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## Film shows us the power that one person can wield

A Girl From Mogadishu, in cinemas tomorrow, Cert: 15a, \*\*\*

MORE than 200 million women worldwide have been subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a barbaric ritual that has a range of health implications and, in some cases, can lead to death. Thanks to the efforts of Ifrah Ahmed many countries, including Ireland, have made it illegal.

Ifrah Ahmed is an incredible woman whose story is one of survival and resilience. When she was a little girl, she underwent FGM in her native Somalia, but this is not where her story ended. It was only the beginning. A Girl from Mogadishu tells her story.

Aja Naomi King plays Ifrah. At 15, she is married to a man three times her age. He beats her, and Ifrah decides to return home to her family. Somalia is at war, and she makes her way through gunfire to get back home. When she gets there her father and brother tell her to go back to her husband. Her father and brother leave to join the fighting. She is too scared to venture back out, staying in the house instead. Soldiers find her and force themselves on her. When they leave, she is unwell. Her grandmother, played by renowned actor Somali Maryam Mursal. Her family decides that she needs to leave the country. Mo-

gadishu is on the verge of falling, and it won't be safe for her to stay.

With the help of traffickers, she begins the first leg of a fraught journey to the States. The journey is dangerous. Soldiers threaten the passengers at checkpoints. The bus driver protects Ifrah from a shady trafficker and tells her that if she goes with him, she will end up as a slave or worse. He promises to find another way for her. He organises for another trafficker played by Captain Phillips actor Barkhad Abdi, to take Ifrah to America. With a fake passport, she boards a plane. She is terrified, but happy to be heading towards her new life.

Her new life is not where she expected it to be. The trafficker has brought her to Ireland, a country she hasn't heard of before. He drops her off at a refugee centre with a note asking for help. She can't speak the language, and she is freezing. As she

is a minor, she is awarded a guardian played by Pauline McGlynn. She has to have a medical, and it's here that she learns that her 'injuries' are not ok. Flashback tells us that she was cut when she was a child. She finds out that this is now OK and it doesn't happen to every girl in the world.

She learned to speak English; she becomes an Irish citizen and is now the world's leading authority on FGM. The film takes us on her journey as she learns to tell the world what happened to her was wrong, and it needs to be stopped from ever happening again. Not an easy watch, but filmed sensitively and safely, this is an inspirational film that shows the power one person can wield if they are passionate about their cause.

King is brilliant as Ifrah, and while the

film does have some issues, it is a remarkable story and one worthy of a big-screen telling.

