



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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### Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

## **Written statement\* submitted by The Institute for Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



# **The Violation of the Rights of Muslim Women in France**

## **Introduction**

The violation of the rights of Muslim women in France is undoubtedly a serious and complex issue that requires careful attention and examination. In recent years, observations indicate that certain actions and policies in France have directly or indirectly led to the infringement of the rights of Muslim women.

French lawmakers voted to ban women and girls from wearing hijab while playing sports showing the world once again that when it comes to further politicizing, targeting, and policing European Muslim women, our clothing choices, and bodies, France is in a league of its own. The French Senate voted 160 to 143 in favor of the ban on wearing the hijab in sports competitions. [1]

Also, despite all the protests against Muslim women, we witnessed that France's top administrative court ruled against a collective of Muslim female soccer players in their case against the French Football Federation (FFF), upholding a ban on the Islamic headscarf, or hijab, during games. The Council of State ruled that "the ban enacted by the FFF is suitable and proportionate," said the court in a statement. "Sports federations, in charge of proper functioning of the public service whose management is entrusted to them, may impose on their players an obligation of outfit neutrality during competitions," the statement read. [2]

It seems France's ban on hijab in women's football is an act of state racism. It is not about keeping sports equal. It is about denying access to those who aren't deemed 'French' enough. The decision effectively strips hijab-wearing women from all opportunities to participate in the beautiful game - playing, coaching, officiating, and participating at any level of football in France.

But Les Hijabeuses, a collective of young women in France challenging the FFF's discriminatory policy, have argued that several non-Muslim players sign crosses before going out on the pitch and have tattoos of Christian figures and symbols that are in plain sight. The rule is, therefore, not being evenly applied. It is primarily being enforced on Brown and Black women who are Muslim and wear headscarves. [3]

One key point here is that some measures have created a sense of inflexibility and non-acceptance towards the beliefs and religious practices of Muslims. Among these measures, the prohibition of wearing the hijab in certain places and situations stands out. This prohibition has placed Muslim women under pressure and deprived them of the right to choose. Therefore, these measures seem to be in contradiction with the principles of human rights and personal and religious freedoms.

## **Recommendation**

Suggestions for resolving this issue are presented to France:

1. **Continuous Dialogue:** The French government and the Human Rights Council should actively engage in discussions and dialogue with representatives of the Muslim community in the country to find common and acceptable solutions.
2. **Respect for Cultural and Religious Diversity:** The French government should respect the cultural and religious diversity of the local community and ensure that its decisions and policies guarantee the rights of all segments of society.
3. **Education and Training:** Ensuring the existence of educational programs that promote correct understanding and coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims and propagate non-discrimination.
4. **Law Reforms:** Laws that directly or indirectly lead to the violation of the rights of Muslim women need to be reformed and improved to prevent conflicts with human rights principles.

5. Monitoring Law Enforcement: Establishing independent mechanisms to monitor the enforcement of laws and prevent discrimination in their implementation.
6. Awareness Campaigns: Organizing awareness and educational programs to increase people's knowledge about women's rights and the importance of achieving gender equality.
7. Transparency: The French government should provide transparent and accurate information about actions and policies affecting the rights of Muslim women for public assessment and scrutiny.
8. Support for Muslim Women: Legal and social support should be extended to Muslim women to safeguard their rights and create conducive conditions for their active participation in social and economic life.
9. Independent Investigations: Conduct independent investigations by human rights organizations and civil society institutions to examine violations of the rights of Muslim women and offer effective recommendations for addressing these issues.
10. Encourage Participation: Encourage the participation of Muslim women in decision-making processes and policies at various levels, including those related to women's rights.
11. Social Media: Utilize social media and online platforms for awareness-raising and improving public discourse on the importance of safeguarding the rights of Muslim women.
12. Access to Services: Ensure easy access to healthcare, education, legal, and social services for Muslim women to guarantee their fundamental rights.
13. International Collaboration: Foster collaboration with international human rights organizations and coalitions to prevent violations of the rights of Muslim women and ensure their rights.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, resolving this issue requires collective efforts and constructive interaction among the government, civil society, human rights organizations, and other relevant entities to seriously pursue equality and make significant improvements in the situation of Muslim women in France.

By implementing these suggestions, the possibility of resolving some of the issues and violations of the rights of Muslim women in France will be enhanced.

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[1] <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/05/opinions/france-hijab-ban-sports-aziz/index.html>

[2] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/top-french-court-upholds-ban-wearing-hijab-during-soccer-games-2023-06-29/>

[3] [https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/france-football-hijab-women-ban-state-racism\(11july2023\)](https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/france-football-hijab-women-ban-state-racism(11july2023))