

Press Release

Switzerland's Ban on the Niqab Enforces its Xenophobic Secular Rule Against Islam & Muslim Women

On Friday ١st July ٢٠١٦, Switzerland's burqa ban was enforced in the southern Swiss canton of Ticino. Muslim women found wearing the Niqab in public places, including in shops, restaurants, hotels and public buildings would face a fine of up to £٧,٨٩٠. The embassy of Saudi Arabia instead of condemning such discriminating bans that will unjustly target Muslim women, wrote on twitter reminding their visiting citizens “of the necessity to respect and conform to Swiss rules and regulations in order avoid all problems.”

Through this ruling on the face veil, Switzerland has now joined the uncoveted ranks of other Western secular nations such as France, Belgium, Spain, Bulgaria and Italy who have stigmatized and marginalized Muslim women and relegated them to second-class citizens through partial or full bans of the Niqab. Such bigoted legislation, along with the relentless anti-Islamic, anti-Muslim rhetoric peddled by secular governments, politicians, and media has generated a nightmare environment for Muslim women in the West who are the frontline targets of anti-Muslim hate-crimes due to their Islamic dress. Such crimes have spiraled in recent years within Western states, including following the Paris and Belgium attacks. However, instead of trying to extinguish the flames of community tensions at this sensitive time, Western governments seem intent on fuelling them through racially charged legislation as with the Swiss Niqab ban, or emotive speeches fear-mongering against Islamic beliefs and practices. All of this carries an underlying divisive and dangerous message that Muslims and their Islamic culture are a threat for Western societies, resulting in entire Muslim communities being placed under a cloud of suspicion, as well as feeding the agendas of racists.

Surely questions need to be asked about the credibility of any system where women dressing modestly according to their religious beliefs are criminalized at a time when it is considered legal for the regime for politicians or xenophobic parties such as the Swiss People's Party, the French National Front, or PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against Islamization of the West) to openly espouse their inflammatory anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant vitriol, fanning the flames of racism and fuelling the rise of hate-crimes against minorities. All this reflects the inherent danger and contradictions of the secular system which allows xenophobic views to be entertained in the name of freedom of expression while simultaneously robbing religious minorities of their basic right to practice their harmless beliefs. It shatters the claim that only secular rule can guarantee tolerant, civilized, harmonious societies. It also emphasizes the ideological bankruptcy of secularism – a system which feels threatened by a handful of harmless women wearing a religious dress; a system that has demonstrated its inability to accommodate the beliefs of different religious communities in a manner that is respectful and just; and a system under which the incitement of prejudice towards Islam and Muslims has become the norm.

In stark contrast to the false unjust democratic system, the Islamic system of the Khilafah Rashidah (Caliphate) based upon the method of the Prophethood prohibits outright any coercion to accept Islam or preventing religious minorities from practicing their rituals and beliefs. It also prohibits any discrimination in the rights of citizenship afforded to Muslims and non-Muslims, and has zero tolerance for racism or attacks on the beliefs of followers of other faiths. This is why many historians refer to the glorious rule of the Khilafah as the “Golden Age” of prosperity and security for the Jews and others from the citizens (Dhimmi) who lived under the shade of the Islamic governance. It is this system that offers a sound, credible model for guaranteeing the rights of all and establishing a harmonious society.

Women's Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir

