



Comment by  
**PAIGHAM  
MUSTAFA**

This article  
instigated the  
Sunday Herald  
news item on  
22 Oct 2017

## Banning the burka. Good sense or Islamophobia?

**A**ustria has become the latest country to ban the burka, the head to foot covering often with only a mesh screen or small opening to see through.

Any woman who now wears it in public will be forced to remove it or face a fixed penalty of around £130.

Austria is the latest country to implement such a ban. France and Belgium introduced a ban in 2011. The Netherlands has approved a partial ban on the veil and Bulgaria implemented a full ban in 2016.

But in modern, multi-cultural Britain, should we adopt a similar ban? Or, in a liberal society, would that simply be Islamophobic?

However, there is nothing in the Quran that condones the burka, and it can also be a divisive issue even amongst Muslims.

Imams too differ in opinion, depending on which country and to which congregation they are preaching.

But the fact that the majority of Muslim women around the world don't wear the burka says it all. While many will agree that some sort of head covering is a sign of modesty, most women don't like the burka and only those who are unfamiliar with the Quran insist that it is proper Islamic dress.

Speaking personally, I sincerely hope that Britain also introduces a ban similar to that in Austria. I know that many Muslim women here would benefit if the UK were to outlaw this peculiar and oppressive form of clothing.

Sadly, it has wrongly become a symbol of Islam. Nothing could be further from the truth.

To hide the body in a tent-like gown and obscure facial features is as bizarre as it is cruel, especially when women are indoctrinated to falsely believe it is God who decrees such a shroud.

The real reason has more to do with the fact that their men are insecure and harbour a deep distrust of their women. Imposing the veil suggests that men suspect their mothers, sisters, wives and daughters of being potential traitors. Do they really think that their women are inherently corrupt or easily seduced?

How can such Muslim men meet other women who are not veiled and treat them respectfully, and not accord the same respectful treatment to the women in their own families? The Quran forbids groundless suspicion of any description. Why should only women be presumed guilty

without evidence?

Pakistan, the only state born out of Islam, as opposed to an ethnic group's desire for self determination, never condoned the burka. But in rural villages some women wore it because their men insisted and it then became part of their culture.

However, in Pakistani cities, you won't see many burqas or hijabs. Most educated and cultured women won't be subdued into such a deception.

In Iran, in the early 1980s, Imam Khomeini first insisted that women must wear the veil and chador. But in response to large demonstrations by women, he modified his position and agreed that while the chador is not obligatory, modest dress should be.

In the 1920s Mustafa Kamal Ataturk encouraged Turkish women to give up the veil and in 1958 Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt declined to capitulate to the Muslim Brotherhood's demand for the veil to be made mandatory. He said he would not descend to the days of ignorance.

To wear the hijab (a scarf-like head-covering) or the veil (face-covering) and the burka (total body-covering) is not an obligation found in the Quran.

In fact, there are many instances in the Quran that show how openly men and women mixed with each other, while maintaining their integrity and the values that the Quran bids all believers to apply.

For example, when Moses arrived tired and hungry in Midyan he chatted to two sisters and helped them get water from a well. One of the girls was so taken with him that she recommended him to her father for work and ended up marrying him.

In Chapter 33:52 the Quran says: "Beyond the categories described to you, you are not permitted to marry any other women...no matter how much you desire them because of their beauty." How can a man desire a woman because of her beauty if he has never seen her beauty, because she is covered from head to toe in a black tent?

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned in the Quran and chosen as a role model above all women. In one passage, she returns to her family after a long absence and they immediately recognise her. She plainly wasn't wearing a niqab or any other covering to veil her face!

Only one verse in chapter 71:7, does the Quran speak about people completely covering themselves, but only those who want to hide and wish

to avoid the truth.

For example, in Pakistani cities like Lahore and Karachi, prostitutes dress in burkas to ply their trade by the roadside, even in daylight hours – but only to avoid recognition.

There is no clothing that can be termed as 'Islamic' or 'unIslamic'. The Quran does not promote any particular traditional or tribal clothing and allows freedom of dress in line with modesty for both for women and men.

The reality is that many difficulties are caused from wearing a full veil or burka. It creates barriers, segregates people and causes mistrust. People need to be able to see faces when speaking to each other.

It isolates such women from the wider community and effectively keeps them out of the workplace. It is not an Islamic observance but a form of male control. Quite simply, it is wrong.

Banning the burka would not therefore be Islamophobic because it doesn't conflict with the Quran. Instead, such a ban would be following Quaranic teaching because the Quran gives great importance to equality between the sexes.

Both men and women are given the same instructions to show respect to the other sex and this is clearly stated in verses 24:30-31.

Banning the burka would promote both good social and Islamic values, giving proper respect and value to all women.

Removing the burka would remove not only visible obstacles but the unseen social obstacles that we shouldn't sweep under the carpet. Women not only deserve equal respect, it is their right, as enshrined in the Quran.

Banning the burka would be a step in the right direction towards inclusion and equality.

**Paigham Mustafa** has been researching and studying the Quran since 1988 and spent over two years writing his book, *The Quran: God's message to mankind*, published in 2016. A review of the book received extensive coverage in the Sunday Times, Scotland and an interview of the author was published in the Sunday Herald, Scotland. Other national and regional press also covered the launch of the book.

Mustafa has also written for the National and the Sunday Herald and was interviewed twice by BBC Radio Scotland. He has also given a presentation at a speaking event at Waterstones Bookstore. You can order the book direct from [www.signat.co.uk](http://www.signat.co.uk).

# Scots Muslim writer who lives under fatwa calls for burka ban

Peter Swindon, Senior reporter

This Sunday Herald news item was instigated by Paigham Mustafa's article on the Burka ban.

## PAIGHAM MUSTAFA

Author: The Quran, God's message to mankind: New Millennium Exposition. [www.signat.co.uk](http://www.signat.co.uk)



**A** PROMINENT Scottish Muslim writer who has received death threats for repeatedly criticising Islamic doctrine wants women to be banned from wearing the "oppressive" burqa. Paigham Mustafa, who claims to be living under a fatwa issued in 2001 by Glasgow imams after he published articles questioning mosque teachings, made the controversial comments after Austria became the latest European country to prohibit face veils in public.

From the beginning of this month Muslim women in Austria who wear a veil which covers the face will be fined around £130. Similar restrictions are in place in France, Belgium, Bulgaria and the Netherlands. And last week Quebec became the first North American province to ban citizens from wearing face coverings in public places.

Mustafa insists burqas are "bizarre and cruel" and said wearing it is not an obligation in the Koran.

Prominent Scots Muslim women have hit back saying it is up to women to decide how they dress.

Mustafa said: "I sincerely hope that Britain also introduces a ban similar to that in Austria. I know that many Muslim women here would benefit if the UK were to outlaw this peculiar

and oppressive form of clothing. Sadly, it has wrongly become a symbol of Islam. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"To hide the body in a tent-like gown and obscure facial features is as bizarre as it is cruel, especially when women are indoctrinated to falsely believe it is God who decrees such a shroud.

"The real reason has more to do with the fact that their men are insecure and harbour a deep distrust of their women."

Robina Qureshi, director of refugee charity Positive Action in Housing, said: "What a woman wears is a woman's choice, that's her business. So long as that is the case, who is anyone to say how anyone else should or should not dress."

Mustafa also drew criticism from Glasgow Councillor Soryia Siddique, who chooses to wear a hijab – a headscarf worn by Muslim women which does not cover the face.

She said: "How people from any faith or none choose to dress is their own choice. Surely in the 21st century how women choose to dress is their inclusive freedom of choice? Men dictating or debating how women should, can or cannot dress can be viewed as oppressive...let women make their own choices, after all there is no compulsion in religion, according

to Islam."

Liaquat Ali of the Muslim Council of Scotland insisted women should be allowed to wear a veil "if they freely decide to do so".

He said MCS recognises "there are different theological approaches... some consider this to be essential part of their faith, while others do not".

### Only one verse in Koran mentions women covering up, according to Mustafa.

Paigham Mustafa argues the wearing of a face veil is not an obligation found in the Koran. He said there is only one verse in the Koran – in chapter 71:7 – that mentions people completely covering themselves, but he said they are "only those who want to hide and wish to avoid the truth".

Mustafa said: "In Pakistani cities like Lahore and Karachi, prostitutes dress in burqas to ply their trade by the roadside, even in daylight hours – but only to avoid recognition.

"There is no clothing that can be termed as 'Islamic' or 'unIslamic'. The Koran does not promote any particular traditional or tribal clothing and allows freedom of dress in line with modesty for both for women and men."

10 22.10.17 News

# 'Ban the burka' says Scottish Muslim writer living under fatwa

**EXCLUSIVE BY PETER SWINDON**

**A** PROMINENT Scottish Muslim writer who has received death threats for repeatedly criticising Islamic doctrine wants women to be banned from wearing the "oppressive" burka.

Paigham Mustafa, who claims to be living under a fatwa issued in 2001 by Glasgow imams after he published articles questioning mosque teachings, made the controversial comments after Austria became the latest European country to prohibit face veils in public.

From the beginning of this month Muslim women in Austria who wear a veil in public which covers the face will be fined around

£150. Similar restrictions are in place in France, Belgium, Bulgaria and the Netherlands. Last week, Quebec became the first place in North America to ban citizens from wearing face coverings in public places.

Mustafa insists burkas are "bizarre and cruel" and said wearing it is not an obligation in the Koran. Prominent Scots Muslim women have hit back saying it is

## There's only one verse in Koran on covering up'

PAIGHAM Mustafa, left, argues the wearing of a face veil is not an obligation found in the Koran. He said there is only one verse in the Koran - in chapter 71:7 - that mentions people completely covering themselves, but he said they are "only those who want to hide and wish to avoid the truth". Mustafa said: "In Pakistani cities like Lahore and Karachi, prostitutes dress in burkas to ply their trade by the roadside, even in daylight hours - but only to avoid recognition. There is no clothing that can be termed as 'Islamic' or 'un-Islamic'. The Koran does not promote any particular traditional or tribal clothing and allows freedom of dress in line with modesty for both for women and men."



up to women to decide how they dress. Mustafa said: "I sincerely hope that Britain also introduces a ban similar to that in Austria. I know that many Muslim women here would benefit if the UK were to outlaw this peculiar and oppressive form of clothing." "Sadly, it has wrongly become a sym-



**Above inset, Robina Qureshi, director of refugee charity Positive Action in Housing, has criticised Mustafa's stance on burkas**

bol of Islam. Nothing could be further from the truth. To hide the body in a tent-like gown and obscure facial features is as bizarre as it is cruel, especially when women are indoctrinated to falsely believe it is God who decrees such a shroud.

"The real reason has more to do with the fact that their men are insecure and harbour a deep distrust of their women."

Robina Qureshi, director of refugee charity Positive Action in Housing, said: "What a woman wears is a woman's choice, that's her business. So long as that is the case, who is anyone to say how anyone else should or should not dress."

Mustafa also drew criticism from Glasgow councillor Soryia Siddique, who chooses to wear a hijab - a headscarf worn by Muslim women which does not cover the face.

She said: "How people from any faith or none choose to dress is their own choice. Surely in the 21st century how women choose to dress is their inclusive freedom of choice? Men dictating or debating how women should, can or cannot dress can be viewed as oppressive ... let women make their own choices, after all there is no compulsion in religion, according to Islam."

Liaquat Ali of the Muslim Council of Scotland insisted women should be allowed to wear a veil "if they freely decide to do so".

He said MCS recognises "there are different theological approaches ... some consider this to be an essential part of their faith, while others do not".

2018 Willerby Mulberry