

# **Religious Leaders DECLARATION**

In the name of God the Merciful

We, a group of sheikhs and religious leaders and scholars from several African and Arab countries: Mauritania, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Somaliland; meeting in Nouakchott, Mauritania on 4-5 Dhu al-Hijjah 1443 corresponding to 4-5 July 2022, at the kind invitation of the International Federation of Planned Parenthood and the Mauritanian Association for the Promotion of the Family and under the auspices of His Excellency the Mauritanian Minister of Health, with the aim of activating the role of sheikhs and religious leaders and scholars to support the abandonment of the practice of female Genital Mutilation/Circumcision; And after listening to the opinions of doctors, psychologists, sociologists, jurists, and to the legal religious vision and the scholars' dialogue on this issue; the participants agreed that abandoning the phenomenon of female circumcision has become a religious legal necessity as well as a medical one, because of the harm it entails. The religious legal principle is that the harm must be removed, as Prophet Mohamed, (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "Do not harm or be wronged".

That is why we call on religious scholars to break the silence and do their sacred duty through all available platforms, to protect women and girls.

We also call on governments, civil society organizations and influential leaders to do so.

We have recommended the following:

- Urging the International Planned Parenthood Federation to provide technical support and assistance to countries where the phenomenon of female circumcision is rampant, to support the abandonment of this practice once and for all,
- Supporting the Center of Excellence against Female Genital Mutilation in Mauritania to play its role in providing medical and psychological support in the field,
- Requesting His Excellency the Minister of Health of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the sponsor of this meeting, to write to the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and the African Union to put this issue on the agenda of the meeting of health ministers in both institutions, to come up with a unified position that supports the elimination of FGM practice,
- Activating the relationship between the concerned ministries (endowments, health, education, social affairs, media...) to unify efforts to abandon this practice,
- Inviting international and advocacy organizations to support the activities of religious scholars related to the abandonment of female circumcision,
- Joint communication between religious scholars, doctors and specialists to unify positions to abandon the practice of female circumcision,
- Preparing a practical religious guide to be used with religious scholars on the abandonment of female circumcision, and consulting scholars,
- Raising the awareness of religious and community leaders of the importance of abandoning the practice of female circumcision by organizing conferences and holding global, national and local workshops,
- Strengthening the capabilities of responsive religious scholars to plan and lead milestone initiatives and revitalize faith-based community dialogue programs,
- Issuing and activating legislation and laws to limit and criminalize the practice,
- Urging media organizations to do their duty to support the abandonment of this practice,
- Including in school and educational curricula what supports the abandonment of female circumcision,
- Activating the role of advocates to stop this practice among women and local communities,
- Forming the global faith network to abandon female circumcision under the auspices of the International Planned Parenthood Federation,
- Establishing partnerships with research, advocacy and legal authorities to search for ways to eliminate this practice.

God is behind the intent.

### **The Religious Leaders :**

- His Eminence Sheikh Ould El-Zein Ould imam, Imam Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Hammadi, Imam Abdul Wahhab, **Mauritania**
- His Eminence Sheikh Sayed Mahmoud Mohamed Zayed, **Egypt**
- His Eminence Sheikh Muhammad Hashem Syed Abdul Wahhab Al-Hakim, **Sudan**
- His Eminence Sheikh Yusuf Ibrahim Musa, **Somaliland**
- His Eminence Sheikh Wadah Salem Haitham Rajeh, **Yemen**
- Priest David Dafidi Lombo, **Burkina Faso**
- His Eminence Sheikh Musse Fall, **Senegal**