



Know Your Rights: Wearing a Hijab

Muslim women are a fast-growing segment of the United States population that reflects the breadth of this country's racial, ethnic, and multicultural heritage. Muslim women who wear a hijab in accordance with their religious beliefs have the right to not only practice their religion, but also to be treated equally and without discrimination or harassment.

Women have the right to wear a headscarf or hijab at:

Workplace

Employers must provide a reasonable accommodation for you to wear a hijab or headscarf. An accommodation is not reasonable if it will cause your employer an undue hardship (compromising safety or imposing a major cost to the employer, for example).

Public Accommodations and Facilities

"Public accommodations" cannot turn you away due to your hijab or headscarf, or demand that you remove them to obtain goods and services. Public accommodations include, but are not limited to, such places as restaurants, hotels, concert halls and arenas. In addition, public facilities like libraries or hospitals must allow you to wear your hijab.

State Identification Card or Driver's License

The state of Rhode Island allows a person who refuses to remove headgear due to sincere religious convictions to be photographed with the hijab or headscarf in place.

Airport

If asked to remove your hijab, you should assert your right to wear it before going through airport security screening. Airport security officers may nonetheless request additional screening. If a TSA officer insists on removing your hijab, you have a right to ask that it be done in a private area and that a person of your gender conduct it.

Public Schools

School officials would probably be required to permit you to wear your headscarf or hijab in school, particularly if it allows students to wear head coverings of any other sort. School officials also have an obligation to take action to stop repeated religiously based harassment by other students.

The Courtroom

Forty years ago, the Rhode Island Supreme Court held that individuals have the right to wear a prayer cap in the courtroom, notwithstanding a general ban on wearing hats in court. The same rationale should apply to the wearing of a hijab.

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