

Five Reasons To Ban the Burqa

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Belgium and France have banned the Burqa and the new Dutch government is considering doing the same. Critics have charged that the ban is religiously intolerant, some even claim that it's intolerant of women, but the truth is that the Burqa is dangerous to women. Both those who wear it—and those who don't.

1. The Burqa Covers Up Abuse

Countries where the Burqa is commonly worn also have higher rates of domestic violence. In Afghanistan 87 percent of women reported experiencing domestic violence. In Pakistan that number goes as high as 90 percent. Domestic violence is also a major problem in Saudi Arabia.

In cases of domestic abuse, the Burqa doesn't just isolate the woman, it also covers up evidence of the abuse. It gives the abuser the freedom to brutalize his partner without worrying that anyone will even notice.

This is an especially vital issue in Europe, where spousal abuse is a serious crime, and the abuser has more motivation than ever to cover it up. The Burqa successfully isolates abuse victims, cuts them off from any prospective support networks and prevents anyone on the outside from even realizing what is being done to them.

The Muslim community has been in denial about its rates of domestic abuse. The Burqa is one reason why. It's easier not to see abused women, when they are segregated and the marks of their abuse are kept out sight.

2. The Burqa Justifies Sexual Assault on Women Who Don't Wear It

In response to a gang rape, the Chief Mufti of Australia said, "If she was in her room, in her home, in her Hijab, no problem would have occurred." By wearing the Burqa or Hijab, women participate in a narrative that gives rapists a pass for sexual assaults on women who don't dress the way the Mufti or Imam says they should.

The Koran gives a similar justification for a head to toe covering for women, “O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies that they may thus be distinguished and not molested.” (Koran 33:59)

This distinction between women who can be ‘molested’ and those who cannot is what makes the Burqa such an explosive addition to Europe—which is already suffering from a high rate of Muslim sexual assaults on non-Muslim women.

The Burqa divides women into “good girls” and “whores” and gives potential rapists, religious ammunition for their crimes.

Banning the Burqa protects women who choose not to wear it from being assaulted because of their perceived immodesty.

3. Civic Participation

The essence of a modern society is that it extends civic participation to everyone. Deliberately preventing an entire gender from participating in society as identifiable individuals is an assault on the democratic character of the state.

Individuals are recognizable through personal attributes. Remove those attributes and you remove the individuality as well. The Sahih Bukhari relates that one inspiration for the Burqa was that one of Mohammed’s followers was able to recognize one of his wives at night. The implication is that the Burqa is meant to prevent such recognition from taking place. Women are not meant to be recognized as individuals. Or to be empowered to make their own decisions.

The Burqa is designed to impede interaction outside the home. The failure to be recognized as an individual is dehumanizing and deprives women of their role in civic life.

Countries where the Burqa is in wide use, have low rates of female civic participation. In Saudi Arabia women are not allowed to vote. In parts of Pakistan, women are not allowed to vote as well. In Afghanistan women were shunted into female only polling stations, or forced to vote by proxy through a male family member.

The rise of such segregation in Europe would threaten the democratic character of the society. But should the Burqa become widespread, the status of some European women living in national capitals would begin to resemble those of Saudi and Pakistani women.

4. Segregation is Discrimination

Purdah segregates women at homes and the Burqa segregates them in public. While the authorities cannot interfere with what people choose to do in their own homes—the public wearing of the Burqa is a statement that women are unequal and must be segregated.

Such an attitude is an assault on the legal place of women in society. It imposes the norms of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on the streets of Paris and London. Like a Klan march, it a dehumanizing and intimidating statement of bigotry against a segment of society. While in the United States, such marches are legal, in much of Europe they are not.

If radicals are prevented from making public statements about the inferiority of races, why should they be permitted to assert the inferiority of a gender.

“Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other,” the Koran asserts. Replace ‘women’ with any race or religion, and a public assertion of such a thing would be cause for criminal proceedings.

Imposing the segregation of the Burqa on women in an assertion of a bigoted creed that dehumanizes an entire gender. While Muslims are free to believe what they do, a public display that dehumanizes women as a gender by treating their faces as obscene, is an intolerant violation of the norms of civil society.

5. The Wearing of the Burqa is Enforced Through Violence

“More often the girls were under orders from their fathers and uncles and brothers, and even their male classmates. For the boys, transforming a bluejeaned teen-age sister into a docile and observant “Muslim” virgin was a rite de passage into authority, the fast track to becoming a man, and more important, a Muslim man.... it was also a license for violence.” (Jane Kramer, Taking the Veil, New Yorker)

In 2003 a French survey found that 77 percent of girls who wore the Hijab did so because of threats. Women in the Muslim world have been punished by having acid thrown in their faces for not complying with similar demands. There is no way to break through this climate of coercion except by giving women and girls immunity from such demands by banning the source of it. The Burqa.

The Burqa also exposes women to blackmail and intimidation when they deviate from the standard of full body covering. There is a rising number of cases in which women and girls who posted Facebook pictures of themselves in normal clothes have been blackmailed and threatened for it.

As long as the Burqa remains a threat hanging over the heads of Muslim and non-Muslim women alike, no woman in Europe can truly be free from its implied threat to her person and her political freedoms.