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## **Lithuanian MP wants ban on wearing burqas in public, activists disagree**

***As Lithuania prepares to receive several hundred refugees, Artūras Paulauskas, chairman of the Lithuanian Seimas National Security and Defense Committee, suggests introducing a ban for wearing Muslim burqas in public, saying that they might pose threat to national security.***

DELFI (13.08.2015) - <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/society/lithuanian-mp-wants-ban-on-wearing-burqas-in-public-activists-disagree.d?id=68725974> - Meanwhile human rights activists have slammed the initiative, saying that it would only spark public prejudice and would impede integration.

"I would like the government to express its opinion. If I see that the government does not initiate such amendments, I will," Paulauskas told BNS on Thursday.

The MP also suggests holding discussions on whether Muslims would be allowed to perform religious rites everywhere or only in certain designated places.

Although there's no reason to expect an influx of Muslims into Lithuania, the country must prepare in advance, Paulauskas believes.

"If there were three thousand of them and not three hundred, it would be much more difficult to adopt such rules due to bigger resistance. It's better to have those rules in advance," Paulauskas, representing the Labour Party, said

Wearing burqas in public might pose threat to public security, the politician believes.

"There might be people with terrorist interests. That piece of clothing does not allow to see whether it's a man or woman, what intentions of that person are, to see the face and identify that person. It's an argument for public, national security," Paulauskas said.

Meanwhile Jūrate Guzevičiūtė of the Lithuanian Human Rights Monitoring Institute says the proposed rules would further impede integration of refugees in Lithuania.

"With such proposals, we are not laying foundation for successful integration and successful acceptance of refugees but we are frightening our society that it's something we should be afraid of and that's something alien for us," she told BNS.

The arriving refugees will not pose any threat to Lithuania's national security, Guzevičiūtė said.

"Refugees are people who are fleeing war and other unrest in their countries or from persecution for certain reasons," Guzevičiūtė explained. "These are not people who want to leave their country. The majority of Syrians would like to stay in their country rather than try to integrate in such a cold and rather unfriendly-to-foreigners country like Lithuania."

Lithuania has pledged to accept 325 migrants from other countries, mostly Syrians, as part of wider efforts to address the Mediterranean refugee crisis when thousands of people from Africa and the Middle East drowned trying to get to Europe.

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