

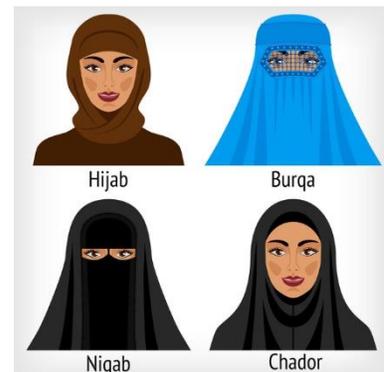
Someya is a 22-year-old French Muslim. As part of her religious practice Someya wears the traditional Muslim niqab, a full face-covering veil with a small slit for the eyes. She says, "I feel like I'm doing something higher ... I'm wearing it for God and for my husband, so that he'll be the only person who can see me and be able to appreciate my face." For Muslims like Someya, wearing the niqab is part of her faithful life of worship of Allah in accordance with the teaching of the Quran:

"O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." (Quran, Surah 33:59).

"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except that (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, ...; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden garments. And O you Believers! you turn all together toward Allah, that you may attain Bliss." (Quran, Surah 24:31)

The niqab, then, is meant to protect Someya and other Muslim women from onlookers, but also serves as an act of humble and modest worship of Allah.

But not everyone in France feels comfortable with Someya's (and many others like her) act of religious devotion because France places a high value on human equality and sees the niqab and the burqa as discriminatory against women. Wearing the veiled niqab and burqa can cause unease and suspicion among other French residents who are used to seeing people's faces and may associate Muslim dress with the threat of terrorism.



So, what should France do? France prides itself on the civic virtues of tolerance and equality. Should it tolerate a religious practice that many in France see as discriminatory against women or view with with fear or suspicion? As a secular country, should it restrict public expressions of religion, such as the niqab or crosses? Would it be just to only restrict some religions?

This case study was based on: <https://www.npr.org/2011/04/11/135305409/frances-burqa-ban-adds-to-anti-muslim-climate>

For further reflection, consider your response to the argument in this article: <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/the-headscarf-islams-gift-to-western-democracy/>