

DATE

Rep. _____
Address _____
Washington, D.C. 20515

FAX: 202-_____

Dear Congressman _____,

I am writing to express my outrage at the recent Board of Immigration Appeals (“the Board”) decision in *Matter of A-T-*, holding that victims of female genital mutilation (FGM) are generally not entitled to asylum. I ask you to urge Attorney General Michael Mukasey to exercise his authority to reverse this horrific decision by signing onto the letter circulated by Representatives Chris Smith and Steve Rothman in the House of Representatives.

As you may know, female genital mutilation is a traditional practice in many developing countries whereby women and girls are forcibly subjected to cutting and/or removal their genitalia. In September, the Board issued a decision in which it held that women who have been subjected to FGM are not eligible for asylum because they have already experienced the procedure and, therefore, have no fear of its repetition. In its decision, the Board failed to recognize that FGM is not a one time act, but an inhumane and life threatening procedure that subjugates women in their home countries. FGM causes women numerous health problems including difficulty conceiving and complication in child birth and deprives women of their sexuality and self-esteem for the rest of their lives.

I am also deeply concerned by the Board’s suggestion that forced marriage generally does not amount to persecution because it is a family tradition. That reasoning is a dangerous precedent; it would suggest that many other violations of women’s rights—such as FGM, honor killing, and domestic violence—must also be accepted in the name of tradition. The Board’s indifference to the abuse and deprivation of freedom suffered by women in such circumstances is shocking.

The Board’s decision is a disturbing retreat in progress for women’s rights. The United States has an obligation to honor the rights of women who are fortunate enough to seek refuge in this country. The United States must not turn its back on these courageous women who seek protection and recognition of their right to autonomy and bodily integrity.

I urge you to sign onto the letter in the House of Representative requesting that the Attorney General certify and reverse the Board’s decision. Please contact Shelly Stoneman in Congressman Rothman’s office at shelly.sontemans@mail.house.gov or 202-225-5061 to sign on.

Thank you for your support and commitment to protecting women's rights.

Name

Address