



**For immediate release**

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**WASHINGTON PANEL SEEKS TO END ATROCITY AFTER CIVIL  
DEMONSTRATIONS OVER DEATH OF GIRL IN EGYPT**

***UNICEF and Others: Worldwide Mutilation/Cutting of Women Can  
End in Single Generation***

WASHINGTON, DC, October 11, 2007 — An atrocity that affects an estimated 130 million women worldwide can end in a single generation according to a panel composed of Coptic Orphans, Global Woman Magazine, Tostan, and UNICEF on Tuesday. Coptic Orphans organized the panel in the wake of public demonstrations in Egypt demanding the end of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) after the recent death of a 12 year-old girl while being subjected to in Minya, Egypt.

The panel reviewed the current state of the practice in Egypt and around the world, noted recent milestones in Egypt such as public prohibitions by the Egyptian government and public demonstrations demanding that the practice end. Gannon Gillespie, Director of Operations for Tostan, said that the only way to end the practice is from the grassroots of communities that practice it. Both Mr. Gillespie and Hanan Baky shared from their experiences of such grassroots efforts, including the work of Valuable Girl Project of Coptic Orphans among women and girls in Egypt. Nassra Abass of UNICEF spoke of how UNICEF is integrating many of the success both in Egypt and in Senegal into their new coordinated strategy for the abandonment of the practice in a single generation.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, sometimes known as female circumcision, refers to the intentional removal of or damage to the external female genitalia for cultural reasons. It is believed in Egypt and other parts of Africa and the Middle East to preserve a girl's honor. Despite global concerns, female genital cutting remains commonly practiced in Egypt and many areas of Africa. UNICEF estimated in 2005 that 97% of women between the ages of 15 and 45 have been subjected to the practice in Egypt.

Coptic Orphans was one of the many organizations and communities that participated in the public demonstrations in Egypt during this past summer. Somali-born European supermodel Waris Dirie, who was also invited to participate, commented on the demonstrations: "This year I could observe something very special for the first time: demonstrations against FGM on African soil. Demonstrations which had an impact...That is why today's congregation gives me... great pleasure and I consider this evening to be a signal to all [faith-based] organizations to become active in the fight against FGM."

Coptic Orphans is an award-winning international Christian development organization that works with vulnerable children in Egypt to transform their local communities by breaking the cycles of poverty and injustice through literacy, education, advocacy, mentoring, and basic needs. Since the founding of the organization in 1988, Coptic Orphans has touched the lives of over 14,000 children in Egypt.

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