

News and Comment

Perspective on 'World Hijab Day'

News:

'World Hijab Day' takes place on February the 1st. Founded by New Yorker Nazma Khan, the movement urges Muslim women across the globe seeking to explain to wider society why they wear the hijab, to try to promote a better understanding about it. Styles include getting people to try on hijabs. The question is – will such activities deal with the attack on the hijab?

Comment:

Why do we wear hijab?

For the majority of Muslim women who take the decision to wear hijab, commonly the name used for the Islamic dresscode for women, there is no denying they do it of their own free will. It is an active decision they make. But we must be accurate in explaining that this does not mean wearing hijab is a choice we make. Because something that one does as an act of submission, as a response to a command to an All Powerful All Encompassing Creator cannot be seen as a choice.

In Surah Ahzab: 36, Allah (swt) says:

«وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا»

“It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error.”

Surah Nur: 31 as well as hadith, make covering in a specific manner a command for Muslim women.

So if asked why we cover - Yes, we wear the hijab because contrary to popular opinion Muslim women actually make a conscious decision to do it. But the only reason WHY we cover is because we submit to our Almighty and All Encompassing Creator and obey him in his command.

Why is there an attack on the hijab?

People dress in so many different ways today, so why is how you cover your hair still so much of a problem? Because the hijab has always represented something more than a form of dress. It is a sign of the Muslim woman, who must be liberated.

In relation to the war of the US in Afghanistan First Lady Laura Bush declared:

"The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women."

And this attack through the hijab is nothing new. Rather it has always been the cover for the attack on Islam as a whole - Its values, its principles, which were always different to the values of the West.

William Gladstone, British Prime Minister in 1894 said: *“The situation in the East will not be successful until we remove the Hijab from the woman and use it to cover the Qur’an.”*

At that time in the East from the way women dressed to the political system, was shaped by Islamic values and laws.

So if we are aware how this attack on the hijab came about, then we know that just explaining what it feels like to wear a metre length cloth in itself, won't change that much.

How do we explain hijab?

Just as many politicians of the past understood, the rules and laws of Islam do not end in just ritual worships. The Islamic values and rules actually achieve a wider impact for a whole society, which they came for. And hijab is one of them.

The Islamic society has an overarching view that women must be viewed and treated as the honour of society. But this view isn't just left to be held in the minds of people. Allah (swt) has given the Muslims a host of social laws to ensure this view is protected and maintained. These social laws take the potential for women to be seen as an exploit or in a derogatory manner, out of society. They act in a preventative manner.

So rules such as the dresscode, the hijab, segregation of the sexes in society to minimise mixing, the prohibition of even falsely slandering an innocent women with a harsh punishment as a result - these were all societal practices implemented by the Prophet (saw) in Madinah.

And when implemented what do these rules achieve? Well they all work to ensure that everyone in society continues to view and treat women as the honour of society and nothing less - At home, in work, in school.

So hijab, as well as being an action carried out by the individual, is one rule out of social system which impacts the societal. Hijab as part of the Islamic Khilafah system, can change the plain for women and the lives they lead.

THIS is what we need to explain to the world.

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