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## **Thousands protest in Mekelle against hijab ban in Axum schools**

[Adisstandard](#) (21.01.2025) - Thousands of Muslims gathered in Mekelle today, 21 January, 2025, to protest against the failure of schools in Axum to comply with court rulings and directives from the Tigray Regional Education Bureau, which guarantee Muslim female students the right to wear hijabs in classrooms.

The rally, organized by, Tigray Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, took place at Romanat Square in Mekelle under the banner: "She will learn while wearing her hijab."

"Our daughters are still being denied access to education despite clear rulings from the court and directives from the education bureau," said Sheikh Adam Abdulkadir, President of the Tigray Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, during the protest, adding, "This is deeply concerning in a region where Islam has been part of the culture for centuries."

According to Sheikh Adam Abdulkadir, the protest followed numerous inquiries and discussions with authorities, but "the issue remains unresolved, and our daughters are still being denied access to education."

"A year ago, Muslim students tragically lost their lives with their hijabs along with their people, and now they must learn their education wearing their hijabs," he said.

He also emphasized the peaceful nature of the rally, stating, "The demonstrators have voiced their opposition peacefully, and we are managing this rally in a calm and respectful manner."

The protest follows months of unresolved [grievances](#), including the exclusion of Muslim grade 12 students in Axum from registering for national exams earlier this month due to wearing hijabs.

Students protested the demand to remove their hijabs, as instructed by school officials, citing constitutional protections for religious freedom. Consequently, around 160 muslim students [missed](#) the registration deadline.

The Axum City District Court had previously [suspended](#) the directive prohibiting Muslim students from wearing hijabs in schools and summoned five schools to respond to the allegations.

Mustefa Abdu, a lawyer participating in the rally, told Addis Standard that the primary aim of the protest was to ensure Muslim students can return to school while wearing their hijabs.

“There is no legal justification for forcing them to choose between their religious beliefs and their education,” he said, adding that “they have the right to attend school while wearing their hijabs, and that’s why we are demonstrating.”

The lawyer noted that wearing the hijab is a religious obligation for many Muslim women and is protected under international human rights frameworks, including the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

“We are not protesting against any religion, but we call on the regional government to respect the law and allow students to study in accordance with their rights,” Mustefa emphasized.

Abdurahman Billal, a 65-year-old protestor, told Addis Standard that “even Christians are condemning this ban, as wearing the hijab is a religious duty for Muslim women,” adding that “we are demanding that the decision be respected and that our daughters be allowed to continue their education.”

Rihama Seid, another protester, described the schools’ actions as illegal. “The court and the Regional Education Bureau have made their decisions, but the schools have ignored them,” she said. “Since nothing has been done to enforce these decisions, we are compelled to demonstrate and urge the authorities to take action so these students can return to school.”

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