

## REASONS FOR CONCERN

Compelling reasons exist for strong concern among attorneys and the public about various types of damage caused by circumcision, including:

- pain and suffering
- psychological harm
- behavioral changes
- irreversible reduction or loss of full sexual function
- underreported tragic complications, including death

Young men circumcised as children are beginning to document this damage. No national medical association in the world recommends circumcision of male newborns because no satisfactory medical justification has ever been demonstrated.

In the U.S., committed attorneys have undertaken legal actions against circumcisers that has made critical contributions to reduce the national rate of neonatal circumcision from a high of 85% in the 1980s, to its present rate of below 60%.

## CHILDREN, PARENTS & RELIGION

Advocating for children's rights to bodily integrity might seem at first to conflict with the assumed right of parents to consent to circumcision, whether the decision is based on religion or not. However, courts consistently state that you cannot cause harm in the name of religion. The right of an individual to security of person supersedes the right of a parent to translate their religious belief into a non-medically indicated surgical procedure on a non-consenting child.

Circumcision is a Jewish initiation ritual, but it does not make a boy Jewish. In Islam, circumcision is not mandated in the Koran.

## ARC'S FOUNDATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Cultural blindness must not allow us to warp American law by insulating perpetrators of non-therapeutic circumcision from liability under a broad range of legal theories. By understanding the medical and psychological harm of involuntary circumcision and positioning ourselves to enforce the legal and human rights to physical integrity and self-determination, we can work for children's best interests by guaranteeing them equal protection under the law.

Attorneys for the Rights of the Child was founded in 1997 by attorney J. Steven Svoboda, a recipient of the 2002 NOCIRC Human Rights Award and a former Harvard Law School Human Rights Fellow active in human rights law. He has addressed the United Nations on the subject of male circumcision and human rights and his writings have been widely published in eight books issued by Plenum/Springer Press and in numerous journals of medicine, law, ethics and human rights.

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# ATTORNEYS

## FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

We are a non-profit organization and international network of attorneys founded to secure equal protection for, and broaden judicial and public recognition of, children's legal and human rights to bodily integrity and self-determination that are violated by unnecessary genital cutting of male, female and intersex children.

In North America, ARC focuses on the cultural practice of circumcision of males due to its frequency relative to females and to the lack of any other legal organization concentrating on the male procedure.

ARC-affiliated attorneys assist those:

- whose sons were circumcised without parental consent or below the "standard of care"
- whose sons died from circumcision
- young men wishing to be plaintiffs in cases to make legal relief available to all involuntarily circumcised males.

Please see our online

"Know Your Rights" brochure at

[www.arclaw.org/knowyourrights](http://www.arclaw.org/knowyourrights)

# OUR WORK TO PROTECT CHILDREN

**ARC BELIEVES THAT NO INVOLUNTARY CIRCUMCISIONS CAN BE TOLERATED IN A CIVILIZED SOCIETY.**

## **United Nations Project**

In July-August 2001, with the assistance of NOCIRC, we organized a team that travelled to Geneva, with Steven Svoboda presenting to the United Nations the first document ever officially accepted into UN records centrally addressing male circumcision as a human rights violation. This work has borne fruit recently with increased UN recognition of male circumcision thanks to efforts by Antony Lempert of the Secular Medical Forum and numerous others.

## **Charleston Presentation and Paper**

In October 2013, we participated in the Twentieth Annual Thomas A. Pitts Lectureship in Medical Ethics, held at the Medical University of South Carolina pursuant to a conference titled, "Ethical and Legal Issues in Pediatrics." Steven was the only non-physician invited, and debated the AAP's Dr. Michael Brady in a talk entitled, "Newborn Male Circumcision--Is It Ethical; Is It Legal?" Steven also appeared in a "Seminar on Pediatric Controversies" opposite Brady and Douglas Diekema, also an AAP Circumcision Task Force member. ARC Legal Advisor Peter Adler participated in the audience discussions and preparation of our talks. We proved we know the science far better than the Task Force and Brady found himself unable to rebut a single one of our arguments and forced to unofficially concede defeat. As they each personally told me later, two (!) of the five physician presenters who are not AAP Task Force members were completely convinced by our arguments and went from being pretty strongly pro-circumcision prior to the event to coming to oppose the procedure based on our arguments. This was a true team victory, with Peter, Aubrey Taylor, and Angel Alonso Terron providing awesome support and asking some hard questions the AAP Task Force members simply could not answer. The Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics will be publishing the long article Bob Van Howe, Peter and Steven wrote as part of a special issue devoted to this conference.

## **Journal of Medical Ethics Publications Rebut Morris**

In June 2013, the Journal of Medical Ethics published Steven's article, "Circumcision of Male Infants as a Human Rights Violation." This special issue on circumcision that Steven helped put together also includes an article by Bob Van Howe and Steven titled, "Out of step: fatal flaws in the latest AAP report on neonatal circumcision." Bob's and Steven's article, leading off the issue of the Journal of Medical Ethics, provoked the AAP into taking the unusual step of filing an ill-fated response in the pages of the same journal.

On January 20, 2014, the JME published an e-letter by Bob and Steve in which we responded to a critique published in the JME by notorious circumcision advocate Brian Morris and colleagues. On March 31, 2014, the JME published an e-letter by Bob and Steven to close the exchange with Morris and colleagues. Our e-letters pointed out that Morris has violated numerous principles of academic integrity in his tireless, quixotic quest to promote the useless, harmful, and antiquated practice of male circumcision.

## **Educating Activists & the World Since 2000**

Ever since the year 2000, we have regularly published our newsletter so as to keep activists and the world updated on pertinent events throughout the movement to protect children from genital cutting and frankly, so as to keep spirits high through this often challenging work. In 2014, we hit our thirtieth issue, our tenth full volume! Recent issues have often been over fifty pages! And this is all offered entirely free of charge. The three leading content providers carry us to thousands of libraries across North America and the world.

## **ARC's European Translation and Education Project**

We have launched an ambitious (and expensive) project to educate the world that European law. Over the past two years, we have had over forty legal cases and law review articles relating to intact rights translated into English from the German, Finnish, and Dutch languages. This has been done to support our presentations regarding at the Helsinki Symposium in October 2012 and in Keele, UK in September 2013, our upcoming Boulder Symposium presentation

regarding recent European legal developments, and two major articles we are planning for 2015, one focusing on Germany and the other analyzing worldwide legal developments in intact rights.

We are winning! In 2012 a Cologne court found that non-therapeutic circumcision of boys violates their right to physical integrity under the German constitution. Other recent European legal decisions and legislative developments have also supported genital integrity. In 2014, the Council of Europe began investigations into non-therapeutic male circumcision as a violation of the human rights of children. The task now is to spread the news and to save as many babies as possible.

The translated materials will be released for general use by activists after my articles are submitted, which should be next year. I am loath to spend other people's money so we will make sure every dollar is wisely spent. Whatever level of support you may be able to provide would be greatly appreciated and would be put to excellent use.

Donations can be sent to J. Steven Svoboda, ARC, 2961 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94705, or made through Paypal at our website <[www.arclaw.org/donate](http://www.arclaw.org/donate)> or using the Paypal address [sarah@arclaw.org](mailto:sarah@arclaw.org)

## **Human Rights Treaties**

International conventions, covenants and declarations ratified by the United States and/or applicable through customary law due to near-universal approval recognize that human beings have the inherent right to life, equality, freedom and security, the right not to suffer discrimination, the right to the best possible state of physical and mental health, and the right not to be subjected to torture or to cruel and degrading punishment or treatment. Along with the Constitution, international law is part of the supreme law of our land.

To learn more, visit  
[www.arclaw.org/legalbrochure](http://www.arclaw.org/legalbrochure)