

the veil is nothing but the flag of the muslim far right

Interview with Marieme Helie Lucas

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THE VEIL IS NOTHING BUT THE FLAG OF THE MUSLIM FAR RIGHT

Maryam Namazie: Limitations on the veil in schools and an all-out ban on the burqa or niqab are often seen to be authoritarian. Your views?

Marieme Helie Lucas: First of all, it is useful not to conflate the two issues: that of veiling girls in schools and banning the face covering. I will thus answer them as two separate questions.

When talking of veils in schools, one automatically refers to the veiling of under-aged girls, i.e. not the veiling of women. The question thus becomes: who is to decide on girls' veiling - themselves or the adults who are in charge of them? And which adults?

I know of only one book that looks at this issue; it is a pamphlet entitled 'Bas les Voiles' (by Chahdortt Djavann, Gallimard 2003) that was published by an Iranian woman exiled in Paris at the time when the Stasi Commission in France was collecting the views of concerned women (and men) before the adoption of the new law on religious symbols in secular state schools. The author states that the psychological damage done to girls by veiling them is immense as it makes them responsible for men's arousal from a very early age. This point requires special consideration given the new trend to veil girls as young as 5 as shown in the numerous campaigns throughout North Africa. The author goes on to explain that the girl's body is thus turned into the site of "fitnah" (seduction or source of disorder) meaning that she cannot look at it or think of it in positive terms. This attitude builds girls that fear, distrust, and feel disgust and anguish at their own bodies. At such an early age, little girls have no way of countering this shaping of their self; they are entirely under the thumb of anti-women men. The women growing up from these psychologically damaged girls are likely to need a lot of help to be able to reconsider themselves and their bodies in more positive terms, to reconstruct their self image, to conquer their bodily autonomy, to abandon guilt and fear - and to give back to men the responsibility of their sexual acts. I think it would be very useful for more women researchers to delve into the psychological damage done to girls who are veiled from an early age.

Also, who is the 'adult' in charge of protecting the girl-child's rights? The state already plays this role on numerous occasions, such as in preventing families from perform FGM on girls, or in preventing forced marriages for instance. Why should it not also take responsibility in preventing the deep psychological damage induced by wearing a veil before adulthood?

Why should the state be seen as authoritarian when it prevents the veiling of girls but not when it protects them from FGM?

It is interesting to remember that groups of lefties and feminists (alas!) in Europe and North America defended 'the right to FGM' in the seventies as a 'cultural right' and denounced 'western imperialism's' attempts at

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eradicating the practice in Europe. At no point was any reference made to the struggles of women on the ground to eradicate it in the limited parts of Africa where FGM was practiced both by animists, Christians and Muslims. We see the same pattern replicated regarding 'the right to veil', which is now seen as a 'religious right' despite the fact that numerous progressive interpreters of the Qu'ran have stated that it is not an Islamic injunction.

What strikes me is the imbalance in treatment of 'authoritarianism' by those on the left and in the human rights community in Europe and North America. Millions of women in predominantly Muslim set-ups have been assassinated for standing for their right NOT to be veiled (so far, veiled women are not assassinated for wearing a veil in Europe, nor in North America, even if it is true that they may be verbally attacked by far-right racist individuals, who, may I emphasise, are then taken to court and generally convicted - as should be the case).

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I wish the magnitude of the vociferous defence of veiled women's 'choice' and 'right to veil' by 'progressive people' would be matched with their defence of women slaughtered for not veiling. But what we see, instead, hidden behind the left and human rights community's unilateral defence of the human rights of veiled women, is in fact a clearly political position. 'Progressives' have chosen to defend fundamentalists who they depict exclusively as victims of US imperialism, rather than the victims of fundamentalists, i.e., amongst others, the millions of unveiled women who have resisted their diktats as well as the millions of secularists, agnostics, atheists, and so on who have been abandoned as 'westernised' or even 'allies of imperialism'! History will judge this short-sighted political choice just as it did the cowardice of European countries at the onset of Nazism's rise in Germany.

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With regards your question, I can only speak from my perspective as an Algerian living in France at the time of the debate on the two French laws that are incriminated the world over as being 'anti-Islam': the law on veiling in schools and the ban on face covering. These are two different issues and in France they have been treated separately.

The ban on religious symbols in state secular schools is done in the name of secularism, whilst the ban on the face covering is done in the name of security. The burqa has been added to other forms of face covering such as masks (outside a carnival setting) or full motorbike helmets (when not riding) as all of these are routinely used to protect the identity of rioters or 'terrorists.' (As an Algerian old enough to have lived through the Battle of Algiers during the liberation struggle from French colonialism, I know for certain that veils were used to carry arms and bombs from place to place - hence I cannot be surprised that full face coverings are added to the list of forbidden outfits.)

Let me deal with veiling in schools.

The situations of France and Britain are very different.

France is a secular country that, since the French revolution, separated the new secular state from the political influence of the Church. The secular laws that established this separation date from 1905 and 1906, way before any immigration from predominantly Muslim-majority countries. Article 1 of the 1906 law guarantees freedom of belief and practice. Article 2 of the same law states that beyond this guarantee of fundamental individual

rights the secular state will have nothing to do with religion and its representatives. The state will not recognise churches, nor fund them, and so on. In the words of a modern analyst of secularism, Henri Pena Ruiz, the state declares itself 'incompetent in religious matters.' Beliefs become a private matter, and established religions (at that time mostly the Catholic Church) lose all political power over the state. The secular state will simply ignore them as political entities. Citizens are the only partner the state recognises, through democratic election processes.

It is a consequence of the definition of secularism as a separation of state and religion that, since 1906, displaying 'any symbol' of religious or political affiliation is forbidden in exclusively two specific situations: for both personnel and pupils in primary and secondary secular state schools (i.e. for under-aged children, and not including universities where students are of adult age), and for civil servants in contact with the public.

The rationale for this is that children come to the schools of the Secular Republic (where education is free) to be educated as equal French citizens, not as representatives of any specific community. Education as equal citizens is a powerful tool against communalism and the divisive specificities that lead to unequal legal rights within a given country, as is already the case in Britain, with the so-called 'sharia courts' becoming parallel legal systems in family matters.

Similarly, civil servants when in contact with the public have to perform their duties as representatives of all citizens of every ethnic or religious background, and that is why they are requested not to display their affiliation within the time frame when they represent the Secular Republic.

This is a far cry from, for instance, British police stations, where one can request to be heard by a policeman of his or her own cult or ethnic group as if a civil servant cannot be educated not to be biased, and is necessarily first and foremost faithful to his or her 'community' rather than to fellow citizens.

It is thus in the name of secularism that veiling has been outlawed in secular state schools and for civil servants in France, just as crosses or kippas have. Interestingly, the emphasis is on the veil, not on crosses or kippas. Why? And who is behind this hierarchy?

What blurred the issue was that the rightwing president Sarkozy passed the new law in 2004 whilst trying to rally the xenophobic far-right in favour of his candidacy. There was no need for such a new law; the 1906 law merely had to be applied.

The right and far-right forces in France have never stopped attacking the 1905-6 secular laws for the past 100 years. They have now found active and powerful partners in Muslim fundamentalist far-right forces which also want to dismantle secularism and to return to the stage when religions had political power and official representation. It is clear that while different religions will compete at a later stage - if they are to succeed in their attempt to eradicate secularism in France - they are useful allies to each other. Just watch how representatives of the Catholic Church and Jewish high authorities support practically every demand by Muslim fundamentalists! The issue of the veil in primary and secondary schools in France is but one of the many demands they constantly devise to fundamentally challenge the laws of the Secular Republic.

Isn't it ironic that laws passed a century ago, at a time when there was virtually no immigration from Muslim-majority

countries, now pass off, the world over, as laws against Islam? This alludes to the expertise of Muslim fundamentalists in media communications.

Coming back to the issue of veil and burqa in the UK, let me state that Britain is NOT a secular state. The Queen is the Head of the Anglican Church, thus it cannot root its ban of the burqa or niqab or even head scarf on secular laws dating back to more than a hundred years nor show its commitment to free and quality non-confessional education for all children as is the case in France.

Britain has devised an alternative definition of secularism, not as separation, but as equal tolerance by the state vis-à-vis all religions. Thus the state in Britain interacts with religions, and considers 'churches' (or the like in other religions) as political partners and representatives of communities. It is this which leads to communalism and cultural relativism. Isn't it high time for Britain to return to the original definition of secularism and to a form of democracy in which citizenship is at its centre?

What we see happening is the fragmentation of people, of fellow citizens, into smaller and smaller competing entities that each demand different rules are applicable to them and their 'community' in the name of cultural and religious identities. Laws that were voted by all citizens are challenged for the benefit of supposedly divinely ordained laws - a direct attack on the very principle of democracy. We see the eradication of the notion of citizenship, and this will have drastic political consequences in the near future. All in the name of rights!

Maryam Namazie: *What happens to a woman's right to choose her clothing? Some would say forcing women to unveil is on par with forcibly veiling them.*

Marieme Helie Lucas: I would like to first point out the fact that the debate is formulated in 'western' terms. To my knowledge, women in Muslim contexts are NOT prevented from veiling and that's the vast majority of supposedly Muslims in the world. In most instances, they are forced to cover, to various degrees, often by law and we have yet to hear a worldwide outcry about their situation.

In sharp contrast, we hear so much about the poor women 'forced to unveil' in non-Muslim contexts - mostly in Europe and North America - but I have yet to find WHERE this happens; nowhere to my knowledge. The limitations on veiling, in specific circumstances in France, have been addressed in my response to the previous question (under-aged girls are requested not to veil only within the premises of secular state primary and secondary schools and burqa-clad women are requested to uncover their face for purpose of identification; the rest of their body, hair, and head can be covered as they like). Also, as per my knowledge, when veiled women are verbally or physically attacked, there are tribunals to defend them against any form of aggression. In actual fact, the debate is reduced to the right to veil in Europe and North America with no regard for the resistance to veiling everywhere in the world and the dire circumstances for resisters. This reduction is utterly unacceptable to me.

On the one hand, there are millions of women worldwide forced to veil who risk their liberty and lives when they transgress veiling orders. They are abandoned to 'cultural' and 'religious' rights with no analysis of the far-right political forces manipulating and hijacking culture and religion for political gain under the politically correct

pretext that US imperialism misused the defence of women's human rights to conceal its economic reasons for invading Afghanistan and that 'whites' are racists. On the other hand, there are women of the diaspora in Europe and North America whose 'right to veil' is defended by a politically correct coalition of left and human rights defenders who show little interest in the numerous cases of young women trying to escape forced veiling.

Isn't there some disturbing imbalance in such an utterly discriminatory political choice between those whose rights deserve to be defended and those who don't qualify? Could these champions of our rights publicly clarify their reasons for such a hierarchy of rights?



Clearly the question here exclusively refers to the 'right to choose' of women who want to veil in Europe and North America and that this is a very limited and partial way of addressing the problem; it means 'disappearing' the vast majority of concerned women.

About 'choice' in general, much has already been written by feminists about how much freedom one can expect in situations where women have no say either legally, culturally, religiously or otherwise. Recently, a powerful academic article by Anissa Helie and Mary Ashe: 'Multiculturalist Liberalism and Harms to Women: Looking Through the Issue of the Veil' (published in UC Davis Journal of International Law and Policy, Vol. 19.1, 2012) concluded that 'proponents of veiling often insist on an individual 'women's right to choose (the veil)... Crafted by the theoreticians of radical Islam (who usurp the mantra of supporters of abortion rights for women), such slogans can confound Western liberals who, afraid of being labelled racist, fall into the trap of cultural relativism.'

I would, however, go back even further to the old debate sparked by Marx on workers' 'freedom to work' at the time of Britain's industrialisation, i.e. a time when in order to not actually starve and die, workers' only 'free choice' was to work 14 hours a day in hellish circumstances that also killed many of them, including women and children under the age of 10.

Women in many countries where Muslim fundamentalists rule and terrify populations have the same 'choice' that workers had in a Britain that was industrialising: to die of starvation or survive a little bit longer as slaves / to die because they resist fundamentalists or survive as slaves. Great 'choice' indeed! Is that the only alternative women are offered by cultural relativists?

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The number of women assassinated by family members, as well as by fundamentalist armed groups, or imprisoned by fundamentalist states in our various countries on all continents for the simple reason that they do not conform with veiling diktats should at the very least count as more important in the eyes of human rights defenders than the 'plea of veiled women' who may occasionally have to cope with racists comments in 'the West.'

How can one dare compare, for instance, the 200,000 victims of the 'dark decade' (through the 1990s) in Algeria, a vast majority of whom were women assassinated by fundamentalist armed groups, mostly ignored and abandoned to their fate by international human rights organisations, with a handful of veiled women yelled at in Paris or London? Yes, how dare one compare. This accepted inequality of treatment only shows that for human rights organisations and left parties, the West is still the centre of the world, and what happens there - however small and marginal - takes precedence over the many crimes committed elsewhere.

I would like to point out an interesting blind spot in the analysis of the left and human rights crowd, which if it were taken into account would prevent the reducing of the issue to 'individual choice.'

The number of veiled women in the streets of European capitals has been steadily growing over the past two decades only. Their number is not proportional to a significant increase of migrant populations. These women do not wear their national costumes (including head covering or not) but the Saudi veil instead which never existed in other countries. There is a growing number of women adopting the most drastic form of not just hair covering but of face covering.

In light of this, how can this form of veiling be seen as a cultural issue when it in fact eradicates all traditional forms of hair covering and of national and regional dress?

How can this form of veiling be seen as a religious issue when progressive theologians and scholars of Islam on all continents keep demonstrating that veiling women is not a religious prescription, that it is a cultural one, circumscribed to the Middle East, both for men and women, adapted to its climate, and common to all religious groups as should be largely demonstrated by Christian iconography that depicts the Virgin Mary and all the holy women that shared the life of Christ in his times as well as Jewish women as veiled. Why not rise in defence of all these endangered cultures? How can they not make the link between the propagation of the Saudi veil and Saudi funding of most of the mosques and religious organisations that have been popping up in European capital cities? How can they not see this form of veiling as fundamentalism's political flag? How can they not link its propagation with the other political activities of Saudi (and Qatari) imperialism? How can they not make a political

analysis of this sudden explosion of veiled women in the diaspora? How can they reduce it to 'individual choice' of individual women in the wake of such a massive and sudden new phenomenon?

If, let's say, there was a sudden spread of nuns' outfits, concomitantly in Italy, France and Spain, and if Catholic women in visible numbers would aggressively assert their right to be clad as 'true Catholics' (a modern invention that would be contested by respected Christian theologians, - just as this new rage for veiling is contested by numerous progressive Muslim theologians and scholars of Islam that neither the left nor human rights organisations ever quote in defence of unveiled women against the inaccurate claims made by fundamentalists), wouldn't the left point at the right and far-right political movements hidden behind this supposedly religious revival? Wouldn't the left analyse it in political terms, rather than in religious ones, and denounce it? If there were rumours, or examples of 'improperly' clad Catholic women being coerced into this outfit, or beaten up, or forcibly secluded, or killed, wouldn't human rights organisations start looking into it? Wouldn't they defend the victims? Wouldn't they denounce these as human rights violations? Or would all these supposedly progressive forces continue to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses and to the cries for mercy of victims? Would they focus on the 'right to veil' of Catholic women?

It is clear to me that by reiterating the claims of fundamentalists over women, without even checking out the most blatant of their lies, the left and human rights crowd only betray their fear of being labelled 'Islamophobic.' They unwittingly (I hope) reinforce fundamentalist views which claim they are the only legitimate representatives of Islam, and that their opponents anti-Islam.

This is what is behind the question of 'choice': it places the debate away from any political analysis that would point at the right and far-right nature of fundamentalists' manipulation of the veil. The right and far-right views of the supremacy of the individual are rooted in economic liberalism.

Maryam Namazie: *Whilst we might consider secularism a precondition for women's rights, Islamists consider Sharia law a precondition for women's rights in the way they see them. Who is to say who is right? They would argue secularism is a western concept and a form of cultural colonialism.*

Marieme Helie Lucas: I object to using the term 'sharia law.' It presupposes that there is somewhere written a body of laws that are used by all Muslims. A simple overview of laws in Muslim-majority countries shows that there is no such thing. The vast diversity of laws in

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predominantly Muslim contexts show that laws have different sources: from giving legitimacy to local cultural practices (FGM passing off as Islamic in some regions of Africa), to different religious interpretations (for example Algeria legalised polygamy whilst Tunisia bans it using exactly the same verse of the Qu'ran but with a different reading of it!), to using laws of former colonisers (such as the ban on contraception and abortion in Algeria, using the 1920 French law), and so on. It would therefore be a huge mistake to think that all the laws in Muslim-majority countries have their source in religion.

'Sharia' is a term coined by fundamentalists in order to make believe that such a body of laws exist; using the term just allows more people to believe in its existence. Exactly just as media started using other terms coined by fundamentalists, such as jihad — which means a spiritual fight within oneself to come closer to God, rather than a 'war' with weapons, as they interpret it — or 'the Islamic veil' when they propagate Saudi veiling; or 'Islamophobia' when one challenges their views on Islam... Do not use the language of the enemy! It gives credibility to their lies...

As I have already pointed at, there are lots of places in the world where veiling is compulsory and no forced unveiling anywhere. Not even in primary and secondary schools in France because ultra-orthodox families have a choice to enrol their daughters in religious schools of their choice. The only obligation of families is to send their daughters to school but the choice of that school is not within the mandate of the secular state.

And nowhere are women forced not to wear a veil in public; they are only asked in France to not cover their face. Hence secularism neither veils nor unveils women. Undoubtedly, however, fundamentalists' interpretation of supposedly divine orders aims at veiling women. Secularism is not an opinion nor is it a belief; it is exclusively a definition and a regulation of the position of the state vis-a-vis religion. Either the state interferes with religion or it does not. Secularism is the formal set up in which the state does not interfere with religion. We should not accept any other definition of secularism.

As for the accusation of secularism being a western concept, haven't we heard that of feminism for decades? But if we are to look into history, especially the history of women in Muslim contexts, we find out that many women, for centuries, fought for what is now considered feminist

ideas and women's rights, that they dedicated themselves to literature, poetry, women's education, politics, legal rights for women, just as is the case now and that they were supported by enlightened men and women, both believers and atheists, just as is the case now. Anyone interested in exploring some of these stories from the past should read 'Great Ancestors' by Fareeda Shaheed and Aisha Shaheed (published by Women Living Under Muslim Laws).

Similarly, there have been many supporters of secularism in Muslim contexts over the past centuries, just as there are many today. That includes atheists, agnostics and believers who thought and still think religions benefit from the fact that political power does not interfere with personal beliefs or spirituality. Today, the former Great Mufti of Marseilles

is a strong supporter of secularism in France, as are many progressive Imams who go public every Sunday in a religious TV show on French channel 2 about their support for French secularism which guarantees freedom of belief and freedom of practice.

So the real question for me is: why don't we hear more about such Muslim supporters of secularism and why won't the media give less public space to the expression of fundamentalist hatred for secularism? It is yet another fundamentalist distortion to present facts in the light of secular law being against divine law...

Recent surveys show that about 25% of the population in France declares itself atheist, and the percentage is the same among supposedly Christians and supposedly Muslim individuals. But the percentage of all those who declare themselves in favour of secularism rises to 75%, and is identical for presumed Muslims and presumed Christians.

There are strong movements for secularism in all so-called Muslim countries, whether in Pakistan, Algeria or Mali. Citizens go public in support of secularism risking their lives in places where fundamentalists run armed groups

that attack their opponents. Why are photos of their public events and street demonstrations never seen outside their national media?

Maryam Namazie: *Some will say this raises the question of how far we are willing to allow the state to intervene in private matters such as the way we dress. Your comments?*

Marieme Helie Lucas: If we do agree that this sudden rise of specific veils worldwide passing off as THE 'Islamic' veil is neither cultural nor religious but a political flag that fundamentalists use in order to increase their political



photo by shakoooh bakhtiar

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visibility at the expense of women, then we must also admit that wearing this form of veil - now - in Europe and North America has a political purpose; the women who wear it, whether they are aware of it or not, are wearing the flag of a far-right political party. Hence I could hardly agree with the formulation: 'a woman choosing how to dress.' This veil is definitely not to be equated to wearing high heels versus flat shoes, or miniskirts versus trousers. It is not a fashion; it is a political marker. If one decides one is going to wear a swastika as a brooch, one cannot ignore its political meaning; one cannot pretend one does not care for the fact that it was the 'flag' of Nazi Germany. One cannot pretend one just likes its shape. It is a political statement.

Women from all over Asia and Africa who wear a face covering or burqa today whether they do so in Europe and North America or whether they wear it in their own countries are wearing a form of veiling that they have never seen before, except if they grew up in a very specific and limited part of the Middle East. They cannot pretend they are going back to their roots and wearing the dress that their foremothers wore centuries ago nor can they pretend that they wear it for religious reasons. Muslims were Muslims for centuries without wearing such an outfit: in South Asia, they were wearing saris or in the

they are alienated into the fundamentalists' politico-religious discourse is irrelevant.

Maryam Namazie: *In practice, how can restrictions be put in place (also looking at the French example) without further inflaming racism and bigotry against Muslims and immigrants and what is the connection between the two? I ask this given that some will argue that a criticism of the veil and niqab are racist.*

Marieme Helie Lucas: In that case, is resistance to niqab/burqa/head scarf and any other form of veiling to be labelled 'racist' in our countries too? Were the women who chose to die rather than to veil in Algeria in the nineties all racist against their own people and against their own faith as many of them were believers in Islam?

Can't we stop thinking 'the West' is the centre of the world? What about the Sudanese woman who at this very moment in Khartoum risks flogging and imprisonment for refusing to veil? What about the numerous Iranian women who have been jailed for decades for wearing 'un-Islamic' dress?

Racism, xenophobia, marginalisation of and attacks on migrants (or people of migrant descent) have always been

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Sahel they were wearing boubous... Today, burqa-clad women wear an outfit that was unseen and unheard of until a couple of decades ago when fundamentalist political groups 'invented' the burqa as their political flag. Hence if the state were to regulate burqas or the niqab, it would not regulate 'the way we dress', nor would it deal with a personal taste in fashion, but with publicly wearing the political sign of an extreme right movement.

It may be the role of the state to do so. This can be debated. But what is not debatable is that women wearing the burqa today are in the grip of a transnational far-right movement. Whether burqa-clad women are aware of the present day political significance of their veil or whether

there. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Southern France, there were pogroms against Italian migrants who 'came to steal the bread of French workers' - sounds familiar today, doesn't it? There were numerous dead and wounded. But if we look at French citizens whose family names betray an Italian origin today, they are fully integrated and no one even thinks of contesting their belonging to the French nation. It is the same for Spaniards, Portuguese, Greeks or Poles and Russians who all came to live in France in recent history, became French citizens and have now 'melted' into the general population.

There are a growing number of well known people in

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France with Arabic names (and often erroneously presumed Muslim); they are professors, lawyers, medical doctors, scientists, journalists, film makers, actors, bankers, computer experts, entrepreneurs... This signifies their incorporation into the nation just like the Italians, Spaniards... less than a century ago.

It is not predetermined that oppressed people or victims of discrimination turn to far-right movements. In such circumstances, people have a choice to become revolutionaries or fascists. The fundamentalist response to racism is a fascist response. We should not under any

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A beautiful play entitled Barbes-Cafe was shown last year in different cities of France. It was entirely the work of people of Algerian descent, most of whom fled fundamentalists’ death threats and attacks on them in the nineties. This play is a hymn to emigration using popular songs in Arabic from the beginning to the end of the 20th century and traces the history of emigration from North Africa, the pain and longing of migrants and the terrible conditions of work but it also celebrates the law that allowed families to join workers, the free and secular education for their children, the solidarity between indigenous and migrant workers in unions and left parties and so on. It ends with images of those of migrant North African descent who ‘made it’ and open the gate for generations to come. It is a manifesto of hope, albeit not trying to conceal the hardship many workers faced - for their children and grandchildren to become a part of France.

pretext grant them any legitimacy. We should support people’s movements for equality and full citizenship.

Fundamentalists have a keen interest in making sure they get the benefit of racist incidents; just like the traditional (xenophobic) far-right political movements, they need to radicalise their troops and recruit more people to their cause. Both these apparently antagonistic far-right forces share the same goal: they welcome bloodshed. Hence they are prepared to provoke racist incidents. In the past few years, fundamentalist inhabitants of a Paris neighbourhood started praying in the streets and blocking traffic for hours on Fridays. The pretext was that their local mosque was not big enough. But for sure the Great Mosque of Paris, only a few tube stations away from them was/is permanently quasi-empty. Police watched on without doing anything and this has now been going on for more than seven years. The only response, of course, came from a far-right group which launched public invitations to share a ‘wine and pork’ aperitif on the very same streets on Sundays.

October 27 was the anniversary of the March For Equality and Against Racism that four young men and women, French citizens of North African origin, initiated in October 1983. They started from Marseilles and walked for two months throughout France, visiting towns and

villages, speaking to their urban and rural fellow citizens, denouncing racist crimes and discrimination, and advocating the equality of all citizens. They also denounced the label ‘Muslim’ that was imposed on them for reasons of geographical origin. Along the way, other citizens of all origins joined them and started marching with them. When they arrived in Paris, 100,000 people had gathered to welcome them and support their goals.

The cowardly left should have taken this into its own hands, demanding that people vacate the public space if they have not received police authorisation to occupy it as is legal. The cowardly left is prepared to ignore provocations by Muslim fundamentalists because they do not want to be seen as ‘Islamophobic.’ In a way, one feels they do not make a difference between believers in Islam and the far-right supposedly religious movement that feigns to represent all Muslims.

It was in the hope of avoiding a confrontation with Franco that European governments, including the then socialist government of France, refused to help and to protect the legitimate government of the Republic of Spain. It was with the hope of avoiding a confrontation with the well-behaved Hitler that European governments went to Munich and allowed the invasion of Poland by Nazi troops. History shows that cowardice in politics leads nowhere and that everyone has to pay the price for not standing for principles and rights in due time.

Victims of racism need to be defended, including legally; social and political problems need to be addressed by social and political means, not with religious ones.

Marieme Helie Lucas is an Algerian sociologist and founder of Women Living Under Muslim Laws and Secularism is a Women’s Issue.



newsflash

AFGHANISTAN

Even though several million Afghan girls are attending school, more than half are married before the age of 18 and about one-quarter are wed by their mid-teens, often because their families cannot afford to support them. Many are virtually sold as teenage brides, and if they run away, they are branded as 'bad women.' The number of women and girls fleeing intolerable domestic conditions has skyrocketed, keeping the handful of urban shelters constantly full. In addition, [according to rights organisations](#), the number of girls and women charged with moral crimes (usually some variation of zina, or sex outside marriage) has increased 50 percent in the past several years.

BRUNEI

The Sultan of Brunei is to introduce a [new code](#) of Sharia law which could see stonings for adultery, amputations for thefts and public flogging for drinking alcohol.

EGYPT

A recent United Nations study suggested that nine out of 10 [Egyptian women](#) had experienced some form of sexual harassment. Human rights campaigners describe current levels of sexual violence as 'horrifying.' Most of the worst attacks have taken place during protests in Tahrir Square. Sexual violence is a tool to silence women demonstrators. The wave of attacks has been fuelled by a culture of impunity. Those who carry out sexual assaults may feel encouraged by Islamist clerics like Saad Arafat who maintains that women who complain about harassment are bringing it on themselves.

INDIA

Women's groups in Kerala [slammed](#) India's decision not to co-sponsor the first ever global resolution against child marriages floated by the UN Human Rights Council. A [Times of India-Ipsos Survey](#) showed that most Muslims in Kerala are categorically against underage marriage. As many as 83% of the respondents opposed the proposition that attaining puberty made a girl ready for marriage, with a gender-based break up showing that 84% women and 81% men are against it. Significantly, the mixed gender percentage which opposes underage marriage is around 90% in Muslim-majority Malappuram.

IRAN

Iran's revolutionary guards [announced](#) the arrest of 'a network of homosexuals and satanists' at a birthday party in the western city of Kermanshah, prompting fresh alarm

over the treatment of gay people. At least 17 people who had tattoos, make-up, or were wearing rainbow bracelets were blindfolded and taken to an unknown location.

Military Commander Sirous Sajadian [declared](#): 'those who do not follow the Islamic dress code will be penalised; their cars will be detained by police officers.' He also announced the establishment of a new patrol, exclusively for policing female drivers' hijab and accordingly fining them.

Iranian president Rouhani [said](#) that police should keep a lower profile in the enforcement of compulsory veiling in Iran. He added: 'in our society women follow moral codes of conduct and any supervision necessary on the issue of hijab is first the responsibility of schools, universities, and other educational institutions; the police should be the last organisation to step in.'

Member of the Majlis (Islamic Assembly) Mofid Kiayi-Nejad has said: 'Each day the authorities pay less attention to the problem of hijab. It is true that economic problems head the list of government priorities, but they are being complacent about hijab. The trousers and coats women wear nowadays demonstrate the extent to which they are ignoring the issue. If we tackled the manufacture of these un-Islamic dresses at source, we would not need to send the morality police and vigilantes onto our streets.'

Zohre Sadat Lajevardi, who is head of women's affairs in President Rouhani's office, [said](#) that the morality police's operations should not vary according to the time of year. 'Those who defy the hijab rules know very well that after the end of the season public dress codes will be relaxed, and they can wear what they like. So laws need to be passed on the wearing of hijab, just as we have laws about how people should drive. Those who defy them would be penalised. A woman who dresses improperly must pay for her actions.' Lajevardi went out of her way to suggest that all Iranian women should police themselves with regard to the hijab issue.



Scene from the 2007 French animated film *Persepolis*, based on the autobiographical graphic novel by Iranian French author Marjane Satrapi. © Sony Pictures Classics

Young Iranian women looking for work face new restrictions as the Majlis (Islamic Assembly) debates a [bill](#) prohibiting government departments from recruiting both single and childless married women. One advocate of the bill – the General Population and Family Promotion Plan – is female conservative MP Fateme Aliya, who has already supported other laws restricting female participation in society. Senior university lecturer Elahe Koulayi condemned the bill, calling it yet one more government attempt to keep Iranian women at home.

Whereas ten years ago most hashish smokers in Iran were men, recent police statistics indicate that its use among women is growing steadily. Abbas Rastegar, a police officer in the province of Khuzestan, [said](#): ‘Cannabis is classified as a narcotic. Once it is in the bloodstream its effects continue for up to 24 hours. More and more young women are using this dangerous drug, as well as others such as opium, ecstasy and crack cocaine.’ A recent official survey revealed that 76% of female Iranian drug users were married and 3% widowed or divorced. 46% had been educated to primary school level and 10% had higher diplomas. The remainder had no education.

Dariush Pir-Niakan, the spokesman for Iran's House of Music has [resigned](#) for calling for an end to the 34-year ban on women singing. He said: ‘The main demand of the House of Music is for women’s voices to be broadcast. For 34 years now, this has been missing from the musical arena. Music is still considered taboo here.’ Following his comments, Hassan Rouhani cabinet's Minister of Guidance Ali Jannati said: ‘If the voice of solo women singers does not lead to vice, it is ok. But there is problem with women’s voice on certain occasions.’

Justice for Iran has released a report titled [‘Stolen Lives, Empty Classrooms: Child Brides in Iran’](#) and states that this year alone in Iran, 1,537 girls below the age of 10 and 29,827 girls between the ages of 10 and 14 were registered for marriage. In other words, one every 15 minutes. Moreover, statistics in Iran from the past five years show a significant drop in the number of students enrolled in (all-girl) schools. At 1,411 cases, Ardebil, a province in northwest Iran, has the highest rate of marriages for girls below the age of 10; a number 67 times more than the next highest province. The rate of girl marriages in Ardebil directly implies that in this particular province, judges routinely allow legal guardians to force their girls into marriage. The report notes the Islamic Republic’s recent legalisation of marriages between parents and adopted children. Despite much debate and opposition, the authorities have referred to Sharia law to legitimise relations between males and females in adopted families before and after the age of maturity.

The Guardian Council has now [approved](#) the bill passed by the Islamic regime of Iran’s Majlis or parliament for the ‘protection’ of children and young people, which includes a clause allowing men to marry their adopted daughters with the permission of a court. The bill had previously been denied and sent back for review because it had originally banned the marriage of step-fathers and their adopted daughters; the Guardian Council found this to be in contradiction with Islamic Sharia law. The law legalising paedophilia and child rape has sparked outrage in Iran and across the globe though it is touted as an attempt to solve problems related to the hijab or veil in the family. An adopted daughter is expected to wear the veil in the presence of her father and a mother is expected to do so in the presence of her adopted son if he is old enough.

IRAQI KURDISTAN

Shara Amin and Nabaz Ahmed spent 10 years speaking to women and men about the impact of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on their lives, their children and their marriages. The film ‘A Handful of Ash’ has culminated in the outlawing of FGM there; also the numbers of girls being genitally mutilated in the villages and towns of Iraqi Kurdistan has fallen by more than half in the last five years.

ISRAEL

A group of female ultra-Orthodox ‘modesty policewomen’ recently sent a [letter](#) to clothing shops in Beitar Illit, imploring them to maintain high standards of modesty when selling female undergarments and forbidding them from including colourful underwear or bras among their wares.



The Ministerial Law Committee [approved](#) for a Knesset vote legislation that would increase the penalties imposed for those who attempt to deny women their rights in public spaces. The legislation was prompted by recent incidents in which women were forced to sit in the back of buses when they were riding in orthodox Jewish neighbourhoods. In several instances, women said that they were accosted, cursed, and even attacked when they sat at the front of buses. The Knesset passed laws against the practice, but the new legislation will beef up those laws, sharply increasing the penalties for offenders.

KUWAIT

Islamists are [denouncing](#) shisha cafes as a ‘moral menace’ because they allow young men and women to mix freely.

They have also demanded death sentences for anyone convicted of insulting Islam, opposed women's participation in sports and forced art galleries to cancel shows. Earlier this month, conservative Members of Parliament lauded a government proposal to screen applicants for entry visas and bar gay or transgender workers. ‘It's a blatant invasion of privacy,’ said Shafiq Ghabra, a Kuwait-based political



science professor. 'People who don't want to be at mixed coffee shops don't have to go to them.' Rights groups have denounced the proposal to require unspecified medical tests to identify and ban gay or transsexual applicants for labour visas. Kuwaiti officials have backed off the proposal, but it could be raised for discussion at a meeting of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council. Also, a Kuwaiti children's centre called off a Halloween event after it came under an onslaught of criticism on social media as blasphemous.

MALAYSIA

Suriani Kempe of Sisters in Islam was **incensed** with the Malaysian Islamic Development Department, which denied any discrimination against women under Islamic laws, claiming that any allegations were unfounded. 'It's a blatant fallacy because in Malaysia Muslim women do not have equal rights to their children. Muslim women experience delay in initiating divorce,' she said, quoting a study by the Malaysian Syariah Judiciary Department. 'Muslim women don't inherit the same as their male counterparts. Muslim girls can be married off at younger age than Muslim boys.'

MOROCCO

Moroccans **staged** a symbolic 'kiss-in' outside parliament in support of three teenagers arrested for posting pictures on Facebook of two of them kissing. A boy and a girl aged



15 and 14, and their 15-year-old male friend who took the photos outside their school in the northern town of Nador, were arrested last week, charged with 'violating public decency' and held in a juvenile centre. Amid mounting pressure, the judge ordered that the teens be released on bail and their trial Friday was adjourned until November 22 to allow 'an inquiry into the social circumstances of the teenagers.'

NIGERIA

In Nigeria's northern Kano state, 10,000 officers have been **deployed** to ensure Sharia laws are enforced, including 'a law in the state which prohibits gender mix in commercial vehicles' and 'indecent dress.'

PAKISTAN

More than 25 women have been **stabbed** by an assailant in

a small town in Pakistan. Elsewhere, a man **punished** his wife for giving birth to a baby girl by forcing her to drink acid. She is in critical condition at hospital.

SAUDI ARABIA

At least 16 women have been **fined** for driving on 26 October, a day set to protest the driving ban for women in Saudi Arabia. A spoof by Heesham Fageeh, a social activist and artist, called '**No Woman, No Drive**' opposing the ban has gone viral.

Hisham Fageeh's satirical song "No woman, no drive", in the melody of Bob Marley's "No woman, no cry" has gone viral.



On 24 September 2013, an appeal court in the city of Dammam confirmed the 15 June conviction of Wajeha al-Huwaider and Fawzia al-Oyouni, two prominent Saudi Arabian women's rights activists, by the criminal court in the city of al-Khobar and upheld their sentences of 10 months in prison followed by a two-year travel ban. The activists were convicted of the Sharia offence of takhbiib (inciting a woman to defy her husband's authority), specifically 'inciting' a Canadian woman to separate from her Saudi Arabian husband. They were first **arrested** in June 2011 when attempting to come to the aid of the Canadian woman, after they received a text message from her telling them that her husband had left her and her children locked in the house with no food whilst he travelled for five days.

A Saudi woman is **filmed** lashing out against Saudi religious police and saying: 'Don't provoke me!' after he asks her to cover up her entire face, even though she is already wearing a traditional niqab, with only her eyes and the top of her nose visible.

Islamist cleric Fayhan al-Ghamdi who had **originally** been absolved and asked to provide blood money (half of what he would have had to pay if he had killed a boy) for beating his daughter Lama with canes, burning her with electrical cables, crushing her skull, tearing off her nails and raping her repeatedly was finally **convicted** to 8 years in prison and 800 lashes due to public outcry. He was also told to pay Lama's mother blood money. In Saudi Arabia, much less serious crimes often receive heavier punishment. Earlier this week, a Saudi court gave four young men sentences of between three to 10 years prison and 500 to 2,000 lashes for dancing naked in public in the city of Buraydah, north of Riyadh. Lama's mother told broadcaster Al-Arabiya that al-Ghamdi took their daughter from her for a two-week visit in 2011 to his home with his second wife and other children. Months went by and he refused to allow the mother to see her daughter. Lama was then taken to a hospital, where she died in intensive care in late 2012.

SUDAN

Sudanese women's rights activist [Amira Osman Hamed](#) could face 40 lashes for refusing to wear a headscarf. She is charged with 'indecent or immoral dress' by the Public Order Police. Amira's trial starts 4 November.



TURKEY

Turkey [lifted a ban](#) on women wearing the Islamic headscarf in state institutions ending a decades-old restriction. The new rules, which will not apply to the judiciary, police or the military, took immediate effect. Secularists say the abolition is aimed at further Islamicising the secular country.

TUNISIA

Tunisian authorities [arrested](#) several young women who allegedly left their homes to perform sexual jihad in Syria.

Activist Amel Grami [says](#): "There is tension vis-à-vis women in terms of their clothes, their life-style, etc. For example, swimming in Ramadan causes problems now for some women. It is a new phenomenon in Tunisia- this new relationship with the body and the feeling that in the public sphere you are not free. There are others who are using violence in order to 'correct' the behaviour of women. It is not possible any more for women activists to travel around the country on their own at night or to go to rural areas, especially to some areas where fundamentalists ...impose their rule. Tunisia is not the same as it was two years ago. We do not have the same freedom of movement."

arts corner



DEEYAH PRESENTS
IRANIAN WOMAN

The fifth annual [Passion for Freedom Festival](#) was held during 4-9 November 2013 despite the original venue pulling out last minute due to ‘legal and security’ concerns. Shortlisted artists exhibited works addressing a wide range of issues, including the veil, women’s rights and freedom of expression. The winning piece - judged by an international Selection Panel was ‘The Perfect Stone’ by Victoria Burgher.

Award winning film and music maker Deeyah has released '[Iranian Woman](#)' focusing on the music of Iranian women and their struggle for artistic expression. Under a regime that currently represses women from performing in public

places, the contemporary artists in this collection are the standard-bearers for a tradition of Persian music making by women that stretches back some 3,000 years.

[Paradise](#) an Afghan rap singer who focuses on women's rights and gender equality issues has recently returned to Afghanistan but faces huge amounts of difficulty; she was recently beaten and had to make her album in Tajikistan. In one of her songs [Nalestan](#), which is dedicated to Afghan women, she sings: ‘I will get my rights whilst I am alive.’

Image source: DEEYAH: IRANIAN WOMEN

Phillip Toledano has sourced censored packaging from Iran for his photography project '[Absent Portraits.](#)' He says: Packaging in which the women have been erased. Inked out, individually, by hand. I remove the blacked-out figure from the surrounding image, and a transformation occurs. The censor becomes an artist. And the censored figure becomes a portrait. A portrait not of a person, but of absence. Of suppression. A portrait of a point of view. The censor, whose job it is to erase, becomes the person who makes us look.'



"Absent Portraits" - Pictures by Phil Toledano
mrtoledano.com



upcoming events



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Join a **weekend of discussions and debates** on the religious right, its attacks on civil rights and freedoms, and the role of secularism for 21st century humanity.

The Arab uprisings; Sharia and religious laws; the burqa and conspicuous religious symbols; freedom of expression and its limits; apostasy, blasphemy and free thought; "Islamophobia" and racism; honour crimes; faith schools and religious education; reproductive rights and secular values will be amongst the **topics discussed**.

The conference is **endorsed by** Atheist Alliance International; Children First Now; Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain; Equal Rights Now; Fitnah; International Committee against Stoning; International Committee against Execution; International Federation of Iranian Refugees; Iran Solidarity; One Law for All; Secularism is a Women's Issue; The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science UK; and Women Living Under Muslim Laws, amongst others.

**FOR ORGANISATIONS OR VENDORS WISHING TO BOOKS STALLS,
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Tel: +44 (0) 7719166731

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upcoming events



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REGISTRATION FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE AFTER MAY 1, 2014.

PHOTO CREDIT: Ezequiel Scagnetti © European Union (Front)

editorial

NEITHER VEIL NOR SUBMISSION

MARYAM NAMAZIE

The niqab (and burqa) must be banned to protect women's rights and secularism – and not just out of concern for security. It's a shroud, strait jacket, and mobile prison for women and girls who are bound and gagged and made invisible. According to Algerian writer Karima Bennoune, the veil represents 'the ever-encroaching fabric erasure of women's bodies.'

Calling it a 'right' and 'choice' is as formal as formal can be when it is often deemed compulsory and imposed and policed by Islamists - often using brute force. Also, let's not forget, the veil is a tool like many others to control and restrict women and girls. To me, saying it is a right and choice is like saying FGM, the chastity belt, foot-binding, or Suttee are such.

A ban is not a violation of the right to religion. Whilst the right to religion and belief is absolute, the right to manifest and express one's beliefs can be and is at times restricted for a number of reasons, including protecting public security, health, order, and the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

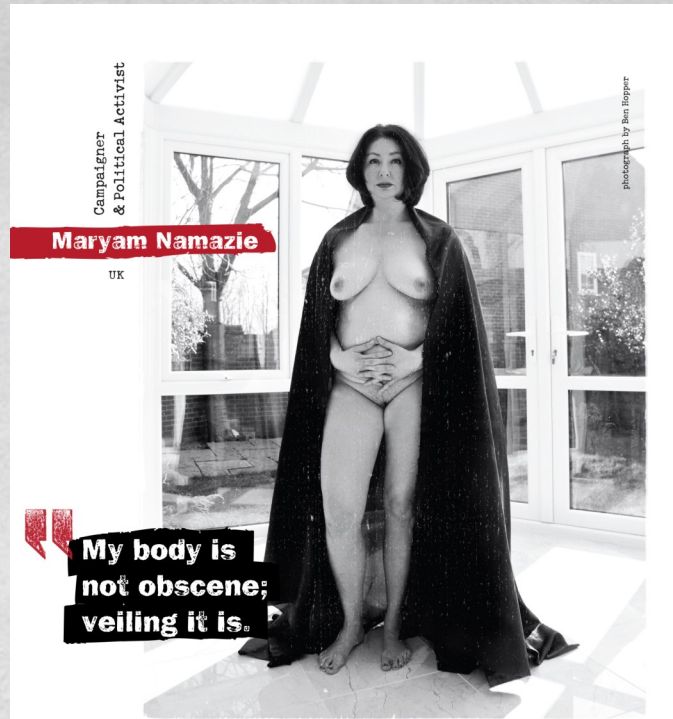
Men in Shi'a Islam might have the 'right' and 'choice' to marry four permanent wives and unlimited temporary wives, for example, but it is nonetheless banned in many places because it is deemed to be exploitative. Uniforms are another way in which the right to dress is restricted in society for health reasons.

The European Court of Human Rights confirmed this when it ruled in favour of Turkey's right to ban the veil at universities (now under question due to Erdogan's efforts to Islamicise the country). If dress can be restricted to protect health or public safety, why not to protect women's rights and secularism?

Moreover, rights often conflict with one another. What about the adverse impact of the niqab and burqa on the rights and choices of unveiled or differently veiled women? It is not as harmless as is often portrayed. In the Shabina Begum case, the House of Lords granted that restricting Shabina from wearing the jilbab to school was permissible in order to protect the rights of others who feared being coerced into veiling. As Algerian sociologist Marieme Helie Lucas says: "The 'right' to veil is always followed with the right to beat up women who do not." Clearly, the right to veil has a corresponding right to unveil or not veil at all. The unveiled or improperly veiled woman is always held up adversely in comparison to the chaste, veiled woman.

Moreover, this is more than merely a question of 'dress.' It is important to remember that the niqab (as well as the burqa and the veil in general) is a highly contested political and social symbol. Many Muslims or those labelled as such are at the forefront of the fight against the burqa, niqab and veil - often at great risk to themselves.

In Iran, the slogan 'neither veil nor submission' has become a rallying cry in the ongoing fight between women and Islamic regime's morality police. In another recent case



in Sudan, Amira Osman Hamed who faces flogging for refusing to wear the hijab says: 'I'm Sudanese. I'm Muslim, and I'm not going to cover my head.'

In this day and age, the veil in general and the burka and niqab in particular are associated with Islamism's efforts to limit rights and impose Sharia law. The enormous increase of veiled women and girls across the world and in Europe is a direct result of the rise of the contemporary Islamist movement and the ensuing pressure on women and girls to veil. Women are always the first targets of Islamism. And veiling restrictions on women is a particular signifier of things to come. The lawyer putting forth Turkey's case for restricting the veil at universities said it well: 'the hijab is not just a dress but a sign of political conviction; it shows near and present danger.'

A good case in point is Madani Free school in Derby where girls as young as 11 have to wear the burqa; all teachers, including non-Muslims, must wear the veil. Those who criticise the fuss over a 'piece of clothing' miss the point. The niqab and burqa are the most visible signs of Islamism's war on women. It also represents sex apartheid and Sharia law and all that follows. In Madani School, burqa-clad girls must sit in the back of the classroom. On school trips, they must give way to boys and male teachers who cut in front of them in queues. Music is banned... (As an aside, child veiling is tantamount to child abuse. In the same way that children are not labelled Conservative or Marxist children because of their parents' political beliefs, children should also be free of religious labels and faith schools until they are ready to make a choice of their own upon reaching 16.)

Continued on next page

Calling for a ban on the niqab or burqa is not about criminalising Muslim women anymore than banning FGM criminalises girls and women who are mutilated. Whilst a ban won't solve everything (there has yet to be a single prosecution with regards FGM) changes in the law, including bans, are important steps in changing culture and attitudes and defending rights.

Secularists have a responsibility to seize the initiative (particularly given the far-Right's attempts at hijacking the issue to promote their anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim bigotry). Calling for a ban is not in and of itself racist though racism and prejudice are very real and need to be opposed on par with sex discrimination.

A ban has nothing to do with a 'clash of civilisations;' it has everything to do with a global struggle between secularists, including many Muslims, on the one hand and theocrats and the religious-Right on the other.

A Manifesto against Totalitarianism which I signed in 2006 with 11 others including Salman Rushdie on the Danish cartoon controversy still applies today:

"We reject the 'cultural relativism' which implies an acceptance that men and women of Muslim culture are deprived of the right to equality, freedom and secularism in the name of the respect for certain cultures and traditions.

"We refuse to renounce our critical spirit out of fear of being accused of 'Islamophobia,' a wretched concept that confuses criticism of Islam as a religion and stigmatisation of those who believe in it."

And to that I must add the wretched concept that confuses a criticism of the niqab, burqa and veil as a stigmatisation of those who believe in it and wear it...

Guest commentary is welcome. Please e-mail the editor at fitnah.movement@gmail.com.

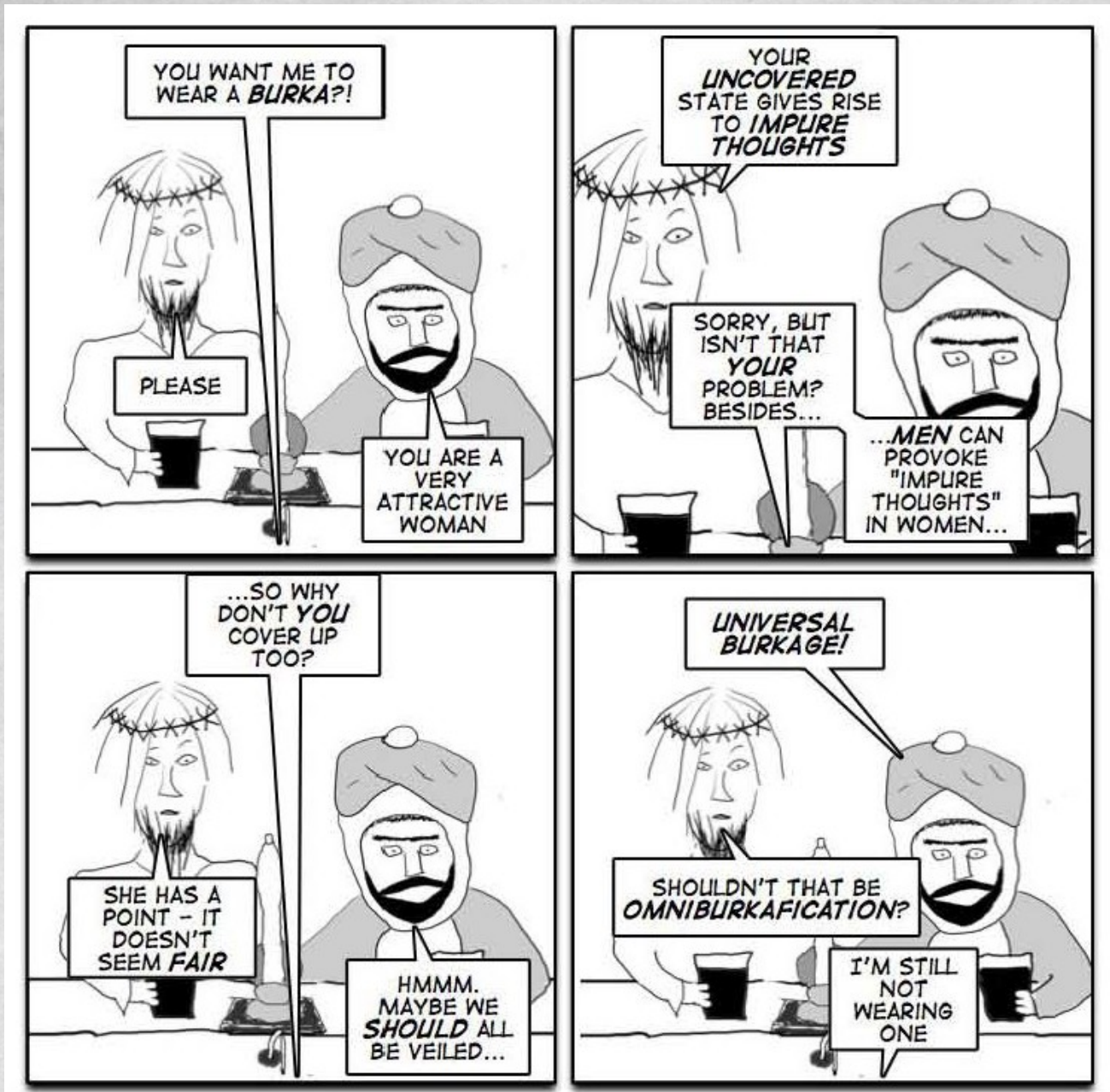


image credit: Jesus & Mo | www.jesusandmo.net

our campaigns

STOP STONING NOW

According to the [Independent](#), two months ago, a young mother of two was stoned to death by her relatives on the order of a tribal court in Pakistan. Her crime: possession of a mobile phone. Arifa Bibi's uncle, cousins and others hurled stones and bricks at her until she died. She was buried in a desert far from her village. It's unlikely anyone was arrested. Her case is not unique. Stoning is legal or practised in at least 15 countries or regions. And campaigners fear this barbaric form of execution may be on the rise, particularly in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. You can find a list of death by stoning in Iran since 1980 compiled by the International Committee against Stoning [here](#).

Sign a [petition](#) by Women Living Under Muslim Laws calling for an end to stoning. This particular campaign to end stoning follows the pioneering work of Mina Ahadi and the International Committee against Stoning over many decades.



CONDEMN LEGALISED PAEDOPHILIA AND CHILD RAPE IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

The Guardian Council has now approved the bill passed by the Islamic regime of Iran's Majlis or parliament for the 'protection' of children and young people, which includes a clause allowing men to marry their adopted daughters with the permission of a court. The bill had previously been denied and sent back for review because it had originally banned the marriage of step-fathers and their adopted daughters; the Guardian Council found this to be in contradiction with Islamic Sharia law. The law legalising paedophilia and child rape has sparked outrage in Iran and across the globe though it is touted as an attempt to solve problems related to the hijab or veil in the family. An adopted daughter is expected to wear the veil in the presence of her father and a mother is expected to do so in the presence of her adopted son if he is old enough.

This shocking law will encourage child 'marriages' and is nothing more than legalised paedophilia and child rape. It will further endanger the welfare of the child and violate



TWEET: #Iran #No2LegalPaedophilia

SIGN: http://www.avaz.org/en/petition/An_end_to_legalised_paedophilia_and_child_rape_in_Iran/

her basic rights. It will deny the child any sense of security and safety in the home.

Fitnah – Movement for Women's Liberation and Children First Now unequivocally condemn this inhuman law. This law, like many other laws in the Islamic regime of Iran, violates the dignity and rights of children. And it must be stopped.

If you haven't already signed our petition, please join the over 9,500 others who have and do it now. Also forward it to 10 friends or acquaintances and Tweet against the law: #Iran #No2LegalPaedophilia. You can also write to Ali Khamenei, Iran's Leader, info_leader@leader.ir, Twitter: @khamenei_ir or to Hassan Rouhani, President, media@rouhani.ir, Twitter: @hassanrouhani demanding an end to child rape and paedophilia.

Tweet against the law:

#Iran #No2LegalPaedophilia

Sign our petition and forward it to 10 friends or acquaintances.

Write to Ali Khamenei, Iran's Leader, info_leader@leader.ir, Twitter: @khamenei_ir or to Hassan Rouhani, President, media@rouhani.ir, Twitter: @hassanrouhani demanding an end to child rape and paedophilia.

Publicise the campaign on social media including by changing your Facebook profile change to our campaign poster.

Do an act of solidarity on the internet, in your city square, at work, at your university in support of children's rights and against the law.

letters to the editor

Send questions and comments to fitnah.movement@gmail.com and we will respond in the next issue of the publication.

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join us

Fitnah – Movement for Women’s Liberation is a protest movement demanding freedom, equality, and secularism and calling for an end to misogynist cultural, religious and moral laws and customs, compulsory veiling, sex apartheid, sex trafficking, and violence against women. We remind the Islamic regime of Iran and Islamists everywhere that the women’s liberation movement is a source of fitnah for their rule alone. We are Islamism’s worst fitnah!

To join Fitnah – Movement for Women’s Liberation, [visit here.](#)

[Click ‘like’ on our Facebook page.](#)

Supporters include: *Amina Tyler, Tunisian topless activist; Avijit Roy, Activist, Bangladesh; Chadi Bejjani, Lebanese Atheists, Lebanon; Dya Ahmad, Member of Youth Parliament in Iraq and Secretary of Student and Youth organisation in Iraq; Harold Walter Kroto, Nobel Prize in Chemistry Winner, UK; Imad Iddine Habib, Founder, Moroccan Council of Ex-Muslims, Morocco; Inna Shevchenko, Spokesperson, FEMEN, France; Karl Karnadi, Founder, Indonesian Atheists, Indonesia; Lloyd Newson, Director of DV8 Physical Theatre, UK; Maryam Jamel, Organisation of Women’s Liberation of Iraq; Nadia El-Fani, Tunisian Filmmaker; most recent films “Neither Allah nor Master” and “Our Breasts; Our Arms”, France; Raheel Raza, President, Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow, Canada; Safia Lebdi, Founder, “Les insoumis-es”, France; Shahin Najafi, Independent Anarchist Artist, Germany; Soad Baba Aissa, President, of Association pour l’Egalité, la Mixité et la Laïcité en Algérie, France; Soraya L. Chemaly, Writer and Activist, USA; Tarek Fatah, Writer, Canada; Taslima Nasrin, Bangladeshi Writer, India; Waleed Al-Husseini, Palestinian Blogger and Founder of Council of Ex-Muslims of France, France; and Zari Asli, Women’s Rights Campaigner, Canada.*

