

Press Release

Populist "Burqa War" a Modern Echo of European Colonialism, Used to Ignore the Genocide in Gaza and Strip the Muslim Woman of Her Islamic Identity

The latest populist crusade from democratic right-wing parties and governments calling for a ban of the burqa now includes Australia, Italy and Portugal. These nations are part of a broader hostile collective of European countries that have already banned the burqa. France, Belgium, Denmark, and Switzerland enforce a nationwide prohibition in all public spaces, while the Netherlands and Germany, have partial bans targeting specific contexts like schools or government offices. In the UK, the debate centres on the workforce, where the right-wing Reform UK party argues such veils hinder integration, communication, and security, framing them as "symbols of division."

This current "Burqa War" is not a modern phenomenon, but the latest chapter in a long history of Western secular hostility towards Islam and Muslims. This long withstanding historical animosity is being weaponized to distract from the profound economic insecurity that is felt across secular societies, caused by a failed model of global capitalism.

Right-wing parties—such as Pauline Hanson's One Nation in Australia, Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia in Italy, and André Ventura's Chega party in Portugal—are using the burqa as a denigrating symbol to scapegoat Muslim women, forcefully assimilate them, and divert broader public attention from the real crises of state failure.

This centuries-old debate over the Islamic dress of Muslim women echoes the European colonial 'civilising mission' and the 'Clash of Civilisations,' repackaged for a 21st-century audience left anxious and angry by a rigged and bankrupt capitalist economic system. It is a calculated strategy to channel real economic pain into a manufactured war against Islam and Muslims.

Femonationalism, where politicians cynically co-opt the language of women's rights to justify Islamophobic policies like the burqa ban, also harks back to colonial-era Orientalism, which depicted the Muslim world and Muslim women as backward, threatening and in need of saving.

The burqa ban proposals in Italy and Australia specifically target Muslim women, who are already primary victims of Islamophobic attacks.

In Australia, data from the Islamophobia Register Australia (Annual Report 2024) shows that 75% of Islamophobic attacks target women and girls. Similarly, a report by

the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) states that 65% of Muslims in Italy experience discrimination, with Muslim women being the most targeted.

Meanwhile, in Portugal, Islamophobia is a growing phenomenon directly linked to the far-right Chega party, led by André Ventura, who frames Islam as a threat to Portuguese and "Western" Christian identity. A burqa ban in these countries would legally sanction the very prejudices Muslim women already face.

Furthermore, the hypocrisy of right-wing political parties grandstanding about Islamic clothing while the governments in Australia, Italy, and Portugal preside over an epidemic of male violence cannot be ignored.

- In Australia, a woman is murdered by her partner nearly every week (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2023-24).
- In Italy, one woman is killed every three days, revealing the extent of a shameful crisis (Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2024).
- In Portugal, domestic violence is the most reported crime, with 85% of the victims being women.

To ignore this crisis while securitizing a piece of cloth reveals the glaring hypocrisy of these states claiming to protect women.

This burqa ban is a deliberate choice by the political class to ignore the public's real humanitarian concerns. While hundreds of thousands of people have marched across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in Australia, in piazzas across Italy, and on the streets of Lisbon to protest the genocide of Muslims in Gaza by the illegal Zionist criminal entity, politicians are instead adopting an 'us versus them' culture war.

This direct attack on Muslim women's dress, which uses the tactic of securitisation to frame the burqa as an existential threat to security, national identity, and secular values, results in the state justifying a coercive project of forced assimilation that demands Muslim women shed their Islamic identity to conform to secular, nationalistic identities.

It is vital as Muslim women, that we continue to hold firmly onto our Islamic beliefs. We should remember the promise from our Creator Allah (swt) of the rewards awaiting those who are patient and steadfast in their Deen during times of adversity and difficulty. Allah (swt) says, **﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا فَلَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ * أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا جَزَاءَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾** **“Verily, those who say, ‘Our Rabb (Lord) is (only) Allah and thereafter stand firm and straight (on the Islamic belief) on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve. Such shall be the dwellers of Jannah(paradise), abiding therein (forever), a reward for what they used to do.”** [Al-Ahqaf: 13-14].

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

