

The Muslim Woman Becomes the Target Once Again of Secular Political Electioneering

News:

Marine Le Pen, leader of France's far-right political party, the National Rally (RN), and candidate for France's 2027 presidential elections, has revived her push to ban the Hijab in public spaces. If she wins the elections, she plans to include the ban in a law on combating "radical Islamism", criminalizing wearing the Hijab in public. RN Member of Parliament, Jean-Philippe Tanguy, announced on BFM TV News channel on the 30th August that if the party wins power, it plans to impose fines on women who wear the Hijab in public, and that the Islamic headscarf represents an ideology that goes against values that France has promoted for years. The RN said that its position is part of a broader effort to combat what it calls "the Islamist ideology" and defend France's secular model.

Comment:

The use of attacks on the Islamic dress of the Muslim woman and the peddling of Islamophobia as electioneering tools to garner support amongst racist and xenophobic sectors of the society is nothing new within France or other secular states. Indeed, it is the norm and part of the fabric of political life within these states. Last year, Gabriel Attal, former Prime Minister under French President Macron, proposed banning girls under 15 from wearing the headscarf in public spaces, saying that it "seriously undermined gender equality and the protection of children." In 2012, a circular issued by the then education minister, Luc Chatel, called for the exclusion of mothers who wear the headscarf from school trips. Under current French legislation, as part of the secular beliefs of the state, civil servants in state buildings including schools and hospitals cannot wear the headscarf, and a school Hijab ban has been imposed since 2004. In Austria, a law banning headscarves in schools for girls under 14 went into force this September.

Therefore, the RN's use of the Hijab as a political tool of electioneering and its proposal to ban it from public life is not just the rants of an extremist far-right party. Rather, Islamophobic rhetoric and measures have been employed by parties of all political hues in France as a political tool to win votes, including imposing or supporting Hijab or Niqab bans, citing the secular basis of the state as their justification. And such Islamophobic policies are not just the privy of France and Austria as seen with Hijab and Niqab bans in other secular states, including Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to mention just a few.

This issue is about the corrupt secular system that allows the peddling of Islamophobia and the demonization of Islamic beliefs to be used as an acceptable electioneering tool to play to the bigotry of racist and xenophobic voters. It is about a system under which Muslim women can be stigmatized, marginalized and discriminated against with no consequences; a system that talks about the need to protect Muslim women and girls while simultaneously linking their dress to extremism, resulting in increased violence against them. It is about the hypocritical secular system which espouses freedoms and gender equality and yet denies Muslim women the right to

practice their basic religious beliefs and convictions; a system which attacks other states for denying their girls and women access to a proper education or employment, while simultaneously excluding Muslim girls and women wearing the Hijab from schools, universities and various professions. It is about the immoral secular system that permits the sexualization, objectification, and exploitation of women in its beauty, fashion, entertainment and pornography industries and yet criminalises women who dress modestly and guard their dignity through their religious dress. And it is about the weak secular system that feels threatened by a piece of cloth and fails to treat all its citizens with equal respect and rights; a system that struggles to accommodate the religious beliefs of all peoples under its rule and whose values, principles and rights are malleable, unpredictable and expendable based on political interests.

This issue is about the flawed secular system which is unfit for purpose in governing a society, and under which, the rise of fascism simmers just under the surface. Surely, all this merits the consideration of an alternative system for mankind and nations.

Under the Islamic system, the Khilafah based upon the method of the Prophethood, the state is obligated to ensure that all its citizens – Muslims and non-Muslims alike - enjoy the same rights of citizenship without discrimination, including protection of their lives, property, dignity and religious beliefs. The state is also obligated to look after the Dhimmi (non-Muslim citizens of the state) well, protect them from any harm, and rule over them with justice always. Allah (swt) says: **﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا﴾** **“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. What a noble commandment from Allah to you! Surely Allah is all-Hearing, all-Seeing.”** [An-Nisa: 58]. And the Prophet (saw) said: **«أَلَا مَنْ ظَلَمَ مَعَاهِدًا أَوْ انْتَقَصَهُ أَوْ كَفَّهُ فَوْقَ طَاقَتِهِ أَوْ أَخَذَ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا بَغَيْرِ طَبِّ نَفْسٍ فَإِنَّا حَاجِبُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ»** **“Whoever wrongs a person protected by a covenant (i.e. a Dhimmi), violates his rights, burdens him with more work than he can do, or takes something from him without his consent, I will be his prosecutor on the Day of Resurrection.”** Furthermore, under the rule of Islam, the state cannot interfere with the religious beliefs or worships of the Dhimmi; rather they will be permitted to practice them under the protection of the law. This is why Will Durant, American Writer and Historian wrote, *“At the time of the Umayyad caliphate, the people of the covenant, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews and Sabians, all enjoyed a degree of tolerance that we do not find even today in Christian countries. They were free to practice the rituals of their religion and their temples and churches were preserved. They enjoyed autonomy in that they were subject to the religious laws of the scholars and judges.”* This is the difference between systems, ideologies and laws generated from the weak, biased and fickle minds of human beings, and the system and Deen revealed by the Creator of the universe, Allah (swt).

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