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## 'It's just against our Constitution': Muslim women respond to Quebec's Bill 62 | CBC Radio

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Bill 62 is now the law in Quebec, banning facial coverings for anyone giving or receiving public services in the province — this includes in places of business, hospitals, libraries, even on public transit.

"We are in a free and democratic society. You speak to me, I should see your face, and you should see mine. It's as simple as that," Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard tells reporters.

The bill is described as a means to social harmony. But some feel the law that passed on Wednesday is sowing further seeds of division.



Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard says Bill 62 represents a principle shared by the 'vast majority of Canadians.' (Jacques Boissinot/Canadian Press)

Quebec's Justice Minister Stéphanie Vallée points out the law isn't targeting Muslim women specifically — the bill also applies to balaclavas and sunglasses.

But many Muslim women say they feel this law targets Muslim women, including montrealer **Zayneb Mohammed** who wears a niqab.

"No matter what Stéphanie Vallée says, it is a law that is only against Muslims," she tells *The Current's* Friday host Susan Ormiston.

For Mohammed, wearing a niqab means enduring hateful comments in public.

"Like, go back to your country, we're not in Afghanistan. I also had, you know, like you're a cockroach ... you are just taking over our country."

Ontario woman, Zunera Ishaq, won the right to wear a niqab during her citizenship ceremony.  
(Patrick Doyle/Canadian Press)

And as a person who relies on public transit, she says this new law will affect her everyday life.

"It will just stop me from going out. I will not have the possibility to go out and do whatever I want to do."

- **Related:** ['I should see your face, and you should see mine,' Quebec premier says of new religious neutrality law](#)

**Idil Issa** tells Ormiston the passing of Bill 62 has her feeling consternation.

"Whenever the rights of women, fellow women, are restricted, I always feel a pit in the bottom of my stomach," she says.

Issa is a board member of [Fondation Paroles de Femmes](#), an organization that promotes the voices of racialized women.

"The idea that now women who choose to veil their faces from religious conviction will be unable to access vital services is just unbelievable to me."

She argues Bill 62 is anti-feminist because it excludes "a segment of the population from society based on their personal belief."

"In Canada we have freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. It's just against our Constitution," Issa says.

- **Related:** [What you need to know about Quebec's religious neutrality legislation](#)

But not everyone is against the bill.

"I'm actually ok with the ban of the face veil because I don't even think that it's a religious thing rooted in the Qur'an or the Islamic teachings," says comedian [Eman El-Husseini](#), who grew up in Montreal but now lives in New York City.

"I actually feel like the niqab, you know, is sacrilegious to Islam."

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El-Husseini argues Bill 62 bill does not target Muslims but is enacted to emphasize "the importance of people exposing who they are."

"I know that everybody wants to make this into a Muslim issue, but the niqab is not Islamic, in my opinion."

She agrees that the law will allow people to live in harmony because she says there will be more human contact, more people talking to each other.

"If you're wearing a niqab, I feel like you're shutting yourself out of communicating with everyday people. You're just making such an extremist statement."

**Listen to the full segment above.**

*This segment was produced by The Current's Ines Colabrese, Karin Marley and Montreal network producer Susan McKenzie.*