

THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE:
THINGS YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT THE
FACE-VEIL DEBATE

**The Right To Choose: Things You Should
Know About The Face-Veil Debate -**

February 2014

Produced and published the UK

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Claystone is an independent think tank formed to offer research, analysis and reasoned solutions to foster social cohesion in relation to Muslims in Britain.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What is presented here is merely a summary based upon the research of others. In particular the research of Dr. Ralph Grillo and Dr. Prakesh Shah was very helpful.

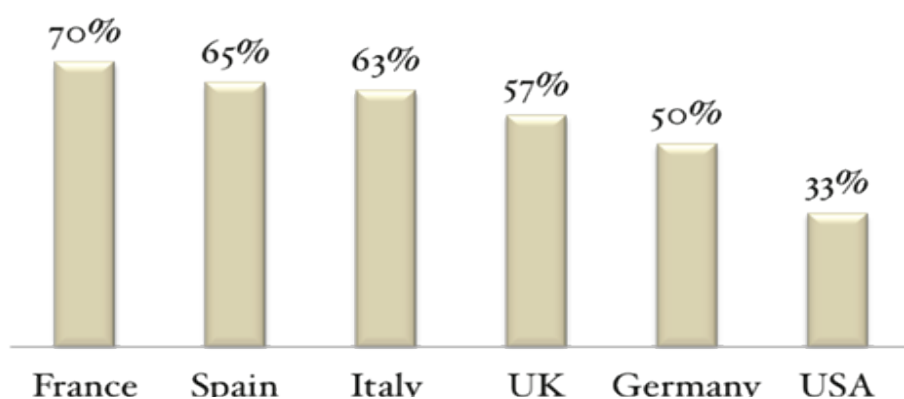
PART 1 INTRODUCTION:

The debate over the Muslim women's face-veil has become more prominent over the last decade within Western Europe. In this period of time wearing the veil in public has become criminalised in France and Belgium. Similar debates are on-going in the Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Spain, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden, with partial bans having been implemented in some of the above mentioned countries already.

In the UK the first major significant public discussion of the face veil occurred in 2006 after Labour MP Jack Straw espoused controversial comments about the face veil. In 2006 a poll carried out in Britain soon after Jack Straw's speech found 53% supported a ban and 40% opposed a ban.

A few years on, in 2010 a similar poll showed an increase in support for the ban to 57%. Despite the initial poll being carried out soon after Jack Straw's incendiary comments, the 2010 poll indicated a rise in support for a ban.

Whilst the accuracy of the statistics and the statistical gathering process can always be critiqued they are never-the-less a useful indicator. The 2010 poll was conducted in numerous countries. Below are the percentages reported to be in favour of a ban.



(Source: Harris Interactive 2010)

In 2010 Phillip Hollobone MP sponsored a bill for the criminalisation of the wearing of a garment whose primary purpose was to obscure the face. The bill did not get a second reading as there was insufficient parliamentary time for it to go through all of the necessary stages.

He once more sponsored the identical bill, which had its first reading on 6th September 2013 (although formally recorded as 24th June 2013). The second reading is due on the 28th February 2014 and looks likely to get a second reading on this occasion, which involves a debate in the House of Commons.

There was a significant spike in media coverage surrounding the face-veil debate for over two weeks after the first reading of the bill in September 2013.

Various stories of supposed conflict that placed the face veil in a negative light were magnified as hugely significant events in the press (see the end of appendix A for incidents such as NHS hospital trusts banning veils; Birmingham Metropolitan College banning it and then reversing the ban;

Muslim schools criticised for their uniform policy; and a Muslim school in Derby supposedly enforcing the wearing of the headscarf on a non-Muslim female member of staff).

This would appear to be the most sustained period of negative coverage seen to date in the UK media.



There are some interesting commonalities that can be identified concerning the debates that have occurred across different countries:

1. It very often appears to be the case that localised events seemingly lacking broader significance are driving the national debate.
2. Opposition to face-veiling and Islam itself is by no means just coming from the far right but all manner of groups such as Feminist groups and leftleaning political parties such as the French Communist Party.
3. The movement for a ban has strong popular support.
4. The debate has often been taken up by national politicians who have vocalised opposition.
5. There is often a shared set of vocabulary, sources, tropes, ideas and paradigms utilised in the debate against the face veil. This makes sense given that there appears to be an influence that has crossed borders and garnered a shared sense of importance towards establishing curtailments or outright bans. This has been partly achieved through some politicians addressing international audiences of fellow politicians and in some instances raising alarm about the rising Muslim minority populations.

PART 2 THE CONTEXT OF THE FACE-VEIL DEBATE:

Despite the fact that the face-veil is typically worn by less than 0.1% of any Muslim population within any Western European country, there are calls for its criminalisation.

This has succeeded in some western European countries already banning it to varying extents. Whilst there are a set of arguments levelled specifically at the wearing of the face-veil, this should not be viewed in isolation from other contemporary debates about Muslim culture; for example the referendum in Switzerland on minarets, which subsequently led to the banning of minarets.

There are a complex set of circumstances which often place Muslim culture and religious practices under the microscope. Some of the aggravating factors that give us a wider view of the milieu in which these events are occurring are listed below:

Backlash against multiculturalism and immigration

- There is a backlash against multiculturalism. Tensions in the governance of diversity are apparent. Some social scientists consider the Salman Rushdie incident to be a significant turning point. The witnessing of violent protests resulted in people starting to question whether the type of liberalism society practised had allowed for the re-introduction of a religious influence, albeit not Christian, to a space from where it was thought to have been removed.
- There has been a growing rhetoric asserting that Muslims have failed to integrate.
- One resulting consequence seems to be a strengthening of repressive interpretations of liberalism which is often termed ‘muscular liberalism’. Whilst ‘muscular liberalism’ has appropriated the language of traditional liberalism it is encroaching religious freedoms and in particular shows intolerance to conservative perspectives on sexuality and gender roles.
- Neoconservatives strongly support ‘muscular liberalism’. Many think tanks are of a neoconservative persuasion and impart considerable influence on the policies of political parties.
- Some leading politicians have co-opted populist incendiary rhetoric for political capital.

- An authentic Muslim life demands an extensive visible infrastructure; and the prevalence of Muslim religious symbols make them an easy target.

Strengthening of a neo-liberal economy

- The neo-liberal economy has increased the wealth divide and brought greater inequality.
- The neo-liberal economic and social agendas such as the running down of welfare state provision brings a threat to ways of life, livelihoods and the general order of things.
- There has been growing economic hardship and a widening wealth divide. Much of the blame has been placed at the door of the immigrant and immigration policy. Strong support for such economies is received from the political right. Deflection of people’s grievances upon immigrants often occurs out of political expediency.

Hegemonic states & the ‘War on Terror’

- There has been support of dictatorial regimes by Western nations to maintain the status quo in various Muslim countries.
- Security of Israel and the region is a significant factor.
- The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the rhetoric used against the West’s ‘enemies’, much of which has focussed on elements of their Muslim identity, have increased levels of hostility towards Muslims more generally.
- Islam’s transnational character, which means Muslims cannot be exclusively loyal to a nation state over and above the ‘umamah’, comes into particular focus when Britain engages in wars in Muslim countries.
- There have been violent responses such as 7/7 and Woolwich. These acts are not portrayed as retribution for foreign policy but as acts of hatred against western values. The spectre of fundamentalism has been nurtured.

- This has been used to maintain rhetoric that establishes a so-called enemy that lies within. This has aided increased security measures that have significantly impacted the public psyche.
- From this milieu have come paranoid fantasies about the Islamisation of Europe. Unfortunately there are some outspoken clerics who encourage this view.

Other ongoing factors:

- The ongoing dialectic between secularism and religion.
- The continuation of a history of Islamophobia.
- Latent racism that is easily aroused by the press and is now being expressed as a type of cultural racism.

The sum total of these complex set of factors has given rise to a strong discourse, which asserts that the face veil is a manifestation of a hard-line Islam that is somehow a threat to the nation-state.

PART 3 COMMON ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE FACE-VEIL & SOME REFLECTION POINTS:

The face-veil is cultural and not religious and therefore due no special protections.

- This is an important point since there are well-known conventions that protect freedom of religion from discrimination.
- Philosopher Tariq Ramadan does not hold the opinion that the face-veil is something obligated for Muslim women to wear. Yet in his evidence to the Gerin Commission (which was setup in 2010 by the French government tasked to examine the question of the face veil) he stated: “One must recognise the clear and objective fact that there is a tradition which maintains that such an interpretation is the true understanding of Islam. This tradition adduces that the example of the Prophet’s wives to establish a standard for all women” (Translated by Ralph Grillo)
- It is asserted that the face-veil is a political statement of extremist Islamism. Some consider that the veil not only hides the face but also the secret intentions to attack secularism and impose Islamic law. As such some believe that the face veil goes beyond acceptable public religious expression in a secular society.
- The view that holds it to be a deeply political form of expression is however in stark contradiction to the idea that asserts that such women are oppressed and forced to wear it either physically or through brainwashing religious dogma. To be both subjugated and yet have secret ambitions to usurp the state is a contradiction that deserves greater exposure.

The face-veil is a symbol and tool of subjugation.

- The evidence contradicts these stereotypes. Many are choosing to wear the face-veil in opposition to family pressure not to wear it.
- There is evidence to show that the ban in France has not liberated veil-wearing women but has had detrimental consequences to their level of social interaction, their health and well-being. They feel like social outcasts that are being targeted. (see appendix E)
- The overwhelming majority of Muslim women wear the face-veil due to personal choice and many are at university and have the smartest minds in the country.

The face-veil is not ‘Our’ culture.

- British culture is not something well-defined.
- Britain is multicultural not mono-cultural.
- Some politicians have pointed out that a ban would be un-British and thus against our culture.
- Cultures change over time and indeed many pensioners who were born and lived all of their lives in Britain often feel modern British values are in opposition to their version of British values.

The face-veil hinders communication and integration.

- It does not hinder meaningful communications. It forces one to pay closer attention to more important elements of communication such as the words of the wearer rather than their facial expressions and gestures.
- Much of modern communication occurs without face-to-face engagement. As such one may argue that modern technology hinders communication and integration.
- Even if the assertion is true, one could still question if there are grounds for banning it, since a modern Britain surely permits the citizen to choose how much and with whom—to integrate and communicate.

The face-veil presents significant security issues.

- A handful of instances, wherein face-veils have been used to commit crimes, is not an evidence-based approach to legislation.
- Banning the face-veil would not improve security. If somebody really wants to commit a crime they will find another method for concealing their identity.
- Very many procedures are already in place to check the identity of veil wearing women by female members of staff where necessary at airports etc.

PART 4 SPECIFICS ON THE BILL TO BAN FACE-VEILS IN THE UK:

The bill was put forward (sponsored) by Mr Philip Hollobone, supported by Mr Peter Bone and Mr Christopher Chope, all of whom are conservative MPs. Phillip Hollobone had made an unsuccessful attempt to introduce the exact same bill in 2010.

There is little chance of this bill being made law this time around as it is a bill proposed by a backbench MP (i.e. a 'private members bill') and not a government minister. As such there is very limited parliamentary time afforded to such bills and thus very little opportunity for such bills to make it all the way through the necessary stages to be made law.

The bill was formally introduced to the House of Commons in what is referred to as its 'first reading'. The second reading is the first opportunity for debate of the main principles of the bill which is due to take place on the 28th February 2014.

Initially it seemed unlikely that the second reading would occur as the bill was further down on the agenda. However Phillip Hollobone has opted to re-order the other bills he sponsored, so that the face coverings bill is now second on the agenda for discussion.

Intention behind of the bill:

There is little chance for the bill to be made law in this parliamentary session. However private members bills are often used as campaigning mechanisms. Phillip Hollobone's intention is therefore more to do with creating publicity around the issue, which it seems he has been successful in doing thus far.

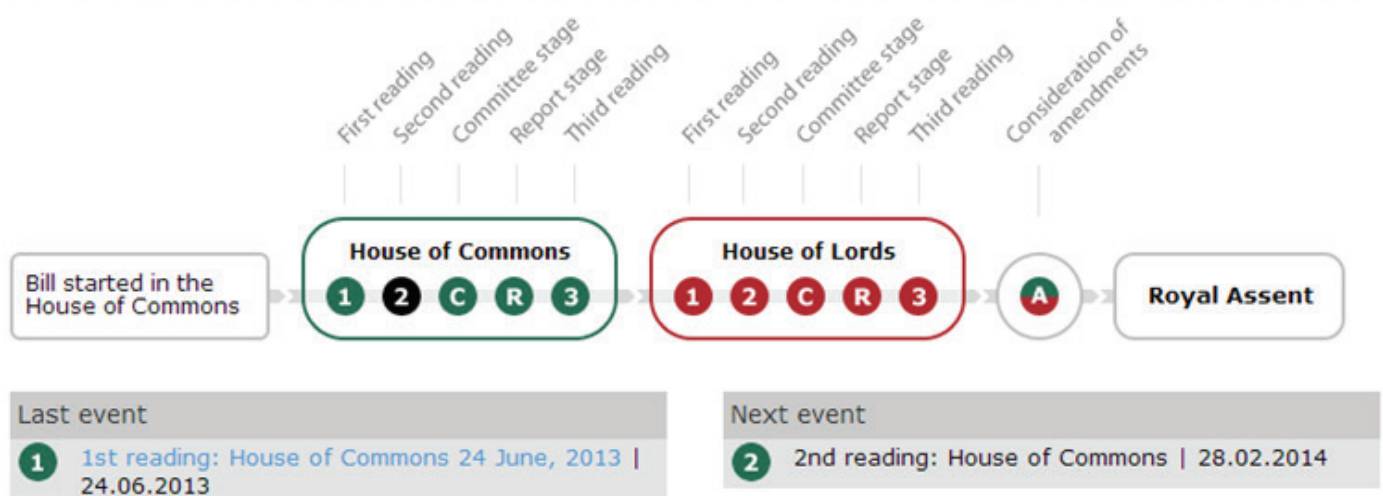
He therefore hopes that he may affect legislation indirectly at a future point in time having demonstrated a significant level of public support for such measures. Therefore one should not underestimate the significance of this event.

The new law will seek to:

1. Make it an offence to wear a face covering whose primary purpose is to obscure the face in any public place.
2. Allowances are permitted inside a place of worship, or if someone's employment requires such a garment, for sports, health and safety, art, leisure or entertainment.
3. If wearing the garment on private premises to receive any goods or services, one must either remove the veil or leave the premises if the premises' holder or someone who works for him/her demands this. Failure to comply or to leave the premises would be an offence.
4. Someone guilty of such an offence will receive a fine of up to £200.
5. This would be implemented in England and Wales.

The stages of the bill:

Progress of the Bill



As previously mentioned the most likely outcome is that this bill will fail to become law in this parliamentary session and thus will not make it beyond the second reading.

PART 5 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Whilst there is little potential for this current bill to be made law in this parliament, that does not discount future attempts being successful. The tide of opinion favouring the narrative of a clash of cultures between Muslims and the wider society continues to grow stronger, and thus pro-active steps are required in the face of what is likely to be escalating challenges.

- Muslim organisations and individuals should understand the wider context in which such debates occur, some of which has been outlined in section 3. It should be understood that there is no point of principle being upheld by seeking to ban the face-veil.
- Muslim organisations and individuals must recognise the clear and objective fact that despite the different opinions in this area, the validity of the face-veil as a recommendation, at the very least, has been present within mainstream Islamic thought since the earliest days. This tradition adduces that the example of the Prophet's wives establishes a standard for all women.
- Muslim organisations and individuals should defend the rights of other Muslims to wear the face-veil, even if they themselves do not believe it to be a sound religious practice. There is in fact considerable continuity between the arguments put forward for educational establishments banning the hijab (which has occurred in France) and for banning face-veils. Thus the logical consequences could well be greater restrictions upon even the hijab being an acceptable item of clothing in some state institutions in years to come. Indeed within public opinion is a significant strand that supports the banning of the hijab in entirety.
- Muslim community leaders must play their role fully in the preservation of religious rights, firstly by understanding the political process by which change occurs; and secondly by giving clear direction to those who hold them in high esteem to becoming active in opposing measures that may be detrimental.
- Muslim community leaders must cogently challenge the false arguments against the face-veil.

- It is of paramount importance that Muslim media representation is developed.
- Muslims need to be consistent in expressing what they stand for. Such representation should not employ crass pragmatism by feigning to be defenders of liberal modernity.
- Muslims need to understand that multicultural liberalism is not an enemy to them. Rather, the newly-postulated 'muscular liberalism' is that which is changing the shape of Britain in a negative way for the Muslim community. It has appropriated the language of liberalism; yet it is intolerant to cultural differences.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: KEY INCIDENTS IN THE UK SURROUNDING THE FACE VEIL DEBATE

Thursday 5th October 2006

1. Jack Straw MP sparks debate, as he intended to, with weekly column in Lancashire Telegraph.

Asks veiled women to take off their veils to improve “value” of conversation

“Most I ask seem relieved I have done so”

“visible statement of separation and difference”

“Many scholars said the veil was not obligatory at all”

2. Column reprinted as article with tagline “ read the column that sparked the debate here” http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/archive/2006/10/05/955978.Take_off_your_veils/

3. By evening, leads on all Major news bulletins

Friday 6th October 2006

1. Column reprinted in full on Guardian Website with Headline: “this is Jack Straw’s Column which prompted the debate”: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2006/oct/06/politics.uk>

2. Coverage continues on BBC Television news
Straw goes further in his criticism
Speculation that unusual outspokenness is part of deputy leadership bid

3. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLUchPPTkp8>

4. Reaches front page of National Newspapers

Daily Mirror

o Headline: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/take-off-veils-644493>

o Comment[Should be listened to because is “well meaning” and “respected” : <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/lifting-the-veil-gently-644499>

Daily Telegraph

o Headline: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1530717/Take-off-your-veils-says-Straw.html>

o Comment: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/3632907/Straw-leads-where-the-Met-fears-to-follow.html>

Daily Mail, Editorial – Straw is right to raise the issue : <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-408902/A-risk-Mr-Straw-right-take.html>

Saturday 7th October 2006

Daily Express: “ Ban The Veil”, claims 97% support from readers <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1302/Ban-the-veil>

Jack Straw’s Deputy, Nigel Griffiths calls veil wearers ‘selfish’: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-409183/Its-selfish-wear-veil-says-Straw-aide.html>

Phil Woolas, Race Relations Minister criticises Nigel Griffiths for describing veil wearers as selfish

Daily Telegraph, Comment: “ Integration can’t be achieved behind the veil:” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/3632938/Integration-cant-be-achieved-behind-the-veil.html>

Veiled Muslim woman is attacked in Liverpool. Muslim Groups attribute this directly to Straw’s comments: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/merseyside/5415478.stm>

Sunday 8th October 2006

1. Ken Livingstone (London Mayor), Press Release: “Same methods used to attack Muslims today as used against Jews” http://legacy.london.gov.uk/view_press_release.jsp?releaseid=9467

2. Phil Woolas writes for Sunday Mirror: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5416732.stm

Wearing veil can provoke fear and resentment

Encourage right wing groups

Hard to tell whether choice or forced to do it

Wednesday 11th October 2006

1. Gordon Brown supports Jack Straw on BBC interview; Tony Blair PM, “perfectly sensible to raise the issue”

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1324/Fewer-Muslims-should-wear-the-veil-says-Brown>

2. Ruth Kelly re delivers speech on ways to tackle extremism and to launch Commission on Integration and cohesion: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5281572.stm

Friday 13th October 2006

1. Jack Straw receives vocal opposition at Blackburn Town Hall, refuses to back down in 20 minutes of media interviews

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6048896.stm

Saturday 14th October 2006

1. Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari writes to Ruth Kelly, SOS for Communities and local government, complaining of recent ‘demonisation of Muslim’ , including the drip feed of ministerial briefings against Muslims following her Speech on 11th October: <http://talk-veritas.blogspot.co.uk/2006/10/letter-from-dr-muhammad-abdul-bari-of.html> ;

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6053992.stm>

Sunday 15th October 2006

1. Aishah Azmi is suspended by Headfield Church of England Junior School for refusing to remove veil in class

2. Phil Woolas tells the Sunday Mirror “she has put herself in a position where she can’t do her job” and that it amounts to “sexual discrimination” and calls for her to be sacked. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6053298.stm>

3. David Davis, Conservative MP writes Article in Sunday Telegraph entitled “Do Muslims really want apartheid here?”

What Jack touched on was the fundamental issue of whether, in Britain, we are developing a divided society. Whether we are creating a series of closed societies within our open society. Whether we are inadvertently encouraging a kind of voluntary apartheid: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3633204/Do-Muslims-really-want-apartheid-here.html> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6052232.stm>

Monday 16th October 2006

1. Tony Blair, at Monthly Press conference, claims a minority of Muslim Community are not integrating and that the veil is part of that. A discussion needs to happen on the veil. “It makes outsiders uncomfortable.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_6050000/newsid_6059600/6059660.stm?b-w=bb&mp=rm&news=1&ms3=4&ms_javascript=true&bbcws=2

2. Supports Kirklees councils decision to suspend Aishah Azmi

3. Azmi’s Lawyer, calls for a retraction and threatens action against the Prime Minister for breach of the ministerial code by interfering in an on-going employment tribunal : http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6058672.stm

4. Harriet Harman says she ‘wants the veil gone from society’ in interview with New Statesman “Because I want women to be fully included. If you want equality, you have to be in society, not hidden away from it.” <http://www.newstatesman.com/node/154513>. She is also vying for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party.

5. Daily Express reports “Veil is banned in hospitals”, Following Birmingham University Medical school’s decision to not allow veils “in clinical situations”: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1345/The-veil-is-banned-in-hospitals>

Tuesday 17th October 2006

1. Daily Express claims overwhelming support for ban on Muslim face veils in an ongoing campaign: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1350/Veil-should-be-banned-say-98-37>

Thursday 19th October 2006

1. Aishah Azmi loses her case for religious discrimination at her tribunal <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bradford/6066726.stm>

2. In response to the opening question on BBC's Question Time, Preston: Does the panel think it is possible for a woman wearing the veil to make a full contribution to British Society?

Hilary Armstrong: Minister for Social Exclusion supported Jack Straw's later comments that the veil was a "visible statement of separation and difference" by adding "I think it is very difficult to wear a veil and participate in everything in our society"

Chris Huhne: It would be wrong to go down that road [strong French secular tradition]....if people want to wear a full face veil that's up to them....with language in schools it can be an issue...

Salma Yakoob: She didn't teach the children with a veil

Theresa May, conservative MP: David says there were issues beyond the veil, we all respect our laws and the universality of our laws, nobody's talking about the wider issues of community cohesion, ...Women should be allowed to wear what they want...it's not about banning the veil

http://news.bbc.co.uk/nolavconsole/ifs_news/hi/newsid_6060000/newsid_6069400/bb_rm_6069466.stm

David Cameron, On Frost Tonight, concerned Muslims will feel "slightly targeted" but says

"I have great sympathy with the school because it seems to me there isn't a teaching in Islam which says you have to wear the veil in front of children and, in terms of teaching, communication is vitally important."

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6068320.stm

Friday 20th October 2006

1. Aishah Azmi appeals against her dismissal with London Employment Appeals Tribunal

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bradford/6282459.stm>

2. Shahid Malik, MP for Dewsbury (Azmi's constituency) appeals to Azmi on BBC radio Leeds:

"I just think there is very little support for this, she is very isolated and it would be healthy all round if she just let it go and just accept the tribunal result," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6069012.stm>

Saturday 21st October 2006

1. Daily Express leads with article: "Ban It!"

Monday 23rd October 2006

1. Trevor Phillips, head of new commission for equality and Human Rights, In an interview with the BBC, urges Azmi to drop the case whilst also seeing the debate as having taken an ugly turn <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bradford/6074484.stm>

Tuesday 23rd October 2006

1. Eccles Mosque in Liverpool is attacked. Muhammad Shafiq, Ramadhan Foundation, blames Straw and Woolas' comments. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/manchester/6076074.stm>

Friday 27th October

1. Rowan Williams argues that restricting displays of faith in society is dangerous. <http://www.politics.co.uk/news/2006/10/27/archbishop-warns-of-dangers-of-banning-veils>

2nd November 2006

1. Jack Straw says he has no regrets over his article at an interfaith forum

Sunday 5th November 2006

1. Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali, tells Sunday Times that certain situations could require women to remove veils and that Muslims seek both "victimhood" and "domination". The Bishops father is a convert to Christianity from Islam. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6117912.stm>

Friday 10th November 2006

1. Lord Chief Justice Hodge rules that courts should use their discretion and allow the use of veils in courts unless it interferes with “the interests of Justice”. This follows Judge Glossop who adjourned a hearing after he asked Shabnam Mughal, a legal advisor, to remove her veil because “he couldn’t hear her”. The guidance is temporary until permanent guidelines are drawn up. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6134804.stm>

Friday 24th November 2006

1. Ms Azmi is sacked by her school: “Mrs Azmi had said she was willing to remove her veil in front of children, but not if male colleagues were present.”

Shahid Malik: “While I would absolutely defend her right to wear the veil in society, it’s very clear that her wearing the veil in the classroom setting inhibits her ability to support children.” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bradford/6179842.stm>

Wednesday 24th January 2007

1. First reports of trial of ‘x’ a 12 year old girl against her Buckinghamshire girls school who had been asked not to come to school wearing Niqab <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6382247.stm>

Wednesday 29th November

1. ICM survey commissioned by BBC finds 33% in favour of banning niqab in public places: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6194032.stm>

Thursday 8th February 2007

1. Girl ‘x’ trial continues <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6341815.stm>

Monday 12th February 2007

1. Headteacher of Buckinghamshire School explains her decision to ban ‘x’ from school for wearing niqab:

“I believe that if the niqab becomes an accepted part of school uniform attire there may well be pressure brought to bear on other Muslim girls to wear one, either from the children’s families or from their friends at school” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6353601.stm>

Wednesday 21st February 2007

1. Judge Justice Selby rejects the arguments of a 12 year old girl who sought a judicial review after her school in Buckinghamshire refused to allow her to wear it because it would make “communication and learning” difficult.

Her three elder sisters all attended the school and had worn the niqab. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6382247.stm>

Thursday 8th March 2007

1. Employment Appeals Tribunal hears Ms Azmi’s appeal against her dismissal: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bradford/6430349.stm>

Tuesday 20th March 2007

1. Government issues guidelines on school uniforms following Buckinghamshire school victory, schools can ban veils : “If a pupil’s face is obscured for any reason the teacher may not be able to judge their engagement with learning or secure their participation in discussions and practical activities” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6466221.stm>

Friday 30th March 2007

1. Ms Azmi loses her appeal against dismissal: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bradford/6511393.stm>; http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKCAT/2007/0009_07_3003.html

Tuesday 24th April 2007

1. Islamic groups welcome Judicial Studies Board’s Equal Treatment Advisory Committee’s guidelines which states there should be no default opposition to wearing the veil in court, decisions should be made in each case separately and “ Nor should it ever be assumed without good reason that it is inappropriate for a woman to give evidence in court wearing the full veil.” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/staffordshire/6588157.stm>

Wednesday 25th April 2007

1. Daily Express: “Muslims standing trial to hide their faces” <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/5321/Muslims-standing-trial-to-hide-their-faces>

Friday 29th June 2007

1. Lay Magistrate, walks out of case because is “concerned with defendant’s identity” because she is wearing a veil <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/manchester/6254506.stm>

Wednesday 4th July 2007

1. Magistrate regrets walk-out, following a formal letter of complaint triggering an inquiry into his behaviour: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/manchester/6269546.stm>

Tuesday 23rd June 2009

1. A day after speaking out against Burka, Nicholas Sarkozy sets up commission to examine veils as signs of “subservience”

Sunday 17th January 2010

1. Nigel Farage, UKIP MEP, calls for a ban of the veil citing oppression and security threat and a different culture being forced on British people. The call for a total ban follows BNP’s calls for a ban in schools http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8464124.stm

Ed Balls regards calls for a ban as “not British”

Tuesday 26th January 2010

1. The French parliamentary committee recommends a partial ban on face veils, including in schools, hospitals and public transport <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8481142.stm>; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8480161.stm>

Wednesday 27th January 2010

1. BBC discusses possibility of a ban of the veil in the UK <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8481617.stm>

Wednesday 21 April 2010

1. Sarkozy orders bill to ban the veil
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8635178.stm>

Sunday 25th April 2010

1. In a public meeting organised by Engage, with Blackburn constituents, during the General Election campaign, Jack Straw issues an apology for his remarks regarding the niqab in 2006. He claimed his remarks were taken out of context and that he regularly saw women with their veil on.

“To be blunt, if I had realised the scale of publicity that they [his comments] received in October 2006, I wouldn’t have made them and I am sorry that it has caused problems and I offer that apology.

“Can I just say, this is about an issue of communication (you understand). I wasn’t raising it to say it [the burqa] should be banned – quite the opposite. Let me say, I’m not responsible for those in France or Germany or in this country pursuing this. That is their business. I am fundamentally opposed to what they are doing.” <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1269055/General-Election-2010-Jack-Straw-says-sorry-Muslim-veil.html>

Tuesday 11th May 2010

1. French Parliament passes a non-binding resolution condemning the veil as “an affront to the nations values of dignity and equality” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8676238.stm>

Thursday 1st July 2010

1. Philip Hollobone, MP for Kettering, brings a Private Members Bill to ban the veil in public: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/7864697/Ban-the-burka-says-Tory-MP-Philip-Hollobone.html>

The bill is 17th on the list of Private members bills and does not proceed to a second reading in 2012: “The Bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the end of the session. This means the Bill will make no further progress” <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/facecoveringsregulation.html>

13th July 2010

1. French Parliament votes to ban Face veil in Public spaces <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10611398>

17th July 2010

1. Newly appointed Immigration Minister, Damian Green, in first round of media interviews says coalition would not propose banning the veil and that it would be “unbritish” to do so

Yougov poll apparently shows 67% of voters in favour of banning the veil

“I stand personally on the feeling that telling people what they can and can’t wear, if they’re just walking down the street, is a rather un-British thing to do. We’re a tolerant and mutually respectful society.

“There are times, clearly, when you’ve got to be able to identify yourself, and people have got to be able to see your face, but I think it’s very unlikely and it would be undesirable for the British parliament to try and pass a law dictating what people wore” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/7896751/Burka-ban-ruled-out-by-immigration-minister.html>

3rd August 2010

1. Tory Party Chairman, Baroness Warsi, says Veil does not stop women engaging in Public life and defends right to choose to wear it. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/baroness-sayeeda-warsi-in-burka-ban-239421#ixzzovg3Qopz6>

Saturday 14th September 2010

1. French Senate approves Bill

Sunday 15th September 2010

1. Independent: Yasmin Ali-Bhai Brown; regards veils as regressive <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/fully-veiled-women-hinder-progressive-islam-8817963.html>

Monday 11th April 2011

1. Ban on face veils comes into force in France: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13031397>

Saturday 23rd August 2013

1. Judge Peter Murphy adjourns the trial of a veiled woman defendant at Blackfriars Crown Court, to clarify the law whether she must remove her veil for the purposes of identification for both her plea and/or for her full trial. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/10261550/Muslim-woman-must-remove-burka-in-court-judge-insists.html>

Friday 6th September 2013

1. Phillip Hollobone MP succeeds in making the motion for a second reading of his “Face Coverings (Prohibition) Bill. It will be read for a second time on 28th February 2014. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130906/deb-text/130906-0002.htm#13090627000007>

Tuesday 10th September 2013

1. Birmingham Metropolitan College, orders students, staff and visitors to remove face coverings to be “easily identifiable at all times” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10298676/Birmingham-college-bans-Muslim-veils.html>

Thursday 12th September 2013

1. Judge Peter Murphy allows veiled defendant to enter a plea whilst veiled, with female staff fulfilling ID requirements. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/12/judge-allows-muslim-woman-wear-niqab>
2. The Prime Minister backs schools being able to set and enforce their own uniform policies. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/press-briefing-afternoon-12-september-2013>
3. Nick Clegg expresses unease at general bans – in classrooms where face contact is important it may be a different matter: <http://www.lbc.co.uk/call-clegg-watch-in-full---12th-september-78049/liveblog/37>
4. Birmingham Metropolitan College reverses decision to restrict face coverings: “modify our policies to allow individuals to wear specific items of personal clothing to reflect their cultural values” the move is welcomed by Shabana Mahmood MP for Birmingham Ladywood. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/13/birmingham-college-muslim-veils>

Monday 16th September 2013

1. Judge Peter Murphy rules that woman must show her face to jury, judge and legal counsel when giving evidence and can remain veiled at other times: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/16/muslim-woman-niqab-judge-ruling>
2. Conservative MP, Sarah Wollaston says women should not be allowed to wear veils in schools or courts, rejecting “freedom of choice” arguments because of the possibility that girls may be forced <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24112909>
3. Jeremy Browne, Home Office Minister Liberal Democrat MP, calls for a national debate on the wearing of veils in Public, even though he feels “uneasy” about restricting freedoms, because girls may be pressured and the need for a “cohesive society” a ban should be considered <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24107502>
4. Prime Minister’s spokesman says PM would support NHS trusts, councils and schools and branches of civil service should they wish to ban face veils: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10312343/Downing-Street-backs-ban-on-veils-in-hospitals-and-councils.html>

Tuesday 17th September

1. Home secretary Theresa May MP, says governments should not tell women what to wear and there would be some circumstances where taking off the veil would be necessary. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/17/veil-womans-choice-theresa-may>

Wednesday 18th September

1. Boris Johnson Mayor of London states his opposition for the face veil to be part of school uniform policy. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10318092/Boris-Johnson-forcing-children-to-wear-burka-to-school-is-against-countrys-values-of-liberty.html>

Thursday 19th September

1. Daily Telegraph runs front page story that 17 NHS hospital trusts have banned veils in clinical situations: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/nhs/10319264/Secret-ban-on-face-veils-for-staff-at-17-hospitals.html>
2. Health Minister, Dan Poulter, asks medical regulatory bodies to clarify their guidance: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/19/doctors-nurses-face-veils-ban>
3. Veil, first question on BBC Question time: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b03bdvsv/Question_Time_19_09_2013/

Friday 20th September 2013

1. Telegraph claims Non-Muslim teachers are being forced to wear headscarf in certain Muslim Schools: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10322872/Non-Muslim-teachers-forced-to-wear-veil-at-faith-school.html>

APPENDIX B: BRIEF TIMELINE OF EVENTS RELATING TO THE CRIMINALISATION OF FACE-VEILING IN EUROPE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Event</i>
c. 2002	Belgium	Local initiatives against face-veiling in Flanders
2004, September	France	Legislation on prohibiting 'conspicuous religious symbols or clothing' in state schools comes into force
2004, Autumn	Belgium	Flemish Government draws up a model provision to facilitate bans on face-veils; in December Maaseik municipality issues general prohibition on facial concealment, purposely aimed at face-veils
2005, Autumn	Netherlands	Verdonk/Wilders proposal to ban the <i>burqa</i>
2006, October	UK	Jack Straw 'uncomfortable' interviewing constituents wearing veil
2008	France	Conseil d'Etat refuses naturalization of <i>Madame M</i> for wearing the veil
2009-2010	France	Gerin commission on veiling begins work, June 2009. Reports January 2010. Legislation enacted 2010
2010	Norway	Integration Commission of the governing Labour Party included a proposal to ban the wearing of the <i>bijab</i> , <i>niqab</i> , <i>burqa</i> and other forms of 'religious dress' by Norwegian magistrates
2010, June	UK	Face Coverings (Regulation) Private Members' Bill presented by Philip Hollobone MP gets its first reading in the House of Commons
2010	Italy	Italian commission set up
2010, Spring and Summer	Spain	Student suspended from school near Madrid for wearing <i>bijab</i> . Two city councils in Catalonia prohibit the wearing of the face-veil in municipal facilities. Barcelona council bans the <i>burqa</i> and other forms of facial covering from public buildings. Government proposes a law to regulate clothing expressing religious sentiments. In July the Spanish Parliament debated a non-binding motion banning face-veiling which was rejected by the lower chamber, but approved by the Senate with the support of the Partido Popular and the Catalan centre-right party, the CIU ⁴⁹

2010, July	Council of Europe	Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, criticizes <i>burqa</i> bans
2011, February	Germany	No general ban on face-veiling, and relatively little pressure for legislation, but the face must be uncovered in identity documents, and face-veils and headscarves are banned for public servants, including teachers in some <i>Bundesländer</i> (e.g. Hesse)
2011, April	France	French ban comes into force
2011, April	Belgium	Belgian ban passed; one vote against. Belgian ban comes into force in July
2011, July	Council of Europe	Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, criticizes <i>burqa</i> bans
2011, August	Italy	Italian parliamentary commission approves draft law
2011, September	France	Women fined for wearing <i>nigab</i> propose to take their case to the ECtHR ⁵⁰
2011, September	Netherlands	Dutch Council of Ministers agrees to prohibit face covering in public
2011, October	Spain	<i>Partido Popular</i> candidates in the general election call for the introduction of a bill to ban face-veiling in public
2012, March	UK	Muslim juror excused for refusing to remove face-veil
2012, April	France	The French Ministry of the Interior reported that during the first year of the ban c. 350 women wearing the face-veil had been stopped by the police of whom 300 were 'booked' (<i>verbalisés</i>)

APPENDIX C: PHILLIP HOLLOBONE'S SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT

11 Mar 2010 : Column 483
2.24 pm

Mr. Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the thoughtful contribution by the hon. Member for Crosby (Mrs. Curtis-Thomas). I believe she has more academic qualifications than any other Member of the House, and certainly more letters after her name. Her informed contributions to debates such as this will be missed.

On this occasion of international women's day, I want to raise the difficult subject of Islamic full-face veils-specifically, the niqab and the burqa. I am sure we can all agree with the Leader of the House's remarks-we all want to empower women in being equal. In my view and that of my constituents, the niqab and the burqa are oppressive dress codes that are regressive as regards the advancement of women in our society. I want to make it clear that I am talking about the niqab and the burqa, not the hijab, the khimar or the chador.

I have been concerned for some time about the niqab and the burqa, but it was not until I took my children to the play area in my local park recently and saw a woman wearing a full burqa that it came home to me how inappropriate and, frankly, offensive it is for people to wear that apparel in the 21st century and especially in Britain. In my view and that of my constituents, the burqa is not an acceptable form of dress and banning it should be seriously considered.

As I was sitting on the bench in the playground watching my children play on the slides, I thought to myself, "Here I am, in the middle of Kettering in the middle of England-a country that has been involved for centuries with spreading freedom and democracy throughout the world-and here's a woman who, through her dress, is effectively saying that she does not want to have any normal human dialogue or interaction with anyone else. By covering her entire face, she is effectively saying that our society is so objectionable, even in the friendly, happy environment of a children's playground, that we are not even allowed to cast a glance on her." I find that offensive and I think it is time that the country did something about it.

Continued...

We will never have a country in which we can all rub along together and in which people of different backgrounds, different ethnicities and different religions all get along nicely if one section of our society refuses even to be looked on by anyone else. As I thought more about it, it struck me that the issue is not the clothes that someone wears but the fact that the face is covered. Lots of people wear what others might feel is inappropriate clothing. That is, of course, everyone's choice. The issue with the niqab and the burqa, however, is not that they are just another piece of clothing but that they involve covering the face either in its entirety or with just the eyes showing.

The simple truth is that when a woman wears the burqa, she is unable to engage in normal, everyday visual interaction with everyone else. That is indeed the point of it. It is deliberately designed to prevent others from gazing on that person's face. The problem with that is that it goes against the British way of life. Part of the joy of living in our country is that we pass people every day in the street, exchange a friendly greeting, wave, smile and say hello. Whether we recognise someone as a person we know or whether we are talking to—

11 Mar 2010 : Column 484

—someone for the first time, we can all see who the other person is and we interact both verbally and through those little visual facial signals that are all part of interacting with each other as human beings.

If we all went round wearing burqas, our country would be a sad place indeed. Indeed, if we were all to be wearing burqas in this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how would you know who to call? I also feel very sorry for women who wear the burqa, as it cannot be very nice to go around all day with only a limited view of the outside world. Of course, many of these women are forced to wear the burqa by their husband or their family. The resulting lack of interaction with everyone else means that many are unable to speak or learn English and so will never have any chance of becoming integrated into the British way of life.

The other issue with the burqa is security. Of course, that problem arises with some other forms of face covering and I do not see why those wearing the burqa should be treated any differently.

Continued...

Bikers wear crash helmets for their own safety, but they are required to take them off in banks and shops. If one were to travel on the tube wearing a balaclava, a police officer would ask one to take it off.

Many of my constituents have contacted me to say that when they visit Muslim countries they respect the dress codes in those countries and wear appropriate headgear. The phrase that has been given to me time and again is, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

This is Britain; we are not a Muslim country. Covering one’s face in public is strange, and to many people it is intimidating and offensive. I seriously think that a ban on wearing the niqab or the burka in public should be considered.

2.30 pm

APPENDIX D: THE BILL

A
BILL

TO

Prohibit the wearing of certain face coverings; and for connected purposes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1 Prohibition of face coverings

- (1) Subject to the exemptions in subsection (3), a person wearing a garment or other object intended by the wearer as its primary purpose to obscure the face in a public place shall be guilty of an offence.
- (2) For the purposes of this section, a "public place" is as defined in section 9(1) of the Public Order Act 1936. 5
- (3) A person does not commit an offence under subsection (1) if the garment or other object is worn—
 - (a) pursuant to any legislative or regulatory provision;
 - (b) as a necessary part of any activity directly related to a person's employment; 10
 - (c) for reasons of health or safety;
 - (d) for the purposes of a sporting activity;
 - (e) for the purposes of art, leisure or entertainment; or (f) in a place of worship. 15
- (4) Any person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding Level 1 on the Standard Scale.

2 Removal of face coverings on private premises

- Where members of the public are licensed to access private premises for the purposes of the giving or receiving of goods or services, it shall not be an offence for the owner of such premises or his agents— 20
- (a) to request that a person wearing a garment or other object intended to obscure the face remove such garment or object; or

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- (b) to require that a person refusing a request under subsection (a) leave the premises.

3 Removal of face coverings in the course of provision or receipt of public services

- (1) A person— 5
 (a) providing a public service in person to a member of the public; or
 (b) receiving a public service in person from a public official;
 shall remove any garment or other object intended by the wearer as its primary purpose to obscure the face unless such garment or other object is reasonably required for reasons of health or safety. 10
- (2) For the purposes of this section—
 (a) a "public service" is any service provided to the public by or on behalf of any public agency or public enterprise of a legislative, administrative or judicial nature or in connection with public order or national security; and 15
 (b) a "public official" is a person engaged in the provision of a public service.

4 Short title, commencement and extent

- (1) This Act may be cited as the Face Coverings (Prohibition) Act 2013.
 (2) This Act comes into force two months after Royal Assent. 20
 (3) This Act extends to England and Wales.

Face Coverings (Prohibition) Bill

A

BILL

To prohibit the wearing of certain face coverings; and for connected purposes.

*Presented by Mr Philip Hollobone
supported by
Mr Peter Bone and
Mr Christopher Chope.*

*Ordered, by The House of Commons,
to be Printed, 24 June 2013.*

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PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON — THE STATIONERY OFFICE LIMITED
Printed in the United Kingdom by
The Stationery Office Limited
Exxon

Bill 31

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APPENDIX E: THE EFFECTS ON MUSLIM WOMEN OF FRANCE'S BAN ON WEARING A FULL-FACE VEIL

After the Ban:

The Experiences of 35 Women of the Full-Face Veil in France
(Research by the open society Justice initiative)

After the Ban: The Experiences of 35 Women of the Full-Face Veil in France examines the effects of France's ban on wearing a full-face veil in public on the daily experiences of women who are subject to the ban.

The report is based on the testimonies of 35 women, 14 of whom participated in research reported in *Unveiling the Truth: Why 32 Women Wear the Full-Face in France*. The current report is a follow-up study to *Unveiling the Truth*, and it aims to assess the impact of the French law, Act No 2010-1192 of 11 October 2010 prohibiting the concealing of the face in public, on women who wore the full-face veil prior to the ban.

A. Wearing the Full-Face Veil After the Ban

The implementation of the ban in April 2011 has not stopped women from wearing the full-face veil. Some of the women interviewed for this report even stated that they adopted the niqab after the ban's enforcement.

In total, eight respondents have removed their full-face veil, while 27 continue to wear it despite the ban. Of the 14 interviewees who participated in the first OSF report, nine are still donning the full-face veil. One respondent started wearing the niqab after the adoption of the law in December 2010 and three other interviewees started wearing it after implementation of the law.

Respondents who continue to wear their niqab explained that, to them, not covering their faces would mean disowning their religion or abandoning part of their religious identity. Those who had been wearing a full-face veil for a long time could not understand why the practice had suddenly become illegal. The women who removed their niqab did so to comply with the law, out of fear of being arrested or assaulted, or because relatives pressured them to do so. One interviewee described that a decrease in her faith contributed to her removal of the full-face veil.

B. Impact of the Law on Respondents

All of the women interviewed described that the law has had significant negative effects on their lives, and that it has neither empowered nor liberated them.

Respondents who are still wearing the full-face veil commented that their movements had been severely curbed by the ban and several women compared their situation to being held in a prison. Out of 32 interviewees questioned, 27 said that they socialized significantly less than before the law, and cut down their outdoors activities to the strictest minimum. The fear of being stopped by the police for an ID check or abused by members of the public prevented many respondents from leaving their house. The ban has also restricted the mobility of some interviewees who have removed their full-face veil in order to comply with the law, but feel uncomfortable in public with their faces uncovered. Only one woman in the sample who has removed her full-face veil said that she was socializing more often now than before as a result of the ban.

The constraints on their movements and lack of physical exercise have taken a toll on the physical and mental health of many respondents. Several women described bouts of depression, anxiety attacks when leaving their house, and an overall deterioration of their health. A few respondents reported wearing surgical masks, which are not proscribed by the law, to access hospitals and doctors' surgeries but this compromise did not prevent tensions with medical staff from arising and as a result several women said that they now avoid seeing health practitioners.

A majority of respondents in the sample are married and have children. These respondents describe that the ban has significantly transformed their family life, increasing their dependence on close relatives especially their husbands and negatively affecting their relationship with their children. Since many respondents could no longer perform many everyday activities—such as taking the children to school or to play outside, and going to the post office or shopping—the burden of most outdoors activities falls on their partners, relatives and friends. One respondent referred to the "collateral damage" caused to her husband and children by the law. Several interviewees described feeling deprived of their motherhood roles, explaining that the effect the law had on their children's lives was the most damaging consequence of the ban that they had to deal with. Two women stated that the ban has discouraged them from having children.

The respondents reported that verbal abuse and harassment by members of the public is a common experience for women who continue to wear their full-face veil. Twelve respondents also reported physical assaults, including having their veil pulled off, being violently pushed, and being spat on. The ban and related public discourse seems to have emboldened some members of the public to behave abusively, and in some instances to act as if private persons were entitled to enforce the ban. Many respondents described instances in which members of the public abusively confronted them, including occasions when angry groups gathered around them.

Like the predecessor report, *Unveiling the Truth*, this report aims to distinguish myths and misrepresentations surrounding women who wear the full-face veil from the actual experience and testimonies of the women themselves. It is hard to establish how representative this research's sample is; however, a number of experiences are so prevalent among the respondents that they appear to represent definite trends. After the Ban shows that many women continue to wear the full-face veil in France after implementation of the ban. It further shows that for women who continue to wear the full-face veil, their personal and family lives are under considerable strain. After the Ban assists the reader to understand the experiences of these women by allowing the opportunity to hear their testimonies in their own words.

<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/after-the-ban-experience-full-face-veil-france-20140210.pdf>

**The Right To Choose:
Things You Should Know
About The Face-Veil
Debate -**

February 2014

Produced and published
the UK

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