

Europe is Having an Important Burqa Debate.  
Posted On:December 31, 1969

Register Pajaronian

Europe, with a seemingly large immigrant Muslim population\227and not a well integrated one at that\227is having open discussion on what to do about women wearing total face-obscuring garments. It is one thing to wear a headscarf, which bothers secularists, but another thing altogether to have women wearing the Arab niqab or Afghan burqa. Why should this be such an issue?

Reciprocity has not been mentioned. If a European woman travels to Saudi Arabia or Iran, she must be covered up\227in Arabia, totally. That is their custom, and they insist upon compliance. Very well, then, when in Rome---or Paris, Copenhagen, or Berlin, immigrant women and visitors should abide by local custom. Reciprocity is fair.

Other reasons for banning the total veiling are even less discussed. The first is national security; there is no way to know who is under that veil and what they are carrying. Male suicide murderers have no shame about dressing as a woman, hiding a weapon or suicide belt.

How can we know the scope of the problem? We are told there are \2235 or 6 million\224 Muslims in France, for example. Without a question about religion on the census (we don\227t have that either), how does anyone know how many there are? Nor is there an indication of what kind of Muslims: secular, religious, militant, educated, uneducated, or origin? The great gap in published numbers in the United States is also illuminating: from 2 million to 7 or 8 million. Which is it and again, what kind? Are there 2,000 women in France who wear the niqab or more? How do we know?

European law insists upon equality of men and women. A veiled woman is demonstrating her inferiority to her male counterparts\227something very offensive to modern Europeans. She is also covering up any indications of physical battery from her menfolk\227a growing problem for Europeans.

One expert on Islam, Dr. Peter Heine, according to Der Spiegel Online International, expressed concern that if the veil is banned, Muslim women will be confined to their homes. Perhaps so. And how is that different from how such women live in their home countries? Other critics of the ban think that this would alienate France\227s Muslims. Are they not alienated anyway? We always care about this\227a care that is not reciprocated.

But the underlying issue roiling Europe is not just what some women wear; it is the tip of the iceberg of militant Islam and the inroads it is trying to make among Europe\227s population.

Most human cultures are not friendly to outsiders. Immigrants accepted when they are few seem threatening to the natives when they are many. In most cases, this fear is just ancient bigotry, as it was in 19th century United States, when waves of immigrants (Irish, German, Italian, Jewish, and Chinese) were met with hostility by the public.

Those immigrants, however, really wanted to be here and wanted to assimilate\227and they have. During World War I, Christian Arabs fled here from countries such as Syria and Lebanon, where they were being persecuted. They most certainly assimilated, the proof of which is how many of their children have become important and useful Americans. The same is true for most of the Iranians who fled the Iranian Revolution. Those who live in Europe and the United States already had one foot in assimilation; they adapted quickly.

The problem today comes from immigrants from the Muslim world who are uneducated, village born, and unskilled, such as many from Somalia and Yemen. These are economic migrants, but their children are targeted by Militant Islamist recruiters, either in school or in prisons where some wind up. And the funding for this comes from wealthy Arab countries.

Our problems are nothing when compared to the United Kingdom, having the most militants who do not hide their intentions. Security alerts are growing more alarming in England\227and the rest of Europe has taken note and are starting to defend itself. Sometimes a headscarf is not just a head covering but is a red flag.

677 words

Laina Farhat-Holzman is a writer, lecturer, and historian. You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or [www.globalthink](http://www.globalthink)