

UK Intersex NGO Coalition: CEDAW72 Briefing Update, 25.02.2019

StopIGM.org • IntersexUK • The UK Intersex Association

Intersex Genital Mutilation undisputedly persists with impunity in all 4 Nations

The fact, that **IGM practices persist in NHS paediatric hospitals** in England,¹ Wales,² Scotland³ and Northern Ireland⁴ is **undisputed even by the practitioners** themselves; the only dispute is whether there are some dozen procedures annually (according to NHS doctors)⁵ or several thousand (according to a recent study based on NHS hospital episode statistics).⁶ Another NHS paediatric surgeon is on public record **insisting to continue** with IGM including **partial clitoris amputation** "until such time as there is a change in the law".⁷ IGM survivors are **denied access to redress and justice** because of the **statutes of limitations**, despite that **CRC** and **CRPD** already urged the State party to "*guarantee bodily integrity*" and "*[p]rovide redress to the victims of such treatment*".⁸

UK fails to take effective measures to prevent harmful practices on intersex children

Officially the **UK claims not to know** how many IGM procedures are performed,⁹ and also **failed to answer the Committee's question** on data of IGM procedures in the LOI.¹⁰ **NHS self-regulation has failed:** Not only does the practice continue with impunity, but two **newly appointed NHS bodies** to address the practice (NHS England Service Specification Workgroup and the NHS England DSD Surgery Policy Workgroup) so far **refuse to consult** with intersex NGOs in a meaningful way or at all, let alone to **consider human rights implications**.

We acknowledge that the **State party now at least admits** to be "*aware of some calls from the sector to ban the practice of medical interventions on minor's sex characteristics*",¹¹ and that it is **wrong to conflate intersex** with transgender.¹² We further acknowledge that the newly launched "*Call for Evidence on Variations in Sex Characteristics*" by the **Government Equalities Office**¹³ and the upcoming **Scotland Intersex Enquiry** both adequately consulted intersex NGOs, however, we note with great concern that the "*Call for Evidence*" again **fails to adequately consider human rights**, namely the non-derogable rights to **protection from harmful practices**, and to **justice and redress** for victims (CEDAW art. 5 and CEDAW-CRC Joint GR No. 31/18).

Please turn over for a message from Dawn Vago (IntersexUK) >>>

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- 1 Intersex NGO Report (for PSWG), p. 11-16, <http://intersex.shadowreport.org/public/2018-CEDAW-PSWG-UK-NGO-Coalition-Intersex-IGM.pdf>
 - 2 <http://www.caris.wales.nhs.uk/disorders-of-sex-development>
 - 3 Intersex NGO Report (for Session), p. 14, <http://intersex.shadowreport.org/public/2019-CEDAW-UK-NGO-Coalition-Intersex-IGM.pdf>
 - 4 http://www.southernguidelines.hscni.net/?wpfb_dl=839 and <http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/pdf/hypospadias-repair.pdf>
 - 5 NHS specialist surgeon Dr Mark Woodward confirmed in a BBC interview (14.01.2019) "*maybe between 20 and 40 surgical procedures a year in the whole of the UK*", most of them unnecessary, full transcript and video link see: <http://stop.genitalmutilation.org/post/UK-NHS-Doctor-admits-to-Intersex-Genital-Mutilation>
 - 6 The 2017 Huddersfield University UK Intersex Study documents 2,900 IGM procedures annually in England alone, see Intersex NGO Report (for Session), p. 11-16
 - 7 Dr Imran Mushtaq (Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust / Senior Lecturer Institute of Child Health, London), "Surgery in infants and children with DSD", see Intersex NGO Report (for PSWG), p. 15
 - 8 CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, paras 46-47; CRPD/C/GBR/CO/1, paras 10(a)-11(a), 38-41
 - 9 BuzzFeed News (16.01.2019), <https://www.buzzfeed.com/patrickstrudwick/how-many-intersex-children-being-operated-on>
 - 10 See question 8 in LOI, and para 46 of State party replies
 - 11 See para 46 of State party replies to LOI
 - 12 Intersex NGO Report (for Session), p. 18
 - 13 Ibid.

Message from Dawn Vago

I am Dawn Vago from IntersexUK and the designated speaker on behalf of the Intersex NGO Coalition, and I'd like to second Daniela's email, as I am not ok and have not agreed to not getting speaking time.

I recently sustained significant injuries from a fall (shattered eye socket and cheekbone, fractured wrist, broken rib) which have kept me from being as vocal in the email chain that I would have liked to have been, and which unfortunately will prevent me from travelling to Geneva without further injuring my health. However, I will follow the session remotely.

Unfortunately, **the severity of my injuries is a direct consequence of having been submitted to intersex genital mutilation**, namely the removal of vital hormone producing organs (gonadectomy) at age 8, of which a known complication is osteoporosis (weak bones), from which I have been suffering since 2005.

I am desperately trying to find someone else to come and speak from IntersexUK but time is short and in case we can't find anybody, IntersexUK officially designates our co-rapporteur Daniela Truffer to speak on my behalf.

We must be allowed to speak out about our grievances during the public briefing, as the UK continues to illegally perform intersex genital mutilation against past UN condemnations. For example I just heard that a young intersex girl age 7 underwent gonadectomy at my local hospital not so long ago, and being told the same cancer risk lie they told my parents 30 years ago! AND my adopted son was also told he needed his penis surgically 'corrected' on and his female body parts removed for no other reason than cosmetic purposes only less than 1 year ago. The UK has not moved on, and we desperately need IGM to stop!

I plea with you to allow us adequate time to speak and not silence us the same way surgeons and society silence us in the UK. We understand the value of everyone else's voice but we can't sit by unnoticed. Please help.

Best regards and respect

Dawn Vago
IntersexUK
Co-Director

