



THE BURKINI BAN

A clash of cultures on France's beaches



The Issue

In August 2016, a number of French municipalities banned the wearing of 'burkinis' - swimwear covering the whole body, including the head, mostly worn by Muslim women

This sparked international controversy and debate

Reasons Given

'Possible link to Islamic extremism'
'Disrespect of good morals and secularism'
'Unacceptable provocation' following multiple terror attacks

French prime minister Manuel Valls: "It is the expression of a political project, a counter-society, based notably on the enslavement of woman"

Opposition

Human Rights Watch: "It's almost a form of collective punishment against Muslim women for the actions of others"

NY Times highlighted the contradiction of "imposing rules on what women can wear on the grounds that it's wrong for women to have to obey rules about what women can wear"

France's Struggle with Islamic Dress



April 2011

First European country to ban the NIQAB (full-face veil) in public places - other European countries or regions have followed

5 million

Approximate number of Muslims in France

2,000

Number of women believed to have been wearing full veils

150 euros

Penalty for wearing veils (together with 'instruction in citizenship')

30,000 euros

Penalty for anyone found forcing a woman to cover her face

425

The number of women fined for violating the ban between April 2011 and September 2012

France has also banned other "conspicuous" religious symbols, such as the Jewish kippah and oversized crucifixes

Islamic dress has become a symbol of 'religious difference and identity' in France
Challenges the national secular value of religion being kept out of public life
Ties in with ongoing debates about immigration, integration and Islam in Western society

Principles of Islamic Dress for Women

Sura 24:30-31 of the Quran

tells women to 'guard their modesty' and to not display their beauty to those outside their extended families



GENERAL GUIDELINES - Islamic clothing for women should be:

Modest

Covering the body (especially the chest) except for face and hands

Loose

Not outlining or distinguishing the shape of the body

Thick enough

Not showing the colour of the skin or the outline of the body

Dignified and decent

Not shiny or flashy, nor dirty or ragged

Not imitating others

Easily identifiable as Muslim (taking pride in Islamic faith)



Different types of Islamic veiling:

HIJAB

Headscarf covering hair and neck - most common form worn in Western countries

NIQAB

Full-face veil, through which only the eyes are seen - usually worn with loose black garment (abaya)

BURKA

Veil covering the entire body and face, with mesh window across the eyes (common in Afghanistan)

DUPATTA

Long scarf, often colourful, draped loosely around head and shoulders (common in South Asia)

CHADOR

Full-length cloak (covering the head too) held closed in front (common in Iran)

