**Fashion Police Gone Wrong**

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There is a country that takes fashion police to another level. In fact, there are several countries that do this: banning certain articles of clothing from view in public. Some may believe that a government which would invade the rights of an individual to the extent that it would try to control what someone wears must be the sort of government that Orwell always feared. 'It must be a country far away from Western influence,' some may believe. This is often true. But not always.

History has shown that this invasion of one's freedom is not a new thing within many Western countries, as seen with Britain's impressment of American ships, the infamous "Intolerable Acts", and the silencing of political opposition under the Alien and Sedition Acts of the late 1700s. However, what could push lawmakers to support a control of one's clothing? One answer is a variation of the same thing that has incentivized a large portion of invasions of privacy by governments: war.

Soon after the fall of the Twin Towers on the infamous date of September 11, 2001, people scrambled for answers as to who to blame. Conveniently, there was someone who took responsibility for his monstrous actions: Osama bin Laden. He was from a “foreign” place that average Americans previously did not have to worry about, which is in a region now called the Middle East. As a result of the attacks, people blamed one thing that differentiated themselves from people in this region: religion. When Osama bin Laden – and al-Quaeda, the terrorist organization he created – took responsibility for 9/11, he linked the justification of his terrorism with the religion of Islam.

Since muslims were a small percent of the U.S. population, meaning that most Americans did not know many muslims, it was easy to spread the idea that most terrorism was motivated by Islam, that Islam was a religion of pure, barbaric hatred and violence. Portions of the Quran were quoted by many non-muslims in the media to prove that Islam was a religion of violence. Soon, terrorism was often associated with being “muslim” – Non-muslim peoples are often mistaken to be muslim, because of those who do not understand that being “brown” or Middle Eastern does not mean that one is muslim. For example, Sikhs are often mistaken to be muslim, although they are not.[[1]](#footnote-1) As a result of this association, many muslims have faced prejudice on account of their religious (and sometimes racial) background.

This is especially the case for women who wear religious veils. For example, as one British woman – who wishes to remain anonymous – walked to pick her children up from school, several women walked up to her and began to ask her about her hijab. Then, they “pulled my headscarf off and started punching and kicking me,” she said.[[2]](#footnote-2) Another person in the Czech Republic attacked a woman wearing a veil, trying to rip off her hijab, and threatened to cut off her head.[[3]](#footnote-3) On a United Airlines flight, after being denied a can of unopened soda, a man told Ms. Tahera Ahmad that, “You Muslim, you need to shut the f\*\*k up... Yes you know you would use it as a weapon so shut the f\*\*k up.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In some places, this discrimination goes so far as making face veils illegal to wear in public. All across Europe and in other countries such as Syria and Tunisia, there has been legislation passed and enforced so that religious veils are banned. [[5]](#footnote-5) Of course, at least in Western Europe, there is little opposition to these laws by public opinion, as shown by poll results that state that the “French public overwhelmingly endorses this measure; 82% approve of a ban on Muslim women wearing full veils in public, including schools, hospitals and government offices, while just 17% disapprove. Majorities in Germany (71%), Britain (62%) and Spain (59%) would also support a similar ban in their own countries.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Oddly enough, the polls also show that the country that faced arguably the biggest and most influential terrorist attack in the recent history of western world, the United States, did not have as widespread support of a public religious headscarf ban, with 28 percent in support of a ban.

Throughout centuries, we have seen large amounts of the oppression of simple rights we take for granted today. Some wonder, 'How could so many people support these heinous acts against those who are only trying to live day by day and live normal lives'. In response, it is thought, 'I would hate to be on the wrong side of history'. For something as simple as allowing people to wear their religious attire, please do not go on the wrong side of the history books.

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