- Many people feel it is a religious duty even though it predates religion.
- Many people believe it is a sub-section of patriarchal control

- People are afraid that if the end it, it will be the end of the moral order. (slippery slope)

Here's what we know about the west:

- FGM was practiced in the west for about 200 years for various reasons; if women were considered nymphomaniacs, thought it would stop masturbation, thought women were hysterical and it would stop it, thought it would cure epilepsy
- Christians have done it in Africa and outside Africa until about a century ago
- Women in other continents do non-medical surgery (botox, breast implants, liposuction) for many reasons and they're not being forced. Why?
  - Some of it is as a result of patriarchal traces. The idea that women have to be a certain way
  - Force of the community
- Some people do FGM and are not forced because just like other women, they have societal pressure/ force of the community

## Judging FGM

There are two theoretical components:

1. principle based ethic: means in terms of FGM, it is universally an act of violence.

2. Cultural relativist approach: instead of condemning it outright, we have to look at it from the perspective of those cultures in question. However, there is an argument that if you can relativize one form of violence you can relativize others too. This is why feminists normally gravitate towards the first approach.

## How to stop it

Judging people doesn't work so how do you stop it from happening? It could take time.

- Get activists within and outside the culture to stop the practice
- Implement laws about gender equality
- Education
- Control reproductive functions: the more opportunity that women get to control their bodies (contraception, abortion, family size) the higher the chance of resistance.
- Increase job opportunities: you have to have increased economic growth to help people's standard of living. This gives them disposable income to spend on other things such as education.
- Decrease poverty