

Press Release

Is France's War on the Hijab an Urgent Necessity or Merely an Electoral Card to Gain Votes?!

(Translated)

Marine Le Pen, the National Rally's French presidential candidate, has pushed the issue of banning the Islamic hijab (headscarf) in public spaces back into the political spotlight. She pledged to put a law criminalizing the wearing of the hijab to a national referendum should she reach the Élysée Palace—a move that has sparked debate regarding the measure's constitutionality and feasibility. Le Pen announced on X platform that she would present a "major law to combat Islamist ideologies" to the French people via referendum; this legislation would include several measures she described as robust, among them the criminalization of wearing the Islamic hijab in public spaces.

A heated debate erupted among the public, accompanied by a flurry of media and online discourse between proponents and opponents. Amidst this, CNews published the results of the CSA institute public poll showing that 60 percent of French citizens support the idea of banning the hijab in public spaces. Meanwhile, a campaign spread across TikTok and other social media platforms in which French female influencers wore the hijab to express their rejection of the proposed measure, viewing it as an infringement on freedoms.

For years, the far right has been inciting public sentiment against what it terms an "Islamic invasion," linking the hijab in its rhetoric to extremism and insecurity. It declares war on anything associated with Islam, completely disregarding principles such as religious freedom, personal freedom, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and others.

It is worth noting that the political, economic, health, and security problems France has faced in recent years represent the most formidable challenges in its history. Yet, right-wing electoral platforms do not reflect serious solutions to these issues; instead, they seem intent on waging war against anything associated with Islam—targeting, at times, the abaya; at others, mosques and associations; and at other times, the hijab worn by mothers accompanying students on school trips, and so on!

The deep and real underlying problem is that the far right—through its exclusionary, racist rhetoric—has succeeded to some extent in instilling fear in many people and portraying Islam as a bogeyman poised to claim lives and destroy freedoms. This is compounded by the media's long-standing role in distorting, misleading, and fabricating falsehoods about Islam and Muslims. Indeed, the aforementioned survey revealed that the vast majority of those supporting the ban were older individuals, whereas younger people were less receptive to the proposal. Most young people have interacted with Muslims during their studies and professional lives; they have come to understand how the media handles incidents and are exposed to alternative—and often conflicting—narratives shared on social media platforms.

The Right's declaration of war on the hijab in France at this particular time is an electoral maneuver designed to garner votes and exploit public sensitivities—all after sowing fear and falsehoods among them. In reality, pressing political, economic, and security issues demand far more urgent attention and serious solutions to address the profound challenges facing the French government.

Regrettably, Islam will continue to serve as a convenient scapegoat upon which extremists project their own failures and the inability of their civilization to resolve the successive crises battering them or to halt their downward spiral. They will always continue to shift their efforts on conflicts far removed from the true battlefield, ultimately emerging as the losers in all cases.

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