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Niqab bans in Canada

by **sppinch** December 14, 2011

After France passed legislation in 2004 banning hijabs or headscarves in schools and th in 2011 banning the burqua (a full body covering revealing only a woman's eyes) from being worn in any public space, discussion amongst activists has come to a boil about wl is reasonable accommodation in Canada.

The latest example is Conservative Minister Jason Kenney's new provision that a niqab veil that covers a woman's face) **cannot be worn when new immigrants are being sworn i as citizens**. This isn't the first time Canada has decided women should not wear the niqa

Bill 94

In Quebec, it is **legally required that women must remove their niqab** when dealing with t government, whether a woman is accessing services or working for them. The bill has garnered criticism among wearers of the niqab and feminists alike who say that banning niqab takes away the agency and choice from the woman. The bill has been attributed w increasing intolerance in Quebec towards women who wear the niqab.

N.S and the niqab

Currently the Supreme Court is considering **whether women should have to remove thei niqabs** to testify. N.S, a Muslim woman in her 30s, alleges that she was sexually abused a child by her uncle and cousins. She refused to remove her niqab to testify, a choice that

was upheld as her right under the Charter by the lower Ontario courts. However, lawyers argue that they cannot properly read a person without seeing their face thus obstructing justice. The Supreme Court decision could force women who wear the niqab to remove them while on the stand, adding more barriers to women of colour reporting domestic abuse, sexual violence and other crimes.

Consequences of bans

The biggest argument for banning facial veils is that they conceal identities and oppress women. Really, what these bans do is refuse reasonable accommodation to specific wor based on their cultural and religious beliefs while stripping them of their fundamental abi to choose what they want to wear. Many women happily show their faces to any government officials who wish to verify their identity, but balk at the notion that the government can impose on women what articles of clothing are oppressive and make th illegal.

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