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Pressure and attacks on women who don't wear headscarves increase

More and more cases of violations and abuses are reported in schools, workplaces, and public buildings. Since 2001, at least 60 national and local rules or laws have been adopted discriminating on the basis of dress. For Alissa Wahid, an "inclusive paradigm" has morphed into an "exclusive" vision that leaves "a single interpretation of Islam".

AsiaNews/Agencies (19.03.2021) – <https://bit.ly/312StX6> - Increasingly, women, especially if they are young, are subjected to pressure, intimidation, threats and even actual physical violence for not following an Islamic dress code.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), attacks take place in schools (as **happened** recently in Padang), in the workplace as well as in the government buildings of the world's most populous Muslim nation.

Since 2001, at least 60 laws and regulations that discriminate on the basis of dress have been adopted in the Asian country at the national, regional or provincial levels.

Human rights activists and NGOs note that the "dress code" is a sign of growing religious intolerance and conservative attitudes in a nation that, at least officially, recognises six faiths (including Catholicism) but more than 85 per cent of its 270 million people are Sunni Muslims.

After 2014, when the national government introduced regulations on school uniforms, "many regencies and provinces interpreted [the suggestion that a jilbab should be worn] as compulsory, so you had the situation where local education officers and public schools began to rewrite the school rules and to enforce the jilbab (hijab) as part of the school uniforms," said Elaine Pearson, the Australia director of HRW's Asia Division.

This was especially the case in more conservative areas, such as West Sumatra and Central Java where the dress code was imposed on non-Muslims as well. The same is the case for Aceh, the only Indonesian province where Sharia, Islamic law, is enforced.

The National Commission on Violence Against Women has identified 32 regencies and provinces across the archipelago that now require girls and women to wear jilbabs (hijabs) in public schools, government buildings and other public spaces.

In some cases young women have been punished by having their hair cut, expelled from schools, penalised or fired from their jobs for a rule that is not supposed to be binding.

Alissa Wahid, daughter of former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, one of the most active in protecting minorities through the Gus Dur movement, and coordinator of the Gusdurian Network, explains that the dress code is part of a very conservative view that prevails in some parts of the country.

For her, this trend represents a transformation from an “inclusive paradigm” into an “exclusive” vision that leaves “a single interpretation of Islam”. That is also why there are “increasingly Sharia-based regulations”.

The activist also notes that while President Joko Widodo's move to ban the mandatory use of the hijab in public schools is a “positive step,” much remains to be done to counter growing religious extremism and to protect women's rights.

In her opinion, regulations mandating the wearing of hijabs by women and girls could lead to other social limits, such as curfews and being forced into early marriage.

In the long term, such limits could lead to women’s “loss of capacity and self-determination”, and ultimately have a greater impact on women’s lives than hijab regulations alone.

Pluralism and Pancasila: the fight against mandatory hijab

by Mathias Hariyadi

The daughter of former president Abdurrahman Wahid maintains it is not just a question of "school uniform", but of interference in social life. Three ministers draw up a decalogue against the obligation of the veil. The province of Aceh is an exception. Executive Secretary Kwi approves the initiative and defends the school as a "meeting place".



AsiaNews (04.02.2021) - <https://bit.ly/39Lnm7M> - "Let's not think this is only a matter of school uniform, the prohibition or permission to wear the hijab. It's more about a trend-setter to cement the majority religion's ideology and exclusivism with its final objective not just regarding Islamic outfits but social life as a nation," wrote Alissa Wahid, the daughter of the late President Abdurrahman Wahid.

Wahid is a young lady whose strong contribution to the nation to promote interfaith spirit is undeniable through GusDurian Movement -the fans of Gus Dur club.

In the recent issue concerning **the obligation to wear the veil imposed on a Christian high school student** in Padang, in the province of West Sumatra, and which has raised controversy and protests, the activist speaks bluntly of an act of intolerance.

"Our Ministry for Education and Culture should make clear that school's environment -- despite its majority Muslim students—should not force its non-Muslim student to wear the hijab," she writes. The reference is to the incident that occurred in mid-January in Padang when Elianu Hia, father of Jenny Hia, opposed the obligation to wear the veil for his non-Muslim daughter.

A case similar to many others in the most populous Muslim nation in the world, but which had so far passed over in silence due to the lack of reporting or fears of repercussions. There are at least 46 non-Muslim students who attend the same school as Jenny Hia, but only the latter's father has fought against the imposition of the mandatory veil during school hours.

In response to the story, the Minister for Education Nadiem Makarim, a devout Muslim married to a Catholic and defender of the principles of state secularism and pluralism sanctioned by the Pancasila, the colleague of the Interior and the holder of Religious Affairs intervened in these hours.

The following points are outlined in the document signed by the three government leaders: school is part of the nation and home to everyone, regardless of ethnicity or religious faith; the decree will be implemented in all state institutions; the choice of uniforms is entrusted to teachers and students, but clothing or clothing that refers to a religion cannot be imposed; schools and local authorities must remove any obligations [such as that relating to hijab] still in force within 30 days; any violations of the new provisions, Minister Makarim concludes, will be punished according to the law and regulations in force, with the sole exception of the province of Aceh, the only one in which the sharia (Islamic law) is in force and which can derogate from these new standards.

Asked by *AsiaNews* Fr. Heri Wibowo Pr, executive secretary of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (Kwi), applauds the inter-ministerial initiative aimed at promoting pluralism in the country's public schools. "On a personal basis - he adds - I approve and support this movement, which is in line with the spirit of the Pancasila". And it is nice to think, he concludes, that institutes are places where "students from different backgrounds can meet".