

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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Egyptians outraged over some schools forcing girls to wear the hijab

A 13-year-old girl was recently forced to wear the hijab at her school in Egypt, which prompted a wave of condemnation that revealed similar practices across the country.

Al-Monitor (30.10.2020) – <https://bit.ly/3mLP73K> – Controversy has recently surfaced in Egypt after a 13-year-old girl was forced to wear the hijab at the school she attends in Sharqia governorate. The incident has shed light on similar cases across the country.

Lamia Loutfi, the girl's Muslim mother and program manager at the New Woman Foundation, a human rights institution based in Cairo that provides support to female victims of violence and discrimination, filed complaints Oct. 21 against the school's teachers over their attempts to force girls, including her daughter, to wear the hijab.

She told Al-Monitor about the incident that took place Oct. 20. She was shocked to hear her daughter telling her that school officials had forced the girls to wear the hijab, including Christian students.

Loutfi contacted the school and the director confirmed what her daughter had told her, saying that all the girls are required to wear the hijab at school as part of their uniform and are free to remove it when they leave, and that girls in other schools are required to wear the hijab, too.

When she threatened to file a complaint against the school, the director said she will not allow Loutfi's daughter to enter the school campus unless she wears the hijab. "They told me, 'Take whatever measures you want. We will not allow the girl to enter the school. These are our conditions,'" Loutfi said.

Article 53 of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates, "Citizens are equal before the law, possess equal rights and public duties, and may not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, belief, sex, origin, race, color, language, disability, social class, political or geographical

affiliation or for any other reason.”

The hijab is an Islamic practice adopted by many women in Muslim countries. However, some Muslim women choose not to wear the veil.

This incident drew condemnation across the country, with parents launching the Arabic hashtag #forcing_girls_to_wear_the_hijab, revealing similar practices in many schools across Egypt. Some families have not opposed such practice out of fear that their children would be kicked out of school.

Hanan Nouredine, a Muslim housewife, told Al-Monitor that her two daughters, aged eight and 10, were forced to veil at the two schools they attend. “We got angry at first, but then we decided to let them wear the veil in order to avoid troubles with the school and bullying from the teachers.”

On Oct. 21, the National Council for Women filed a complaint to Minister of Education Tarek Shawki. The complaint included a plea from a mother whose daughter, along with other students, was threatened by her teachers and forced to wear the hijab under the pretext that it is part of the school’s uniform.

Kamal Mughith, an expert on educational affairs at the National Center for Educational Research and Development, condemned the attempts to force girls to wear the hijab at school, saying such practices deviate the attention from the

school's main role of providing education.

Speaking to Al-Monitor, Mughith stressed “the need that the education minister goes public on whether or not he supports such practices. The hijab should be a personal matter that girls themselves need to decide on, not an obligation under the pretext of a school uniform.”

Meanwhile, the New Woman Foundation circulated Oct. 21 a petition against forcing schoolgirls to wear the hijab, which dozens of institutions and public figures signed. The petition stressed the state's obligations under the constitution to guarantee the rights of women and children to citizenship without any discrimination on the basis of gender or religion.

Shawki condemned the campaign and said that he is against forcing students to wear the hijab at school. He referred to this case as “an isolated incident” that people overreacted to. He said in a TV statement Oct. 22 that such campaigns are “similar to what the malicious channels and Egypt's enemies do.”

Photo: A woman stands with books in front of a shelf inside the main building of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina library in the coastal city of Alexandria, Egypt, June 24, 2019. Photo by GIUSEPPE CACACE/AFP via Getty Images.

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