

“Judaism does not depend on the foreskin. The halacha is clear: A uncircumcised Jew is a Jew as long as he is the son of a Jewish mother.”

Prof. Dr. Michael Wolffsohn

Would a ban on circumcision intrude into the free practice of religion?

No. In fact, a ban on forced genital cutting would even contribute to strengthening the right to the free practice of religion, namely through the overdue **consideration of children’s free exercise of religion**. Because the parents’ right to the free practice of religion extends only to themselves – and not to an influence over their children, who have the right to develop their own religious beliefs, independent of those of their parents.

Admittedly, children are later able to discard their original religion, even when they have been undergone forced circumcision. Nevertheless, religious circumcision is a life-long label, which may be perceived as a burden – quite apart from all the other disadvantages of the removal of the foreskin. Ex-Muslim Ali Utlu from Cologne expressed it like this: *“For me, it was in retrospect a branding by religion. As if somebody stamped a cow and said: You belong to my herd.”*

Is circumcision as a baby less traumatic than in later in life?

For a long time it was actually believed that infants felt less pain. Some newborns suddenly fall silent and seem to fall asleep during the procedure, which appeared to indicate that they indeed felt nothing. Today we know that these children are in a **state of traumatic shock**. Because newborns experience pain much more intensely than older children or adults! The reason: The pain suppressing system that makes the experience of pain bearable through the release of endorphins, doesn’t function until a few months after birth.

The director of the German Children’s Pain Centre (Kinderschmerzszentrum), Boris Zernikow, pointed out that a specific *pain memory* may develop through the unmitigated circumcision pain a newborn experiences. Months after the circumcision the children feel more pain when they are vaccinated and release higher doses of the stress hormone cortisol. On the whole, their pain threshold is lower and the danger of chronic pain higher. Tragically, this cannot be prevented by a general anaesthesia, says Zernikow. Instead, the nerve pathways that lead from the penis to the brain need to be directly blocked, which even anaesthetists in good clinics don’t achieve in five to ten per cent of cases.

“State Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.”

UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 24,3

My Body Belongs To Me!

Please support the educational work of international paediatricians as well as the growing number of Jews and Muslims who oppose the traditional practice of circumcision! Act for children’s rights to self-determination and the physical integrity!

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www.pro-kinderrechte.de



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My Body Belongs To Me!



Why forced circumcision is wrong – also when boys are concerned

Working group Children’s Rights

gbs giordano bruno stiftung

Working group Children’s Rights at

gbs giordano bruno stiftung

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Campaign Photo: Evelin Frerk
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“Whoever supports religious justifications for the amputation of the most sensitive part of the penis, does, in fact, justify the abuse of children.”

Prof. Dr. Gregory Boyle

“A civil right to encroach on somebody else’s body cannot be thought of. Any freedom ends at the other’s nose – not to speak of their foreskin.”

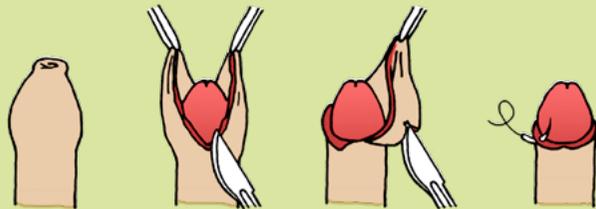
Prof. Dr. Reinhard Merkel

“My circumcision is the worst thing that was ever done to me. The religious organizations yell so loud that you tend to overhear the children crying.”

Alexander Bachl

Why should a boy not be circumcised in the absence of medical reasons?

Circumcision is a high-risk, painful, sometimes even traumatising procedure, which results in the irreversible amputation of a highly sensitive, functional and useful part of the body. An encroachment of this kind into the right of self-determination and the physical integrity of a child cannot be justified by appealing to parenting rights. It doesn’t matter if the parents’ interest in having their son circumcised is religiously, traditionally, allegedly hygienically or aesthetically motivated. Only in the rare case in which circumcision is medically essential, can it be legitimate.



If parents learned about the consequences of circumcision, one wouldn’t need to discuss a ban on circumcision, as the vast majority of mothers and fathers would no longer instigate the circumcision of their children. Because the foreskin has important bodily functions: It protects the glans from abrasion, drying, callusing (keratinisation), and contaminants of all kinds. In the beginning, it is stuck to the glans, so that the glans is protected from the boy’s excretions throughout infancy and childhood. Come puberty, it one of the primary sources of male pleasure, as it contains about 20,000 sensitive receptors. These make the foreskin the most sensitive region of the male body. If the foreskin is removed, this inevitably leads to a loss of sensitivity. As they age, circumcised men are significantly more prone than others to erectile and orgasmic dysfunctions.

What complications can arise through circumcision?

Even under ideal medical conditions, **every fifth infant** suffers from post-operative problems, says the renowned child urologist Maximilian Stehr. These can be so severe that they need further surgery. The main reasons are secondary haemorrhage, infections, boils and the constriction of the urinary meatus. Injuries of the glans are not rare, and even amputations of the penis have occurred in Germany.

In addition to the direct complications of circumcision there are indirect ones, such as the risks that accompany anaesthetics and narcotics. A study published in 2010 came to the conclusion that in the US alone 117 infants die every year due to infections following their circumcision. In countries with worse medical care the number of boys who pay with their lives for a circumcision that is not medically indicated is many times higher.

Is it medically reasonable to circumcise as a matter of routine?

No. **There is no credible evidence for any health advantages of circumcision!** Every study that tried to establish such advantages in the past has meanwhile been falsified. This also applies to the widely cited study by the World Health Organisation, which advised men (not children!) in some African countries (not in the western world) to have themselves circumcised in order to reduce the risk of an HIV-infection. In contrast, more recent surveys have shown that in most countries circumcised men have even a greater risk of HIV-infection than men with an intact foreskin. The reasons for that have not yet been completely clarified. One of the reasons may lie in the fact that circumcised men tend to use condoms less often, because of the loss of sensitivity. By avoiding the use of condoms not only does their risk of infection increase, it is also more probable that they infect others and therefore contribute to spreading epidemics. (By the way, the risk of HIV-infection also increases directly through circumcision, namely when the procedure takes place under hygienically questionable conditions, as are often encountered in the regions worst affected by HIV.)

The American Academy of Paediatrics, AAP, is the only Western experts’ organization to still see health advantages of circumcision. This is probably based on cultural reasons (the circumcision of boys in the United States began 150 years ago as a method to impede masturbation and has since then been advocated by many generations of physicians), as well as a concrete economical interest (circumcision is a 2 billion dollar business, from which not only physicians, but also pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries draw their profits, by producing skin transplants and anti-wrinkle creams from “freshly harvested” foreskins).

Can the forced circumcision of boys be compared to female genital cutting?

Of course. Although the infibulation, the stitching of the vagina after the removal of the outer clitoris and the labia, is more dramatic than the genital cutting of boys, there are also forms that are evidently “less harmful”, for example the removal of the foreskin of the clitoris or its mere pricking or incision. Therefore, there is no reason for tolerating the cutting of the male foreskin whilst all forms of female genital cutting – including the “milder” varieties – are internationally banned. If legislature protected the physical integrity of girls while sacrificing the physical integrity of boys, that would be a clear violation of the principle of *gender equality*.

It also threatens the argumentation against female genital mutilation. **Because all of the arguments against the genital cutting of girls also apply to the genital cutting of boys.** It should also be noted that girls suffer genital cutting only in regions, in which boys are circumcised. Researchers assume that the genital cutting of boys, which is performed about five to six times more frequently, is the older ritual, from which female genital cutting was later derived. Therefore, a ban on the circumcision of boys might indirectly lead to a decline in the genital cutting of girls.