

19th March 2011

Islamic Human Rights Commission

Ireland: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review
Twelfth Session of the UPR Working Group of the
Human Rights Council

03-14 October 2011



The Islamic Human Rights Commission is an NGO in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and social Council.

Islamic Human Rights Commission
PO Box 598, Wembley, HA9 7XH.
United Kingdom
Telephone (+44) 20 8904 4222
Fax (+44) 20 8904 5183
Email: info@ihrc.org
Web: www.ihrc.org

In this submission, the Islamic Human Rights Commission raises concern in relation to the discrimination against Muslim women wearing the headscarf living in Ireland.

Executive Summary

In this submission, the Islamic Human Rights Commission provides information under sections B, C and D as stipulated in the General Guidelines for the Preparation of Information under the Universal Periodic Review. Under section B, the Islamic Human Rights Commission gives background information about the struggle of the Muslim women living in Ireland facing discrimination against their wearing of the headscarf. Under section C, the Islamic Human Rights Commission raises concern in relation to freedom of religion of Muslims living in Ireland. Under section D, the Islamic Human Rights Commission makes a number of recommendations regarding action that should be taken by the government.

B. Background

1. The Muslim population in Ireland has risen since the 1990s, showing a 70% increase between the years 2002 and 2006. Many residents have long complained of discrimination and oppression throughout their daily lives in relation to having the freedom to practise their religion. The Islamic Human Rights Commission is concerned about the plight of Muslims in Ireland.
2. The Irish government has acted contrary to the obligation towards its citizens in showing no interest in preventing any form of discrimination to religion by taking no action in protecting their rights.

C. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

Freedom of religion

The discrimination against Muslims practicing their religion living in Ireland has been evident in the past. On 8 December 2010, during court procedure, Judge Furlong demanded the removal of the Islamic headscarf from a Muslim woman, stating the words “she is Ireland now, no headgear allowed in court.” It is apparent that the essential rights of a human have been compromised and discriminated against on religious grounds.

Furthermore, in September 2007 a 14 year-old Irish girl brought the attention of the public towards the government’s attitude of repressing minority rights. Although, ‘Gorey Community School’ eventually allowed the wearing of the religious headscarf to school, the Irish government refused to take a stand on the issue, leaving it as a matter for individual schools. Muslim families living in Ireland have said the government is "silently repressing minority rights" and that this is a reflection of how Ireland treats its minorities.

D. Recommendations

The Islamic Human Rights Commission recommends that:

1. The Muslims citizens of Ireland must be given the freedom to practice Islam according to their religious belief, without interference.
2. The government of Ireland must support their Muslim citizens in enabling them to practise their religion.
3. The government of Ireland must work towards rebuilding relations with the Muslim community in order to regain their trust in the government.