

THE 2012 HELSINKI DECLARATION OF THE RIGHT TO GENITAL AUTONOMY

12th International Symposium on Law, Genital Autonomy & Children's Rights
Helsinki, Finland, 29 September to 3 October 2012

Whereas it is the fundamental and inherent right of each human being to security of the person without regard to age, sex, gender, ethnicity or religion as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Now we declare the existence of a fundamental right of each human being a Right of Genital Autonomy, that is the right to:

- * personal control of their own genital and reproductive organs; and
- * protection from medically unnecessary genital modification and other irreversible reproductive interventions.

We declare that consistent with the Right of Genital Autonomy the only person who may consent to medically unnecessary genital modification and other irreversible reproductive interventions is:

- * in the case of a person who is competent to give free and informed consent, being fully informed about the nature, the risks and benefits of the intervention – the person undergoing the intervention; and
- * in the case of an incompetent person including a young child – only a properly constituted public authority or tribunal appointed to balance the human rights and the best interests of the person after considering the views of family members, professionals and an independent advocate for the person.

We recognise the fundamental right of parents and guardians to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Those rights of parents and guardians are not absolute, they are limited by the same fundamental human rights of others, in particular their children.

We declare that healthy genital and reproductive organs are natural, normal, functional parts of the human body. Governments and healthcare providers have a duty to educate parents and children about non-invasive hygiene, care of genital and reproductive organs, and to explain their anatomical and physiological development and function.

We encourage and support further research into the adverse consequences of such interventions.

We oppose research and experimentation that involves the performance of medically unnecessary modification and other irreversible medical interventions affecting genital and reproductive organs upon non-consenting children and adults.

We call on all governments to acknowledge the Right of Genital Autonomy for every child and adult, that is the right to:

- * personal control of their own genital and reproductive organs; and
- * protection from medically unnecessary genital modification and other irreversible reproductive interventions.

We call on all States members to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to honour their commitments under that instrument in particular Articles 2, 12, 14, 19 and 24.

Done at Helsinki, Wednesday 3 October 2012