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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

New Russian Bill Sets Out 10-Year Prison Term for FGM

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Russians who practice female genital mutilation (FGM) could face ten years imprisonment under a new bill, the Meduza news website reported Friday.

The bill says that FGM "has no place in a civilized society," and was presented to parliament by United Russia deputy Maria Maksakova-Igenbergs.

"FGM is mutilation based on sexual discrimination," said Maksakova-Igenbergs. "Those carrying it out believe that they must do so to protect women from an 'immoral lifestyle.'"

A report on the practice of FGM in the Russian republic of Dagestan was published earlier

this week by the Russian Justice Initiative human rights foundation. The report found that the practice was taking place predominantly in five mountainous areas of the republic, where the operation is normally performed on girls under the age of three. On rare occasions, girls as old as 12 had also been subjected to the operation, according to the report.

While many rushed to condemn the practice, an Islamic cleric from Russia's North Caucasus, Ismail Berdiev, defended its use, calling for all Russian women to undergo FGM to combat "sexual immorality."

FGM is an internationally recognized crime, with the practice predominantly carried out in northern Africa. As well as being at a higher risk of maternal mortality, women who have undergone FGM often report difficulty urinating and passing menstrual flow, fertility problems, chronic pain, and psychological trauma.

Maria Maksakova-Igenbergs will not be standing in this September's State Duma elections, having failed to win a spot on the party list at the United Russia primaries in May. She has since alleged that the vote was fixed.

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