

still performed on 74 million

never been systematically investigated.

When asked why they performed "female circumcision", most population groups, whether tribal or modern, rural or urban, illiterate or educated, Moslem, Christian or Animist, replied that the primary reason was sexual; to promote chastity, preserve virginity and curb female sexuality.

Genital operations are said to preserve the polygamous family — "How else can a man satisfy all of his wives?" The mutilations are required for marriage, the sole purpose in life for a female.

There is also custom — it has always been done. Many Moslems believe it to be a religious command, although it is nowhere referred to in the Koran. In Egypt and the Sudan, it is believed that it beautifies the women. Other groups believe that the clitoris, source of a woman's pleasure, is male and must be removed.

There are those who argue that objections to the practice are "Western" and that Western values have no place in these matters. Clitoridectomy was performed in the West, and still is on occasion.

Moreover, the transparency of charging "cultural interference" becomes apparent as these operations are increasingly incorporated into the modern sector and performed in hospitals (often government-subsidized) on the children of the educated and the privileged. Modern medicine is now used, without ritual, to mutilate little girls who have no choice in determining "their" culture. Because they are young, female and black their plight is largely ignored by the West.

Detached Western observers often practice a new form of racism disguised as "objective value free judgement". The physical sufferings of "another people" are somehow different and thus no unjust. Injustice inflicted on women in a male-dominated society is seen to be a

cultural rather than a political question.

Certainly the Western press is very reluctant to touch the topic. Even in the Year of the Child, it resisted publishing the facts or even acknowledging the existence of the practice. When pressed, one is told that it is "in bad taste", "not for a family paper" (the same paper which publishes lurid details of pornographic murders), or not newsworthy. One wonders if the mass castration of small white boys would excite more attention.

Fran Hosken has struggled for years to make her research public and to instigate action. She asserts that Western organizations which work in Africa know what is going but refuse to take a stand.

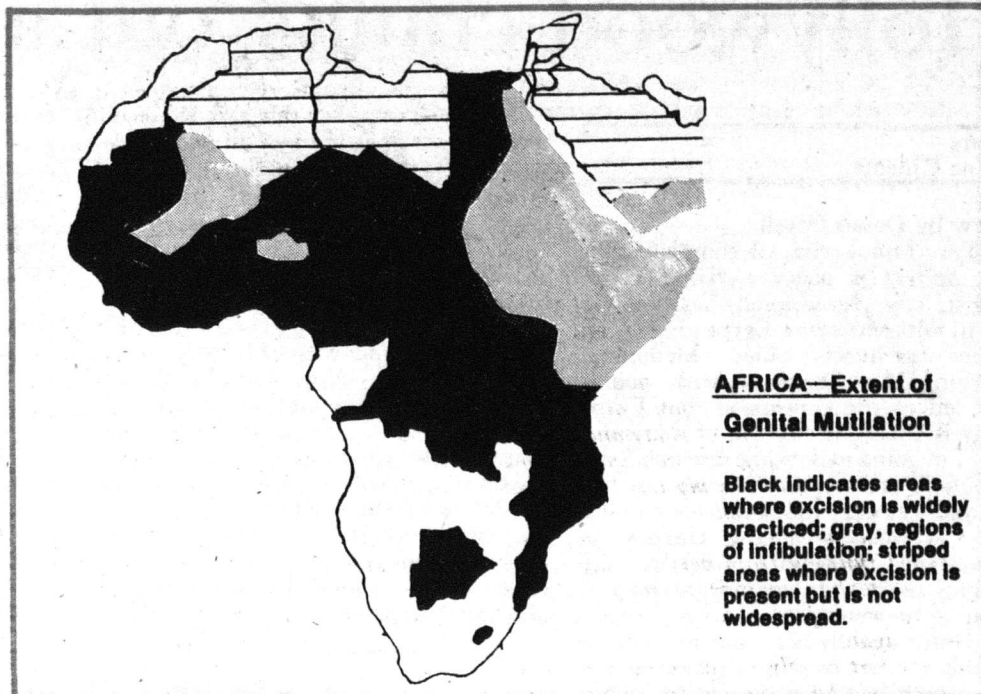
Despite requests on the part of Africans The World Health Organization (WHO) has long refused to even study the subject, pleading the inviolability of "cultural conceptions". Hosken reports that her inquiries to U.N. bodies have met with evasion and noncommittal responses.

Until very recently, UNICEF had been entirely unhelpful. A recent letter to Hosken confirmed that UNICEF personnel are now being instructed to incorporate concern about genital mutilation into their health work. Nevertheless, despite the fact that advocacy for children is its avowed purpose, UNICEF has refused to take a public, media

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The U.N. Committee for the International Year of the Child paid the matter lip service in its April 1978 newsletter. Hosken claims that no action or studies on the subject has been undertaken to date. The same is apparently true of innumerable other Church, economic aid



AFRICA—Extent of Genital Mutilation

Black indicates areas where excision is widely practiced; gray, regions of infibulation; striped areas where excision is present but is not widespread.

and Third World development and support organizations which Hosken has contacted.

According to Hosken, population planners active throughout Africa with the support of African governments are aware of the magnitude of the mutilations but say nothing about them nor attempt to inform women who work for them or who use their services so that their daughters may be spared. Although individual members may differ, organizations such as Amnesty International do not consider these practices to be torture.

In sharp contrast to this indifference, African women themselves are beginning to demand change. Awa Thiam of Senegal in her work *La Parole aux Negresses* documents case histories of horror and denounces the practices which oppress her sisters.

In a powerful article published in the Nigerian magazine *Drum*, Esther Ogun-

modede, head of an influential women's organization, asks, "How much longer will we subject our girls to this barbaric practice?" She has called for an international health campaign to stop it.

What is required to eliminated these practices is more than talk. The resources presently exist to do so. What is needed is the commitment to use them.

Judging from the past it is apparent that only grass-roots public pressure, especially in the area of funding for these programs, aided by media publicity can effectively direct funds and force the active commitment of both African governments and international agencies to support the Khartoum resolutions for the eradication of a practice which affects the health, well-being and rights of so many women and children.

For further information, see Fran Hosken, *The Hosken Report: Genital and Sexual Mutilation of Females* (Lexington, Mass., *Women's International News*, 1979), or contact *Women Against Mutilations*, 338 Jarvis Street, Toronto, Ontario.

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FACULTY	BUILDING	ROOM	TIME
Agriculture & Forestry	Agriculture & Forestry Centre	2-14	March 16-April 15
Arts	Humanities	6-7	March 16-April 30
Business Administration & Commerce	Central Academic	379	March 16-April 24
Education	Education	Lobby	March 16-17
Engineering			
Current 2nd & 3rd Year Students			
Chemical	Chemical & Mineral Engineering	536	March 16-April 15
Civil	Civil & Electrical Engineering	220	March 16-April 15
Electrical	Civil & Electrical Engineering	238	March 16-April 15
Mechanical	Mechanical Engineering	4-9	March 16-April 15
Mineral	Chemical & Mineral Engineering	606	March 16-April 15
Home Economics	Home Economics	115	March 16-April 24
Physical Education & Recreation			
Physical Education Students	Physical Education	E-125	March 16-27
Recreation Administration Students	Physical Education	W1-08	March 16-27
Science	Biological Sciences	CW223	
Honors and Specialization Students			March 16-April 30
General Program Students			March 16-April 30
Faculté Saint-Jean	8406-91e rue	117	du 16 mar au 30 avril

Other Faculties — Forms will be distributed as described in the Course Registration Procedure Booklets which are available at your Faculty Office.