



# International Women's Day

In solidarity with  
survivors of state  
sponsored **Gendered  
Islamophobia**

Statement of Support for the  
Family of Ferah Uri –  
Islamophobic Accusation of FGM

Statement written by HEART, Queer  
Crescent, Justice for Muslims  
Collective, and Vigilant Love

PARTNERSHIP TO  
END GENDERED  
ISLAMOPHOBIA



MUSLIM  
ABOLITIONIST  
FUTURES



# Partnership to End Gendered Islamophobia

Statement of Support for the Family of  
Ferah Uri – Islamophobic Accusation of FGM

Trigger warning: state violence, sexual  
abuse, ableism

This Women's History Month, the Partnership to End Gendered Islamophobia provides our unwavering support to survivors of state sanctioned gendered Islamophobia. We call upon the broader anti-violence movement, women's rights movements, and organizations celebrating Women's History Month to demonstrate their solidarity for survivors of state-sanctioned gendered Islamophobia who are often erased and forgotten.

Ferah Uri, Noor Salman, and Dr. Aafia Siddiqui are three such victims of the state's blatant disregard for the safety and well-being of Muslim women in the United States.

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## This is Ferah Uri's story.

Ferah Uri's infant daughter was being watched after by a babysitter. After a diaper change during the paid caretaking session, the babysitter jumped to the assumption that this baby girl had experienced Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation. She called another person, who was not trusted or given consent by this baby's parents to provide care. This unrelated and unqualified person was invited by the babysitter to look at the baby's genitals – and then jointly, they called federal law enforcement, not Child Protective Services, to investigate Ferah and her family for charges of child abuse. The irony of transgressing the boundaries of the baby and her family by inviting in a stranger to 'examine' the baby in pursuit of safety mimics the way the state intervenes in the name of safety and security. The actions of the babysitter are the result of Islamophobic narratives compounded by ableism.



These Islamophobic narratives underpinning the choices made by the babysitter aren't innocent or harmless; they have tangible effects. These are the harms of [Gendered Islamophobia](#). Gendered Islamophobia consists of the ways the state utilizes gendered forms of violence to oppress, monitor, punish, maim, and control Muslim bodies (Justice for Muslims Collective, 2019). In this case, the Gendered Islamophobic trope perpetuated by the state is that it is norm for Muslim bodies to experience extreme forms of violence.

This action by the babysitter also demonstrates the harmful impacts of ableism – whereby a person assumes what is “normal” looking for a body and jumps to action when the image they are presented with doesn't match their limited understanding of diversity of bodies.

According to the grassroots organization Sahiyo, “Female genital cutting involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the



female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice has no health benefits for girls and women.” This harmful practice has been carried out all over the world, by faith-based and non-denominational communities for centuries. There is no substantiated Islamic grounding for the practice and in fact, [extensive research](#) supports the claim that FGM/C is indeed un-Islamic and prohibited in most of the religion’s sects.

While it may still be practiced due to patriarchal misinterpretations of the faith and cultural pressure, the association of FGM/C with Muslims for Americans specifically, is largely due to the dominant narratives perpetuated by the United States government, media, and public about Muslim bodies. Some of the dominant narratives include Muslim women being submissive, devoid of any sexuality, and obedient to the men in their lives. Additional narratives ascribe extreme forms of gender based violence in Muslim communities as a norm. Instead of language



that mirrors white centered communities such as intimate partner violence or domestic violence – Muslim communities are characterized as having problems with “honor killings” as if the run of the mill domestic violence has nothing to do with power/control/ego and pride.

For state sponsored funding opportunities for Muslim and in particular, immigrant, communities – the focus is often on eradicating gender based violence as a means to achieve national security and combat “extremism” instead of addressing misogyny, rape culture, and the systemic roots of violence that are found in all of society. Programs specifically addressing FGM/C are housed in the Department of Homeland Security – Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The two Pakistani films to receive awards at the Oscars – “Saving Face”, about acid attacks, and “A Girl In the River” about “honor killings” – while both brilliant films about gendered violence, also validate the understandings of extreme forms violence



in Muslim communities for a white American audience. With all of that in mind, it comes as no surprise then that non-Muslim Americans would assume such violence to be the norm in Muslim communities and without much thought for the lived reality, act quickly to validate the imagined reality they have.

The issue that is illuminated by Ferah Uri's case is how the state's narrative of and resulting solutions to gendered violence in Muslim communities is rooted in systemic Islamophobia. The solutions can't be divorced from those inherently islamophobic systems and institutions and any reliance on the state to address gendered violence will result in the racist tools of the State being used against us. Surveillance, profiling, non-judicial forms of punishment, policing, and incarceration are all possibilities that can and most likely will, be used to address the harm that is in question.

In this case – the allegation of FGM/C



brought against Ferah was investigated using the State's tools of oppression that were developed to control Black, brown, and Muslim bodies. Moreover, individuals who hold Islamophobic views that are shaped by the state's dominant narratives and policies that prescribe certain forms of gender-based violence such as FGM/C to Muslim communities, in-turn police, monitor, and surveill Muslim bodies, including a child's body. Ferah and her family were subjected to background checks, surveillance, invasion of privacy over their daughter's medical files, and secret recordings being used against them. All this to no conclusive end – they found no evidence of FGM/C and closed the case.

What remains are the trauma, feelings of betrayal, violations of bodily autonomy and sanctity, state sanctioned child sexual abuse, and the presumption of criminality for Ferah and her family. This is the reality of many Muslim, Black, brown, immigrant, and indigenous communities in the United States. The



invasive nature of the State looking into allegations brought by the harmful ignorant leaves scars and trauma that are not aligned with fighting gendered violence, they are not aligned with our understanding of reproductive justice, and invoke the exact opposite when it comes to feelings of safety and security in one's body and home.

The work of challenging gendered violence in our communities is best left to those who are directly impacted – the ones who know intimately what is at stake and how to navigate the cultural sensitivities and politics involved. Grassroots organizations like Sahiyo are best positioned to specifically address FGM/C from and with a community perspective.

The State can't. And shouldn't.



The Partnership to End Gendered Islamophobia in the Muslim Abolitionist Futures Network unequivocally supports Ferah Uri's calls for justice and denounces the actions by the state and the babysitter who participated in state sanctioned gendered violence against our dear community member. At a time when reproductive justice is being stripped every single day from the most impacted communities, we cannot let such actions by the state to go unchallenged and we demand justice be served by dismantling the harmful state programs that continue to profile Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Muslim communities as inherently violent.

We call on our allies and those within the Muslim community to challenge national security programs that co-opt our needs for protection from gendered violence to further their agenda of surveillance, criminalization, and profiling of our communities.



# Calls to Action



Dismantle harmful state programs that continue to profile Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Muslim communities as inherently violent



Challenge national security programs that co-opt our needs for protection from gendered violence to further their agenda of surveillance, criminalization, and profiling of our communities



Defund Operation Limelight in DHS  
Resource grassroots organizations like Sahiyo



End the War on Terror and Abolish the Department of Homeland Security



Follow and support Ferah Uri's case

