

Council of Europe
The Secretary General

Strasbourg, 8 October 2013

Dear Shimon, *Dear Shimon,*

Thank you for your letter of 6 October concerning the recent Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly on children's right to physical integrity.

I understand the reaction of many people, specifically from the Jewish and Muslim communities, to the Resolution.

First of all, I should like to underline that the Parliamentary Assembly is a consultative body which does not represent the position of the Council of Europe as a whole.

While our organisation is of course fully-committed to children's rights to physical integrity, nothing in the body of our legally binding standards would lead us to put on equal footing the issue of female genital mutilation and the circumcision of young boys for religious reasons.

In fact, female genital mutilation is specifically banned as a form of gender-based violence under the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. There are no similar legal provisions regarding the practice of circumcision of young boys for religious reasons.

For my part, I can assure you of the Council of Europe's continued and unequivocal commitment to tolerance and freedom of religion, which is not only a moral imperative, but a right protected by the European Convention on Human Rights.

Yours sincerely,



Thorbjørn Jagland

Mr Shimon Peres
President of Israel

F - 67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France

Tel. + 33 (0)3 88 41 20 51
+ 33 (0)3 88 41 20 00

Fax: + 33 (0)3 88 41 27 99
+ 33 (0)3 88 41 27 40