



what is gender-based asylum?

Since the mid-1990s, there has been increasing attention paid to the fact that many women around the globe experience gender-specific types of persecution, and that they could qualify for refugee protection under U.S. law. Gender-based persecution includes practices such as:

- Human Trafficking for Prostitution or Sexual Slavery
- Domestic Violence
- Female Genital Cutting (FGC)
- Forced Marriage
- “Honor” Killings
- Forced Abortion or Reproductive Sterilization
- Rape and other Sexual Violence

As more gender-based asylum claims are raised in the U.S., immigration judges and the courts have been forced to confront a range of issues related to persecution that is unique to women and girls, as well as other groups such as gays and lesbians, children, and the disabled. Women fleeing gender persecution often arrive in the U.S. only to be told that they do not qualify for asylum, and that they will be forcibly returned to the very countries from which they have fled for their lives. CGRS actively works to prevent their return.

CENTER FOR Gender & Refugee STUDIES

at the University of California
Hastings College of the Law

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Making a Life or Death Difference in the Lives of Women and Girls From Around the Globe

women's human rights around the world

Recognition of women's rights as human rights has grown in the past fifty years as a result of grassroots efforts, as well as the adoption of key international treaties and conventions. By 2006, over 180 countries were party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or CEDAW, making it the second most widely ratified human rights treaty. The day-to-day reality for most women, however, is far from the rights enumerated in CEDAW and other international agreements when it comes to economic empowerment, political rights, gender equality, and health. Feminization of poverty, gender-related aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and widespread violence against women are among the many challenges they face. In short, there is much work still to be done.

DID YOU KNOW?

- At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime—usually by someone known to her.
- Each year, an estimated 700,000 to two million women and girls are trafficked internationally—many for sexual exploitation.
- Women account for nearly half the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide; in sub-Saharan Africa 57% of adults with HIV/AIDS are women.
- It is estimated that about 130 million women worldwide have undergone female genital cutting (FGC), with an additional two million girls and women undergoing the procedure every year.
- Out of 550 million working poor in the world, an estimated 330 million are women. Two-thirds of the world's 875 million illiterate adults are women, and half of the children in the world who are not in school are girls.

Contact CGRS for source information.

about CGRS

The Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS) works to advance women's human rights by focusing on gender-based asylum law and broader migration policies, both in the U.S. and internationally. Established in 1999 and housed at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, CGRS serves as a national center for attorneys and other advocates representing asylum seekers fleeing gender-related harm. CGRS aims to positively impact the outcome of individual cases as well as the development of national law and policy to protect women refugees. CGRS engages in collaborative advocacy and public education efforts regarding gender-based asylum issues as well as the root causes that force women to flee and seek protection in the U.S. and elsewhere.

CGRS history

In 1994, a seventeen-year-old girl from Togo arrived in the U.S. seeking political asylum. Fauziya Kassindja had literally fled with little more than the clothes on her back in order to escape being sold into marriage and subjected to female genital cutting (FGC). In 1996, a long year and a half after her arrival in the U.S.—most of it spent in horrible conditions of detention—Fauziya was granted asylum. Her case (also known as “Kasinga”) established the landmark legal ruling that women who suffer serious violations of their fundamental human rights because of their gender are entitled to refugee status in the U.S. Karen Musalo, who was the lead attorney on Fauziya's case, established CGRS to support advocates around the country—and the world—who are seeking expert advice and resources regarding gender-based asylum. CGRS also seeks to raise awareness about women's human rights



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what we do

In an effort to advance women's human rights globally and to positively influence the development of gender-based asylum law, CGRS:

- **Consults with hundreds of attorneys and other advocates** each year regarding specific gender-based asylum cases, providing free legal advice and guidance, both one-on-one and through our website
- **Conducts original human rights research** on the status of women and girls in countries around the globe, which is made available to the general public on our website; CGRS also helps to find experts who can provide key testimony in gender asylum cases
- **Maintains a cutting-edge website**—<http://cgrs.uchastings.edu>—that provides advocates with access to an extensive database of resources, including unpublished judicial decisions that are not available from any other source; this unique resource helps CGRS to track and monitor cases nationwide, introducing unprecedented transparency and accountability into asylum decision-making
- **Becomes involved in groundbreaking legal cases** which have the ability to impact evolving precedent
- **Engages in national policy advocacy and coalition-building** from the grassroots to the highest levels of government in order to positively impact law and policy, as well as the outcome of individual asylum cases
- **Works with the media** to educate the general public on the issue of gender asylum and women's human rights; CGRS's work has been covered extensively by the press, including outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Newsweek*, NPR and PBS
- **Trains and mentors students through the UC Hastings Refugee and Human Rights Clinic** launched in 2005, and by offering volunteer opportunities during the academic year, and internships during the summer
- **Participates in trainings, conferences, and forums** as the nation's leading experts on gender-based asylum law and a consistent voice on challenges to women's human rights worldwide
- **Welcomes international visiting scholars** seeking to learn more about gender-based asylum and who wish to contribute to CGRS's growing body of research and resources

