February 5, 2017

His Holiness, Saiyedna Abu Haatim Taiyeb Ziyauddin Saheb,

Re: Eliminating Khatna amongst girls in the Bohra community.

On the eve of the UN’s declared International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, 2017, we, the women of the community hereby appeal to his Holiness to take steps to eliminate khatna of girls in our community.

We were subjected to khatna at the fragile age of 7. The physical and psychological effects of this are still with us. We have experienced severe pain and excessive bleeding and, in some cases, shock, difficulty in passing urine, infections, injury to nearby genital tissue due to the procedure done on us.

The pain inflicted by female circumcision/khatna did not stop with the initial procedure, but continued throughout our life. Because, as children, the shock and trauma of being subject to mutilation of an extremely sensitive genital part, without being told, the subsequent pain and shame associated with it combined with secrecy, has left indelible scars on our psyche. We have all experienced various long-term effects - physical, sexual and psychological.

For most us, talking about this itself has been a huge step as we have never disclosed to any of our near and dear ones the aftermath of this procedure and the effects it has had on us throughout our lives. Today some of us have taken courage to address you and appeal to you to eliminate and eradicate this practice in our community. We request you to take cognizance of our voices and pay heed to traumatic experiences. We want you to specially consider the harmful effects it has on the girl child and the severe abuse of child rights which takes place because of this procedure being perpetrated on young innocent girls aged 6-7.

As our Dai, you have the best interests of all your followers at heart. We feel it necessary to share with you our traumatic experiences and after effects of this procedure. Given that the Bohra community is spread across the whole world, one directive from your Holiness would bring the community together as one and end the practice.

We request you to take heed to our pleas by banning the practice of FGM/C among all Bohras, residing in all parts of the world.

Salaam,
Respectfully yours,

Signed

Members of Speak Out on FGM

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