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Arguments developed by TERRE DES FEMMES – Human Rights for Women e.V. for disputing Full-Face Veils

Why this paper?

At the co-women meeting in 2016, the majority in the association TERRE DES FEMMES voted for agreeing to a law against Full Muslim Face Veils in the public realm.

During the ongoing discussions revolving around veiling, one thing seems to stand out: democrats following a humanistic ideology, as well as feminists quite often voice their opposition to a ban on Full-Face Veils. Behind this is the justifiable effort to distance themselves from right-wing and xenophobic tendencies. However, being able to criticize any religion is generally a characteristic of an enlightened, pluralistic and open society, and has nothing to do with xenophobia or hostility towards strangers. What's more, it is anything but right-wing to position oneself squarely against fundamentalist tendencies in any religion. They themselves often have a lot in common with right-wing movements. On this topic, TERRE DES FEMMES is positioned in the traditions of those feminists who, since the beginning of the last century, have been fighting against religious-patriarchic fundamentalism with its pre-defined gender roles and pre-enlightenment opinions.

This is why we are criticizing that, in some circles, challenging certain practices, such as circumcision, child marriage, Full-Face Veil and veiling children is seen as racist, islamophobic or (neo)colonialist. In particular, criticizing Islam including its fundamentalist tendencies is generally equated to racism and right-wing populism. The allegations have become so vehement, even denunciatory that they poison any debate, thus silencing all non-religious or religious-secular and liberal forces. Hushing up critical, enlightened voices helps first and foremost the Religious Right.

We want to counteract this development with our arguments against Full-Face Veils, thus supporting all who fight against patriarchal structures and fundamentalism.



Content

1. Why is it Essential to Show Your Face When Communicating and Coexisting with Other People?	3
2. Does a Ban on Full Face Veils Break Constitutional Law and Human Rights?	3
3. Is it Possible to Ban Full Face Veils when Donned Voluntarily?	5
4. Is It Gratuitous to Ban FFV Since Only Very Few Women Actually Wear It?	5
5. Are Muslim Women Obligated to Wear a Veil?	6
6. Does a Ban on Full Face Veils Offend Religious Sensibilities?	7
7. Does Full Face Veiling Protect Women from the Dictates of Western Beauty Ideals and from Sexualization?	7
8. Does Full Face Veiling Protect Against Sexual Assault?	8
9. Does a Ban on Wearing Full Face Veils Exclude Women from Participating in Social Interaction?	9
10. Is a Ban on Full Face Veiling Islamophobic, Homophobic or Racist?	9
11. Does a Ban on Full Face Veiling Constitute an Expression of (Neo-) Colonialist Patronizing and „Forced Westernization“?	10
12. Who Demands the Right to Full Face Veiling?	11
13. Is Tolerating Full Face Veiling an Expression of an Open, Pluralistic, Multicultural Society?	11
14. Why are Education and “Successful Integration” not enough to Counteract Religious Fundamentalism?	12
15. Will a Ban Only Result in More Women Wearing Full Face Veils?	13
Conclusion	14



1. Why is it Essential to Show Your Face When Communicating and Coexisting with Other People?

A basic characteristic of the human species is to interact showing open, uncovered faces. The reasons for this are not only sociologic, but also evolutionary: the face with its outstanding and many-faceted significance for survival and for human interaction embodies the identity of the individual, serving as the most important identifying feature. For this reason our brain is capable of using a dominant system of face recognition from the moment we are born. One could say it is programmed to distinguish individual faces from the masses of other sensations with the speed of lightning. When we look at the moon or at a spot on the wall, we see faces; even toddlers know the archaic symbols: dot, dot, comma, dash.

Moreover, the face is the most active social organ – its innate expressions are the language of mankind, transcending cultures. The basic repertoire people can understand in New Guinea, in Germany or Alaska: the six primary emotions (sadness, happiness, surprise, disgust, fear, anger) and their countless variations are universal letters of the alphabet.

Facial expression is regarded as the decisive social medium. People use it to elicit or even control emotions in their interlocutors: facial expressions are “contagious”. Subconsciously, the person you are talking to mirrors your own emotional expressions. This automatic emotional exchange enables people to adapt to and understand each other better.

Conclusion: Human communication and social competence are based on two principal prerequisites. One consists of being able to read in people’s faces when spoken to, and the other one is being able to communicate one’s own internal emotional landscape when speaking. Consequently, in most communicative situations a shrouded face naturally triggers a major feeling of discomfort, insecurity, even opposition, because face veils sharply contradict the deeply engrained “internal image of humanity”, and disrupt the subconscious laws of human communication – which then becomes asymmetrical.

2. Does a Ban on Full Face Veils Break Constitutional Law and Human Rights?

Many European countries, such as France or Belgium, and parts of Switzerland already ban Full-Face Veils. In Austria, the ban is justified with, among other reasons, safeguarding Muslim women from fundamentalism. In 2017, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) declared the Belgian ban in line with the law and reasoned that such a ban „constituted a choice of society, a balance democratically struck by the legislature“, and was to „be regarded as proportionate to the aim pursued, namely the preservation of the conditions of ‚living together‘ as an element of the ‚protection of the rights and freedoms of others“.

Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany

In Germany, mainly the first four rights laid down in the Basic Law [Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland →GG] are of importance with regard to Full Face Veils (FFV): the Inviolability of Human Dignity (art. 1 GG), Every person’s right to free development of his/her personality (art. 2 GG) i.e. the way to dress, equal rights for men and women (art. 3 GG), and the fundamental right to freedom of faith, conscience and creed (art. 4 GG).



One iron-clad principle of the German legal system is that all basic rights are considered of equal value. Naturally, there will be collisions in actual practice. Thus for each individual case, the jurisprudence uses the principle of balancing legally protected interests before deciding which (basic) right will be deemed more important. The tendency of such balancing is significantly influenced by the prevailing societal conditions and political mood.

In particular, article 3 GG (equal rights) and article 4 GG (freedom of religion) are in conflict here. According to article 3 GG, however, the state also supports "the actual enforcement of equal rights for women and men and works towards the elimination of existing disadvantages". The acceptance and preservation of religious thinking and doctrines that infringe upon human rights is contradictory to this tenet of the state. Equal rights for men and women as an expression of human dignity are to be placed above pre-enlightenment religious beliefs. Consequently, equality has to be accorded priority when the need for balancing legally protected interests arises.

Article 4 GG (freedom of religion) means both the positive (free practice of worship) as well as the negative freedom of religion (freedom from religion). Today, it is more and more being interpreted as an instrument to enforce positive freedom of religion. Such an interpretation paves the way to fundamentalism and oppression of women, both of which blatantly contradict the spirit of this basic right, particularly when considering the problem from the perspective of the integrity of human dignity as stipulated in article 1 GG ("Human dignity is inviolable"). FFV degrades people as it reduces women to a purportedly "sinful", "seductive" body and takes away their freedom of movement. Accepting FFV for reasons of freedom of religion means tolerating gender apartheid along with a symbol of Islamism which, among other things, rejects freedom of religion.

Considering the entire constitution, article 2 GG (freedom of personality) has to speak for a ban of the FFV as well, for it is the express purpose of the FFV to prevent any free development of personality. It is designed to make women invisible in public; it robs women of their faces, their expressiveness, and their individuality. Such de-personalization renders women objects, which is in sharp contradiction to the Basic Law.

Human Rights

FFV contradicts articles 1-3 (freedom, equality, brotherhood – prohibition of discrimination – right to life, liberty, and security of the person, as the FFV ties this directly to dress), as well as article 12 (arbitrary interference with personal freedom), and article 18 ([negative] freedom of religion) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Especially article 2 is to be highlighted here:

"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". Finally, article 30 stipulates: „Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein". All this is contravened when limiting the human rights of women and coupling them to the wearing of a particular piece of clothing while referring to freedom of religion.



3. Is it Possible to Ban Full Face Veils when Donned Voluntarily?

As for voluntary veiling, it is to be noted in principle that there are women who do not perceive veiling as being forced upon them because it has been part of their traditions within their personal environment for a long time. The underlying image of woman as sinful and of diminished value has been internalized since childhood and, for the most part, is no longer taken into account.

The argument stating that women are always wearing FFV voluntarily is to be disputed. Very often, their social environment (people in their neighborhood, their mosque community, their peer group, or family) exerts pressure on them. This could include psychological terror and physical violence, such as setting their hair on fire or spitting on them in the streets, along with threats that they would end up in hell or be shunned by their families.

In the following quote, even Judith Butler, professor for Gender Studies, confirms indirectly that young women may be subjected to such pressure: "It (the burka) symbolized that a woman is modest [sic!], and that she has close ties to her family; but also that she is not exploited by mass culture and proud of her family and community [...] Thus, losing the burka means suffering a certain loss of family ties which should not be supported. Loss of the burka could entail the experience of alienation and forced westernization." Consequently, if women have to face the possibility of being rejected by their families when taking off their FFV, then this constitutes coercion resulting from existential fear.

Evidence that women in general are in complete and voluntary agreement with wearing FFV is often presented by women, mostly converts, who attest to wearing their FFV based on self-determination. This private desire to live according to biologist and sexist ideas should be recognized and categorized as such – not re-interpreted as defending individual freedom, tolerance and cultural openness, or even as anti-racist resistance. Actually, wearing the FFV means the factual submission to one of the most powerful expressions of patriarchal suppression and control, wanting to be regarded as autonomy.

In 1989 already, the French-Algerian historian Mohammed Harbi wrote: "Hiding behind the ingratiation words of the Islamists pretending that the veil were an expression of respect [...] is the will and intention to keep [the woman] in a state of subordination [...] let's not forget that the same people who, in the name of individual freedom, plead for girls to be able to wear the veil in school [...] demand elsewhere that all Muslim women veil themselves and they do not shrink from persecuting those who resist with terror and violence."

Even though such women may personally feel that they are wearing their veil voluntarily this would not at all constitute an argument against a ban on FFV. For even if people said they wanted to be slaves, slavery is prohibited in enlightened societies, and rightfully so.

4. Is It Gratuitous to Ban FFV Since Only Very Few Women Actually Wear It?

In Germany, it is indeed rare to see women wearing FFV. Such scarcity, however, is not an argument for not needing a ban. Fundamental rights are not about quantity of appearance, they are about transporting the quality of a certain image accorded to a human being. Moreover, it is conceivable that the frequency of women wearing FFV will increase as the



influence of Islamism is increasing the world over; in Germany, too, all forms of veiling are becoming more and more prevalent, and the women wearing it are getting younger and younger, right down to girls of kindergarten age.

One of the reasons is the incidence of competition within religious communities involving compliance with religious rules: one pious person is trying to be more devout than the next one and demonstrating their own "orthodoxy" by putting their own behavior on display for all to see. In this way, exaggeration occurs more and more (e.g. demonstrative and frequent praying; putting the veil over shorn hair; veiling even of young girls).

A former Salafist describes such escalation when practicing religious precepts and the pressure exerted upon others as follows: "They [the people] had no way of knowing [...] that fifteen sisters had spurred each other to appear in public with only a viewing slit in their veils [...] Never will I forget when one of these women was tearing into a female student: 'You there, with your student hidjab.' [...] A woman – fully veiled with only a small opening for the eyes – was making fun of a teenage girl because she had covered her hair and neck with only a scarf [...] the girl was reduced to tears".

The majority of pious Muslims consider the FFV as too extreme. The above mentioned example clearly shows that this is not about religiosity, or spirituality, but rather about fundamentalism which must not be tolerated by democratic societies.

5. Are Muslim Women Obligated to Wear a Veil?

In Islam, there is no universally applicable, unconditional law for women to cover themselves. Even in Saudi Arabia, not all women wear a face veil even though they are to cover their bodies. Furthermore, new developments seem to point towards further liberalization in this Arab country.

We (the authors) reject the strict focus on "holy texts"; thus the following description is to be regarded merely as a classification along lines of research into the history of religion with the objective to demonstrate the development of man-made contempt of women.

No commandment requiring a strict veiling of the head or full face veiling can be found in any part of any currently recognized interpretation of the Koran.

Verse 24:31, interpreted as concealment order, is about covering "private parts" and the frontal slit in the ancient Arabic women's garment, because the women were to not show off any adornments worn on their upper bodies. Also, they were to not cross their legs in such a way as to reveal any additional adornments worn underneath their garment. The meaning of such requirements is not easily transported to extend to genitals and breasts since they cannot be heard, not even when moving vigorously.

So, originally this verse was about adornments. Over time, though, the word adornment has been increasingly applied to a woman's body and hair.

Most of all the Hadithe (reports on statements and actions attributed to Muhammad) have contributed authoritatively to the legitimization of regarding women as reproduction property and servants to men. Under the influence of the "puritan" legal doctrine of the Hanbaliya in the 9th century AD, women were eventually secluded in the home by veils and



other confinements. This was legitimized through Hadithe which, however, can be referenced for only that particular time, not before. At that time already, opposition was massive.

The hanbalite theologian Ibn Taimiya (died in 1328), whose ideas have decisively influenced the Wahhabiya (Saudi Arabia), eventually connected the veil to "purity" and demanded Full Face Veiling.

There are millions of pious Muslim women worldwide who do not wear veils. They are less and less regarded as Muslims, even their faithfulness is being put into question. Media, too, carry almost exclusively the image of veiled Muslim women, thereby supporting the Islamist agenda.

6. Does a Ban on Full Face Veils Offend Religious Sensibilities?

Another very popular instrument to remove religious traditions and values, such as FFV, from public debate is the pointing towards "offending religious sensibilities". Here, a very clear question needs to be asked: What are "religious sensibilities"? And what might be the reason for not being permitted to offend them? Are "religious sensibilities" of a higher order than humanistic values?

When debating contents and practices of any religion or ideology, there must not be any exceptional position and no areas declared taboo. Otherwise, the danger arises that such areas might be misused for the purpose of circumventing societal and judicial norms.

Freedom of religion as guaranteed in the constitution must not degenerate to a mere hollow phrase that can be used to open the gates to inhuman and antidemocratic ideas.

7. Does Full Face Veiling Protect Women from the Dictates of Western Beauty Ideals and from Sexualization?

People who speak up against veiling do not at all, as is often implied, concurrently advocate for obsessive notions of beauty or the sexualization of women.

On the contrary: wearing the veil and exaggerated emphasis on a beauty ideal or the degradation of a woman to a sexual object (objectification) are two faces of the same coin. Both sides correspond to the usual, patriarchal classification of women into the categories "Madonna" and "whore".

The beauty craze and fashion dictates do, indeed, take on unacceptable forms. However, there is a grave difference between wearing a FFV and wearing a nose that corresponds to a beauty ideal: fundamentalism has elevated wearing a veil to a religious dogma; deviation is being punished (e.g. rejection, violence). On the other hand, it is possible to evade any beauty ideal or dictates of fashion because the non-religious, non-dogmatic realm affords a person the freedom to choose, to make an individual decision. Also, no-one will be repudiated or killed because they had a nose job.

A woman covered with a religious veil also embodies a beauty ideal: virginal, chaste women are much sought after "status symbols" for the religious male. Match-making



platforms on the internet specifically present veil-wearing women, and there are videos in circulation that portray veiled women as "concealed gracefulness". It is exactly this meaning as a symbol for chastity and virginity that, for some men, could render the veil highly erotic, so it is very popular with clients of prostitutes, where it represents a "tantalizing, sexy" garment. Thus here, too, women are reduced to sexual objects specifically with and by their veils. (Last but not least, it is also entirely possible to be subjected to beauty crazes and fashion dictates underneath the veil.)

Male and female Islamists like to evoke the image of "western women" as walking about "naked". This could be a deliberate exaggeration and an attempt at depicting non-Muslim women as "immoral". This impression, however, could also be a consequence of the veiling culture: those who are not veiled, i.e. not "chaste" or, in current, trivializing terms not "modest", but otherwise clad in clothes that correspond to the prevailing weather are quickly considered "naked".

The struggle for an enlightened sexual culture is, at the same time, a struggle against Abrahamic-patriarchal moral ideas that have declared sexuality a sin and continue to do so. The removal of taboos surrounding the subject of sexuality which is felt to be "immoral" might shock right-wing adherent of Islamic and Christian religions. Among other things, however, the removal of taboos has also cleared the way for talking about abuse and sexualized violence more openly. Full Face Veiling is part of a backward ideology that burdens sexuality with taboos, devaluing it and declaring it dangerous. Thus, it does not represent a solution.

8. Does Full Face Veiling Protect Against Sexual Assault?

Girls and women moving about in public in unencumbered and self-assured ways will often be subjected to constraints, verbally and physically, since their basically normal behavior is felt to be provocative. Sexual desires, for which the girls and women are in no way responsible, are projected onto them. In some societies, the ideology of the patriarchy has already granted so much freedom to misogynists (haters of women) for assaulting that women in general are threatened by sexual violence that could even extend to (sadistic) killing.

Clothing is thereby of no importance as numerous studies have shown – important is only the perpetrator's perception of women. Veiling women does not fight the sources of misogyny; rather it is an expression of that same patriarchal contempt for a woman that is responsible for such assaults.

Veiling separates women into "honorable" and "dishonorable" people; it is closely related to the subject of "violence in the name of honor". A dishonorable woman is a non-covered woman, one who is permanently "tempting" men, either actively or passively ("sisters" are being called upon to veil themselves and feel responsible and sympathetic towards their "brothers"; even mothers are supposed to avoid any figure-hugging garment as soon as their son becomes sexually mature). According to this reasoning women are not only presumed incessantly interested in tempting men but also sexually available at all times. Thus the question arises for the consequences of such ideas for *all* women with regard to sexual assaults. It follows that veiling is not only concerning their male or female advocates but has also consequences for the entire climate of co-existence of women and men in any given society.



According to German law, sexual unavailability does not need to be signaled by wearing an external symbol, such as a veil. Exclusion from public life and attempting to physically neutralizing women by veiling them do not represent a solution. The idea of Full Face Veils contradicts the idea of sexual self-determination and equal rights of the sexes, and represents a setback for what has already been achieved.

9. Does a Ban on Wearing Full Face Veils Exclude Women from Participating in Social Interaction?

The argument that women wearing Full Face Veils would be excluded from participating in social interaction when banning their veil distorts the facts. It is precisely the FFV that renders the simplest forms of socializing impossible, such as a shared meal or having a coffee in the public realm. Interpersonal communication is massively limited since facial expressions or mannerisms are concealed (see also point 1).

FFV is an expression of the idea that the public realm is principally no place for women. The feminine ideal propagated by fundamentalists is a "chaste" woman who is not seen and does not "dishonor" her family. In fundamentalist societies, veiling represents an expedient solution enabling women to leave the house at all, in case it might be necessary, for example, to accompany their husbands.

The argument that the veil affords women the freedom to be active in the public realm and pursue a career is already prevalent in the debates surrounding the hidjab. Following this line of argument now even for advocating FFV is absolutely unacceptable and represents a clever distortion: society is made responsible for indigenizing women. It is no longer the fundamentalists that exclude "their" women from the public realm, but an allegedly anti-religious and islamophobic society.

Hidden behind this pointing out the "danger" of excluding women from social participation is nothing else but the threat to exchange the prison made from cloth for one that is made of concrete. For the above mentioned reasons, the demand directed at fundamentalists thus has to be: women have to have the option to participate in public and societal life also when unveiled.

10. Is a Ban on Full Face Veiling Islamophobic, Homophobic or Racist?

As is well known, there is no such thing as "one homogenous religion of Islam". Rather there exists a multitude of interpretations and real-life varieties. TERRE DES FEMMES explicitly welcomes interpretations of Islam that are concurrent with human rights, e.g. equal rights for men and women. A ban on FFV would mean supporting this kind of Islam and protecting Muslim women from religious fundamentalism.

Criticizing socioreligious practices of Islam is usually rejected by claiming that "Western men and women" could not possibly have a sustainable opinion on Islam, on a religion that is "foreign" to them, and on societies shaped by it. Such a debate does not at all consider that the abrahamic patriarchy and its attributions of gender roles is nothing "foreign" for "Western" women – that even includes veiling. It is only a few decades ago that people in Europe started to fight ideas such as: men as custodians of women (until 1957/59); women regarded as temptresses (whores) on the one hand and as the embodiment of chastity and morality (Madonna) on the other; arranged marriages/forced



marriages; penalization of “fallen girls” who behaved “immorally”, who perhaps got pregnant “outside of marriage”; refusal to help women when they experienced pain while giving birth (original sin); women as reproduction property (marital rape has been prohibited since 1997 only); prohibition of homosexuality, etc.

The accusation of allegedly “anti-Muslim racism” weighs so heavily that even those Muslim women who draw from immediate experience with fundamentalism, who perhaps even have fled from fundamentalist –ruled societies, who, therefore, know exactly whereof they speak, will not get any solidarity from parts of the Left. Accusations of racism immunize the religious Right against criticism. Standing up against ideas and practices that counteract human rights is often denounced as an attack on “minorities” motivated by racism. Although fundamentalists see it differently: religion does not represent an unchangeable, innate characteristic of an individual (as opposed to skin color or gender). Consequently, it can be subject to criticism. Attitude or creed could change, and the resulting behavior can change along with it.

11. Does a Ban on Full Face Veiling Constitute an Expression of (Neo-) Colonialist Patronizing and „Forced Westernization“?

Today, criticizing Islam is considered neo-colonialist patronizing behavior. According to this idea, colonialism is being continued culturally, and “the Islam” is being oppressed or destroyed by “Western ideas” forced upon it. Here, too, criticism is countered by insinuating chauvinist ideas. It is ironic then that left-wing politics of all things would defend the inhuman practice of Full Face Veiling, declaring such human rights violations as “specific to a culture” which have to be tolerated “from the outside”. Such a way of thinking supports the idea that culture was a static phenomenon that is intrinsically tied to a specific “race”, ethnicity or group. The claim that there is any “forced Westernization” taking place follows the assumption of a principal opposition between “East” and “West”, even of a principal difference between people.

Hidden behind the accusation of “(neo) colonialist, patronizing behavior” is an opinion that denies the people from Islamic societies any capability for developing the idea of an enlightened society on their own, since it is claimed that such a society could only have been established or rather imposed upon them through massive “extraneous force”. However, criticism of their religion has already been practiced since medieval times by Muslim thinkers as well. Their ideas later influenced European philosophers. In many Muslim countries there is also a women’s movement fighting for equal rights for men and women and for de-veiling. One such women’s movement developed already in 1925 in Egypt: in 1923, Huda Scha’arawi (d. in 1947) took off her veil in public, and many other Muslim women followed her example. Muslim men, such as the Egyptian Qasim Amin (d. in 1908) were of the opinion that the practice of veiling was a testimony to men being afraid of their own sexual instincts. They also held that those who put veils on women regarded men as weaklings, and the veil was considered an obstacle to progress and equality.

This process of de-veiling was disrupted by the rise of fundamentalism first in Iran, then in Saudi Arabia. Fundamentalism with its propagated perception of enlightenment as “Westernization”, actually conjures up an image of excess foreign infiltration with “culturally alien”, “unislamic” ideas – an image that is undistinguishable from theories held by the extreme Right. The non-veiled (Muslim) woman has been stylized a “Western”



woman, as the essence of the much hated modern times and of so touted Western opposition to Islam. In turn, veil and FFV became symbols of Islamism.

Another phenomenon demonstrates that painting the picture of “Westernization” does not work: the ideas and demands represented by Christian fundamentalists in “the West” are the same as those of Islamists, e.g. when it comes to the issue of evolution versus creationism. Thus, the conflict arises less between the so-called “West” and “Islam”, it is much more separating secular, enlightened, liberal tendencies from the Religious Right of any stripe.

12. Who Demands the Right to Full Face Veiling?

FFV – as we said before – is the extreme manifestation of males controlling women, controlling their bodies, as the woman is considered reproduction property. Women are defined solely by their sexuality and regarded as temptresses, always ready to seduce men to committing severe sins.

Thus, all forms of FFV are an expression of a patriarchal, religious fundamentalism. On the other hand, there are also other forces that support the right to Full Face Veiling, such as:

- Devotees of a variant of feminism for whom the issues of „culture, identity, language, and ‚minorities‘ ” have become the inward-looking focal point of political theory; those who apparently notice fundamentalism only from their privileged vantage point and do not accord any importance to very specific experiences involving fundamentalism.
- People who play up Islamist movements to be freedom fighting movements despite their repressive nature, for whom Islamism is nothing but a consequence of imperialism and neo-colonialism.
- Political forces who firmly believe that according equal legal status to Islam would actually establish justice, whereas so far, they have mainly supported the „noisy“, extremely conservative and partially nationalist Islam that is organized in associations and brotherhoods.
- Religious forces that desire more importance and visibility of their own Christian religion; that consider conservative Islam an ally in the fight for their own special privileges, and who actively participate in pushing back secular realms.
- People who want to protect a group that they have identified as an oppressed and racially persecuted minority. In principle, this would be a good idea! However, the following has to be taken into account: refugees and/or Muslims do not represent a homogenous group; they are individuals and should be seen and protected as such. German “natives”, too, can be Muslims – Islam is not a “characteristic” of “foreign” ethnicities. Moreover, Islam is not a minority religion; in this country it is neither oppressed nor banned. In recent years, millions of public funds have been invested in the establishment of university departments teaching Islamic Theology.

13. Is Tolerating Full Face Veiling an Expression of an Open, Pluralistic, Multicultural Society?

Multiculturalism can only work if a society, marked by plurality, is rooted in a common ground for different cultures to live together in harmony – based on the Constitution and human rights. On this basis, plurality has to be negotiated, whereby such plurality must not fall short of any human rights achievements or an enlightened perception of humanity.



An open, many-faceted society is also represented by public spaces without any religious connotations (court houses, schools, public authorities). Those who advocate for the removal of such public realms of religious neutrality are forgetting that they do not represent discrimination, but rather religious freedom, both in the negative and in the positive sense. Only secularization has made democracy and religious freedom possible, and religious plurality along with it.

Originally, the idea of multiculturalism meant culture in all its forms. The objective had been to expand people's horizons in terms of thinking and acting, of mutual cultural enrichment. In recent decades, however, multicultural politics has increasingly focused only on "religion" as a cultural building block. The result: a multiculturalism that tolerates almost anything, the existence of cultures/religions in parallel spheres that excludes any "meddling" on principle, denouncing such intervention as racist or homophobic, even when human rights are being violated.

It is no coincidence that precisely fundamentalists welcome such interpretation of multiculturalism as a model of „tolerance“, since here they find the freedom to push their own interpretation of religion through. In this anything-goes-multiculturalism, religious justice is supposed to be administered as well. In England, the results of this policy are already apparent: there is no education of Muslim women in terms of their democratic rights; rather they are coerced into using the religious courts instead of the "secular" ones.

14. Why are Education and "Successful Integration" not enough to Counteract Religious Fundamentalism?

Currently, "successful integration" means that only minimal requirements have to have been met by people migrating or having to escape to Germany from elsewhere: the local language has to be learned and they have to be self-sufficient. Any further-reaching idea involving information and training about what it means to live in a value system that holds universal human rights and freedom of the individual as the ideal and the objective of any political evolution, has been systematically discredited in recent years as chauvinist patronizing attitude and forced assimilation. This is despite the fact that leftist politics along with the 68'ers had fought for and won such values against "the repressive constraints controlled by black-robed academics".

It should be borne in mind that it is only a historical coincidence and not a sign of supremacy that human rights could have developed thus far in the so-called "West" – historically speaking it could have happened in an exactly reversed way: throughout the middle ages, the "Islamic world" had been more progressive and informed than the "Christian world". Human rights are good values because they correspond to the basic needs of all people (safeguarding also the right to freely follow any religion), and not because they are "Western" values.

In fact, values of the enlightenment are, on the one hand, practiced in daily life in Europe, yet they are not consciously considered as such. It would be high time to become aware of these values and their historical development, and to teach them in schools, too. Even today, values are being taught only in currently widely different religious study courses. Instead and at long last, credible steps need to be taken for the establishment of integrative ethics and values courses that teach possibly common values and ways to



peacefully argue with each other to *all* children, even if such courses went against the wishes of the churches.

In addition, the subject of Islam in conjunction with the issue of integration has moved to the fore since about the end of the nineties. Ever since, it is no longer about the integration of people and individuals of various backgrounds but rather about the integration of a religion along with the purportedly homogenous group that is supposed to have sprung from it. More and more, clerical and other religious powers deemed "experts" have become responsible for integration policy. Thereby it is often overlooked that these stakeholders do not act in the interest of the society. They act for the benefit of their own religious interests, such as the maintenance of their special religious privileges (as, for example, stipulated in the German Anti-Discrimination Act and in the Labor Law).

Any attempt at education with a view to religion will be successful only if representatives and affiliates of a religion would permit it. It will vanish into thin air when there are any chauvinistic claims that separate people into believers and non-believers, and that deem living by a specific religion an aspiration common to all people.

Many Muslims have long since realized that in Germany, too, they can live their religion much better without any churchlike Islamic associations or clerics trying to patronize them.

15. Will a Ban Only Result in More Women Wearing Full Face Veils?

There is a wide-spread fear that banning FFV would lead to radicalization resulting in an increased frequency of women wearing it. In recent years, this constant apprehension involving the possibility of radicalization (along with the fear of being labeled "discriminatory and racist") has resulted in more and more concessions to the religiously conservative associations who, in part, tolerate fundamentalist ideas. Over time, however, it has become apparent that the representatives of religious fundamentalism would neither be satisfied by accommodations made to them, nor have they become less demanding.

By banning FFV, an open society that is characterized by enlightenment would send a signal to the effect that religious fundamentalism and chauvinism is not tolerated there and will be confronted. A ban would lend a helpful tool to those who have to defend themselves against forced FFV, as FFV is enforced mainly by pressure. Where there is no ban, fundamentalists feel free to increase this pressure. Without a ban, very soon there will be a lot more Full Face Veiling in Germany. Case in point: before the revolution in 1979, in Iran, too, wearing the veil had been demanded as a "right" – and afterwards, the women were violently forced to wear it by guardians of public morals.



Conclusion

Those who plead for FFV as a purported expression of religious freedom and an open society, turn a blind eye to its misogynist (women hating) and fundamentalist meaning. Accepting FFV means refusing any solidarity with those women who are forced to live concealed by Full Face Veils, who have to live in fear of sanctions up to and including death if they refuse to comply. The increasing spread of Islamism, the immigration of people from Islamic countries that have fallen victim to such religious fundamentalism, all these require clear messages. The “weaker” a society presents itself – whereby tolerance, unfortunately, is also considered a “weakness” by the extreme right and by fundamentalists – the more this encourages those who only know of the principle “might makes right” and the authority derived from it. There must not be any tolerance accorded to intolerance.

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