

## Press Release

## The Paranoia of French Politicians towards the Hijab, Exemplifies the Islamophobia and Religious Intolerance of Secularism

On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September, French MP's once again illustrated the racist, Islamophobic nature of France's extremist secular system by preposterously exiting an inquiry being held in the French parliament building, in protest of the presence of a student representative, wearing a Khimar (Islamic headscarf). The walk out was led by an MP from President Macron's LREM ruling party, Anne-Christine Lang, and supported by other MP's from the right wing Les Republicains party. Lang later stated in a video posted on twitter, "I cannot accept that in the centre of the National Assembly, the beating heart of democracy ... that we accept that a person appears in a hijab before a parliamentary inquiry committee". She also commented in a tweet that as "a feminist, who values republican principles, secular principles and women's rights, I cannot accept that someone comes to participate in our work at the National Assembly wearing a hijab, which remains for me, a symbol of submission." The Muslim woman wearing the Khimar, Maryam Pougetoux, who is the leader of the National Union of Students in France (UNEF), was at the parliamentary hearing in order to address the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on young people and children. The Muslim sister was also attacked previously in 2018 by various political figures, including the then Interior Minister and Minister for Gender Equality, for taking up the position of leader of the Sorbonne chapter of UNEF while wearing the religious dress. Last October, a Muslim mother who wore a headscarf during a school trip with her son to the regional parliament in Bourgogne-Franche-Comte in eastern France, received verbal abuse from a far-right politician during an assembly meeting. He demanded that she remove her Khimar "in the name of secular principles." In the same year, Senate President, Gerard Larcher stated, in reference to the 'Hijab', that he was against "everything that could lock women up".

Extremist secular French politicians of all political hues seem adamant to continue to peddle the false anachronistic colonial-engineered narrative that the Islamic dress oppresses women. Is it not time that they step into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and realise that it is their Islamophobic statements, actions and laws which stigmatise, marginalise and constrain the public life of Muslim women, relegating them to second class citizens within the society and forcing them to live in submission to the racist dictates of opportunistic politicians who are playing games with minorities to boost their electoral ratings?!! Furthermore, this secular obsession with the Hijab, is nothing but pure racism and xenophobia masked thinly behind the veil of feminist and women's rights rhetoric! France's Islamophobic track-record is notorious. Indeed, since France declared a state of emergency in November 2015, it has engaged in numerous discriminatory raids and house arrests against Muslims, targeting over 5000 Muslim homes, businesses and places of worship.

Muslims in many other secular states – East and West – have also been subjected to discriminatory and repressive Islamophobic policies and laws, including hijab and niqab bans. All this re-emphasizes the point that religious intolerance is ingrained in the DNA of the secular system which is not fit for purpose in the governing of humankind. What kind of system for example, creates politicians who view a religious dress as more dangerous than the fallout of a serious pandemic??? Furthermore, what kind of farcical ideology bears contempt towards the expression of modesty, while sanctioning the expression of all forms of lewd and debased ideas and images within its society, including pornography? This warped view of morality is exemplified in the words of French President Macron, who vociferously defended Charlie Hebdo's re-publishing of the disgusting cartoons against our beloved Prophet (saw), on the basis of the secular principle of freedom of speech, while previously stating that that the hijab (a dress of modesty) is "not in accordance with the civility of our country."

As Muslims, this should surely be a stark reminder that the flawed, divisive and anti-Islamic secular system stands in diametrical opposition to our Deen, and hence we should reject its implementation in our lands outright! Indeed, the only system acceptable to Allah (swt) and which will protect the Islamic dress and all our deeply held Islamic beliefs is the Khilafah (Caliphate) based upon the method of the Prophethood. Allah (swt) says, ﴿وَمَن يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ﴾ "And whoever seeks a Deen other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers." [Al-i Imran: 85]

Dr. Nazreen Nawaz

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

