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Estonia contemplating hijab, niqab ban

Interfax (30.11.2015) - <http://bit.ly/1YH01WV> - The Estonian Justice Ministry has sent other ministries and other government departments a bill banning women from wearing hijab and niqab in public places, primarily, in state, educational and medical institutions.

"The aim of this law is to ensure uniform behavior within Estonian society and within the social space, including among immigrants, which does not raise any concern," a Justice Ministry spokesperson told Interfax.

"After the analysis with experts, I consider it necessary to hold a discussion on the issue of restricting the wearing of face veils, primarily, in order to prevent complicated practical issues," Justice Minister Urmas Reinsalu has said.

The bill was drafted ahead of the so-called Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe, which aims to prevent domestic violence against women. Estonia signed the convention in 2014.

"The convention contains a number of rules that Estonia does not have or need to change," the ministry said in a memo

The possible restrictions do not restrict the freedom of religion, it said. Underlying the bill is the protection and provision of law and order, human dignity, human rights, and local social programs.

The bill also bans and criminalizes the maiming of women, forced marriages, stalking, as well as purchase of sexual services from the victims of human trafficking.

Estonia minister proposes ban on wearing burka

Estonian Social Security Minister Margus Tsahkna made a proposal at the cabinet meeting on Thursday to introduce a ban on wearing a burka and other articles of clothing concealing the face in public, Postimees Online reports.

DELFI (08.08.2015) - <http://en.delfi.lt/nordic-baltic/estonia-minister-proposes-ban-on-wearing-burka.d?id=68692556> - The cabinet tasked the Justice Ministry with analysing the problems related to the integration of people with different cultural backgrounds. As one particular suggestion, Tsahkna proposed banning clothes covering one's face.

"The rules must be set before similar issues and problems start arising that have emerged in various European countries regarding the issue of cultural diversity. Regulation of these issues afterwards is very complex. What concerns wearing facial covering in public spaces, it is inherent in our society that people have to be identifiable," Tsahkna told Postimees.

He noted that when rules exist that retain safe environment, it is honest to the people of Estonia, as well as people arriving in Estonia who know the current regulations in advance. Wearing clothing hiding face in public places has to be regulated by law, he insisted.

According to Tsahkna, there are no problems concerning this issue with the Muslim community living in Estonia now and yet no one is seen wearing facial cover.

Crusade against tolerance? Estonia may ban migrants from wearing burqas

The Estonian government might ban potential migrants to the country from wearing burqas, traditional Islamic clothing for women that covers the entire face and body, in public places, Estonia's Minister of Social Protection said Friday.

Sputnik (07.08.2015) - <http://sputniknews.com/europe/20150807/1025495058.html> - In late July, EU member states agreed to redistribute some 55,000 asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa, in an attempt to resolve the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean. Under the agreement, Estonia will receive over 150 refugees in the next two years.

"This concerns the security of the social area... There is no final decision on the issue yet but the Justice ministry will analyze which way of solving the problem will fit us," Margus Tsahkna said, as quoted by the Estonian Eesti Päevaleht newspaper.

Some European countries have been trying to limit the wearing of burqas for security reasons.

In May, the Dutch Government approved a ban on burqas in some public places, including education and healthcare institutions, government buildings and on public transport. A similar ban on face covering in public places has been in place in France since 2010.
