

Press Release

Kyrgyzstan's Ban on Niqab is a Desperate Attempt of its Secular Regime to Suppress the Rise of the Islamic Identity Amongst its People

Kyrgyzstan has become the latest country in Central Asia to ban the Niqab. This legal measure came into effect on the 1st of February 2025 and violation of this will incur a fine of 20,000 som (\$230). Muslim women's Islamic clothing and men's beards have long been a target of the governments in Central Asia, where the staunchly secular powers fear the growing influence of Islam. Kyrgyz lawmakers have given the flimsy excuse that the ban is needed for security reasons, so people's faces can be seen and individuals identified. But opponents say the ban deprives women of the freedom to dress how they wish.

Although the region is dominated by Muslims, the ban is justified by an amendment to the Religious Sphere Act. This was signed by President Sadyr Japarov on January 21. It does not explicitly mention the niqab, locally known as "parandzha." However, it bans *"clothing that makes it impossible to identify a person in government offices and public places,"* a euphemism used in Central Asia to describe the niqab. Face coverings that are required as part of work or worn for medical reasons are exempt.

In a curious contradiction that gave a pretense of support for Islam, lawmakers and government-backed religious figures insisted the ban does not extend to the hijab, the Islamic head scarf that covers the hair and neck but leaves the face visible. Kyrgyzstan is the only country in Central Asia that allows hijabs in schools and offices. Nurlanbek Shakiev, the parliament speaker told lawmakers when he presented the bill last year: *"There will be no restrictions on the head scarf. Our mothers and sisters have always worn headscarves as part of our traditions and religion."*

It is clear that without the Khilafah there can be no security of Islamic expression and anything can be justified, even the Haram. The idea that there is some kind of privilege - that Muslim women can wear Hijab while other Muslim sisters are forced to abandon their religious convictions regarding wearing the Niqab - is not a positive point to celebrate. Islam is under attack and that affects all Muslims. Opposition leaders who want to advocate for Muslim women's "freedom" to wear what they want is also no comfort. Muslim women do not need intervention from these liberal freedoms that originate from the same secular basis and system that banned them from dressing according to their religious beliefs. There is never a positive outcome for the implementation of Islamic rules when the enemies of Islam come with their false women's empowerment agendas.

The rise of women wearing the niqab in the Central Asian Republics is a visual representation of the increased attachment of Muslim women to their Islamic identity which the secular rulers of these regimes are desperately trying to suppress in order to prevent the birth of the Islamic political system, the Khilafah, in the region. In 2023, lawmaker Sharapatkan Mazhitova spearheaded a new campaign against the niqab after visiting the southern region of Osh, where she said she was shocked by how many local women were donning the all-encompassing niqab, saying, *"Every fourth woman in Osh wears the niqab, and their number is growing by the day."*

The honour of the Muslim woman, her Islamic dress and all her Islamic obligations will not be protected fully under any system other than the Islamic rule of the System of Allah (swt), the Khilafah based on the method of the Prophethood. The Prophet (saw), as leader of the first Islamic state in Madinah demonstrated to the Muslims and all people the weight of safeguarding the dignity of the Muslim woman and the importance of her Islamic dress when he expelled the tribe of Banu Qaynuqa due to their abuse of a single Muslim woman and the violation of her Islamic dress. So, we call our Muslim sisters in the Central Asian Republics and across the world to keep firm to all their Islamic beliefs and to join the work of Hizb ut Tahrir to establish this noble Khilafah state with urgency under which they will be provided full protection and support to practice their Deen in its entirety.

Women's Section

in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir

