



September 2011

Human Rights Council.  
18<sup>th</sup> Session.  
Agenda item. UPR Country – Belgium

Individual Oral Statement- Islamic Human Rights Commission

Mr. President,

The Islamic Human Rights Commission would like to highlight their concern regarding the discrimination Muslim women living in Belgium who choose to wear the headscarf and those who choose to wear the face-veil are experiencing. Both these garments are of religious nature.

Under the Belgian governments strict regime Muslim girls are banned from wearing the headscarf in schools, this can lead to adverse affects such as increased educational exclusion and social deprivation. According to Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, education must be encouraged and made accessible on the basis of equal opportunity.

Furthermore, the Belgian government seeks to punish anyone caught in public places wearing the face-veil by fines up to 30 Euros and/or up to seven days imprisonment. Such anti-democratic rulings are a violation of the fundamental right to Freedom of religion which is provided for in Article 19 of the Belgian constitution. The prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion is provided for in Articles 10 and 11 of the Constitution. The European Court of Human Rights, has consistently stated that this right is at the core of a democratic society, claiming that '[i]t is, in its religious dimension, one of the most vital elements that go to make up the identity of believers and their conception of life,'. It is the Belgian government's primary responsibility to maintain and comply with human rights standards and laws that they are a party to.

The Islamic Human Rights Commission urges the Belgium government to provide their citizens the right to practice their religion without government interference or approval, as religion is a personal choice and is not something to be controlled by second parties. The government of Belgium must take measures to abolish all unreasonable laws against women, providing them with respect and protection from discrimination, in order to safeguard their human rights.

Thank you Mr. President