

An illustrated guide to Islamic veils

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Hijab

Hijab is a general term for Islamic dress code, which requires both men and women to dress with modesty and respect.

Derived from the Arabic word for “veil,” hijab often refers to the headscarf worn by many Muslim women. In Western countries, this scarf usually covers the neck and head, but not the face.



Niqab

Worn commonly in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Yemen, the niqab is a veil that covers the face, leaving the eyes visible. A piece of fabric with bands or ties, it can be worn with a separate headscarf, eye veil or full-body cloak.

Belgium is slated to be the first European country to ban the niqab in public places.



Burqa

The most concealing form of hijab, the burqa is an outer garment that covers a woman’s face, head and body. Leaving only a mesh screen for the eyes, it is worn primarily in Afghanistan and rural regions of Pakistan.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has said that the burqa is “not welcome” in France.



Chador

The chador is a cloak worn mainly in Iran. It consists of a long, loose, semi-circle of fabric that is open in the front. Worn over the head and wrapped around the body, the chador can also be paired with a smaller headscarf. It does not cover a woman’s face.

Photo: Pentocelo

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