

Attorneys for the Rights of the Child

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An international network of attorneys and supporters now addresses the multi-faceted issue of genital mutilation of children, particularly the practice of male circumcision. [Attorneys for the Rights of the Child \(ARC\)](http://arclaw.org) is a non-profit organization 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. ARC directs its efforts towards both male and female circumcision (also known as female genital mutilation [FGM] or female genital cutting), focusing on the American cultural practice of male circumcision due to its frequency in the United States relative to FGM and also due to the lack of any other legal organization currently concentrating on the male procedure. ARC's network of attorneys can assist families whose sons were circumcised without parental consent or below the "standard of care," and those whose sons died from circumcision. ARC is also working to assist plaintiffs wishing to expand the legal standard on this issue to make legal relief potentially available to all involuntarily circumcised males. The medical profession will confront a challenge to this inhumane disfigurement of baby boys' genitals from an organization of legal professionals which it cannot afford to ignore.

Compelling reasons exist for strong concern among attorneys and the public about the various types of damage caused by circumcision. These including pain and suffering, psychological harm, behavioral changes, irreversible reduction or loss of full sexual function, and underreported tragic complications, including deaths. Moreover, no satisfactory medical justification for routine circumcision has ever been demonstrated. Committed attorneys have already undertaken a range of legal actions against circumcisers which have made critical contributions to reduce the rate of routine neonatal circumcision in the United States. The national rate has dropped from a high of 85% in the 1980s, to its present rate of less than 60%. However, ARC believes that no involuntary circumcisions can be tolerated in a civilized country.

ARC actively works to encourage professionals in relevant fields including medical ethics, psychology, the rights of children and youth, and the treatment of male sexual victimization to incorporate genital integrity awareness into their work. ARC representatives have published pertinent articles in legal and medical journals and have presented papers at relevant conferences in these and other fields. ARC responds immediately when the need arises for a position paper, letter, or press release related to our expertise.

Please refer to the other side of this page to learn more about the foundations of ARC's philosophy.

To support the work of ARC and for more information contact:

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J. Steven Svoboda is an attorney, a 2002 recipient of the NOCIRC Human Rights Award, and a former Harvard Law School Human Rights Fellow active in human rights law. His writings have been published in seven books issued by Plenum Press and Springer Press (including one forthcoming volume) by the British Journal of Urology, the Journal of Law & Medicine, the Journal of Contemporary Health Law and Policy, the Journal of Medical Ethics, the Journal of Health Psychology, and in numerous other journals, and he has twice presented by invitation to the International Society for Sexually Transmitted Diseases Research and at the last four International Symposia on Genital Integrity. His work has been cited by the American Urological Association and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

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Yes! I support the rights of children to physical integrity and self-determination by protecting them from circumcision. To help keep children's genitals whole and intact, I enclose my contribution or membership dues, which I understand are tax deductible when checks are made payable to NOCIRC and mailed to ARC.

- I wish to join ARC.
 \$35 (Member) \$100 (Sustaining) \$200 (Patron)
- I wish to pledge a monthly contribution to ARC.
Monthly: \$5 0 (\$1.67/day) \$30 (\$1/day) \$15 (\$.50/day) Other \$ _____/month
- I wish to make a contribution to ARC. \$50 \$100 \$200 Other \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

The Foundational Philosophy of Attorneys for the Rights of the Child

A number of human rights documents appear to forbid infant male circumcision based on such important principles as the right to physical integrity, the right to freedom of religion, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and the right to protection against torture. These documents bind the United States, either through our direct ratification of the treaty or under principles of customary international law. The many laws against female genital mutilation, contrasted with the discriminatory nature of excusing and tacitly condoning male genital mutilation, violate principles of equal protection under both international human rights law and American constitutional doctrines.

Our own cultural blindness must not be allowed to warp American law by insulating perpetrators of circumcision from liability under a broad range of legal theories. By understanding the medical and psychological harm caused by circumcision and by positioning ourselves to enforce the legal and human rights guarantees of physical integrity and self-determination, we can work for the best interests of children, by guaranteeing them equal protection under the law.

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES RAISED BY CIRCUMCISION

	Universal Declaration on Human Rights UDHR -1948-	International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights ICCPR -1966-	International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights ICESCR -1966-	Convention on the Rights of the Child CRC -1989-
Self-Determination	Preamble, 1, 2	1	1	Preamble, 2, 12
Physical & Moral Integrity	29, 1-2	6, 7	--	27, 41
Forced Labor & Traffic in Persons	23, 1-3	8	--	32, 34, 35, 36
Liberty & Security of Person	3, 9, 12	9, 10, 11	--	16, 33, 37
Freedom of Religion or Belief	18, 19	17, 18	--	14
Protection of Children	16.3, 25	23, 24	10	19
Physical & Mental Health	25	6.1	12	24
Right Against Torture	5	7	--	37
Against Genital Mutilation	Implied Throughout	Implied Throughout	Implied Throughout	Explicit at 24.3
<p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">Excerpted with permission from <i>Universal Reproductive & Human Rights: Ordering Corrective Action against North American Circumcisers</i>, Ch. 1, "Introduction to the Urgent Human Rights Proposal" (p. 11), by Anastasios Zavales. Copyright 1995 Ecumenics International Press, Sloatsburg, NY 10974 USA</p>				