

University conference to debate latest issues around FGM

Anti-FGM campaigners Leyla Hussein and Ifrah Ahmed will be amongst a host of speakers set to talk about the challenges presented by female genital mutilation at a London conference organised by Coventry University.

Home Office minister Norman Baker, who is leading the UK government's campaign to eradicate FGM, is also set to deliver a video address to the conference.

The conference – which comes as the Crown Prosecution Service announced the first ever prosecutions under the Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) last week – will take place on Friday 11th April at the University's London Campus near Liverpool Street.

Prevention or Prosecution? The Behaviour Change Approach to Tackling FGM in the EU will discuss research carried out by Coventry University and its partners in the European Commission-funded REPLACE 2 project – which was set up to combat FGM.

Leyla Hussein, who co-founded the 'Daughters of Eve' organisation which works to protect girls and young women at risk from FGM, will talk about the importance of preventing the practice amid widespread discussion around achieving prosecutions.

Dublin-based, Somali-born Ifrah Ahmed – an FGM survivor – will discuss the crucial role community engagement has to play in putting an end to female genital mutilation.

Workshop sessions in the afternoon aim to delve down into some of the deeper challenges surrounding FGM, and will involve the discussion of forthcoming academic papers on the issue – including those addressing ethical, legal and economic concerns.

The UK government's latest statement on the matter of female genital mutilation followed the signing by senior ministers of a Home Office 'declaration to end FGM' on February 6th – the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation – and underlined the "serious criminal" nature of FGM.

Professor Hazel Barrett from Coventry University said:

"We're seeing the issue of FGM being taken very seriously across government, but there's still a considerable amount to be done at a community level to work towards preventing the practice in the first place. A lot of high-level discussion on the matter focuses on legislative concerns and achieving the first prosecution in the UK, but through our research we've been finding that there are far more complex factors at play which put the onus for long-term solutions on changing attitudes amongst communities affected by FGM.

"This cannot happen overnight, but with the right approach we can do a lot to influence current and future generations into recognising and acknowledging the harmful effects that FGM can bring about.

“It is these issues and concerns that will be at the forefront of discussions at our conference, and we will benefit from the insight of some key figures and campaigners, including those who have experienced FGM and have been fortunate enough to have survived to help prevent others suffering from it.”

The all-day conference – entitled Prevention or Prosecution? The Behaviour Change Approach to Tackling FGM in the EU – will take place at Coventry University’s London Campus on Middlesex Street (map).

For more information, visit www.replacefgm2.eu.



REPLACE2

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