45672 - Should she wear hijab even though her family will be harmed because of that?

the question

What is the ruling on a woman who wears hijab in an Arab country which forbids hijab by force and by harming the woman’s religious commitment and social interests? Should she remain steadfast even though some of her family members may be harmed indirectly? Please advise me.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is a serious crime and a reprehensible action to prevent a Muslim woman from wearing hijab as enjoined by Allaah and forcing her by law to uncover her head and face and go out unveiled among people.

The Muslim has to adhere to the rulings of sharee’ah and “there is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience towards the Creator.” The Muslim woman’s hijab is one of the duties that she is obliged to fulfil. The harm that a woman imagines will befall her or her family may be baseless, or it may not be extreme, and it may be something that can be put up with. So she has to continue to adhere to correct Islamic dress.

If the harm is extreme and certain, or it is most likely that it will happen, then the woman can take off her hijab in order to protect her honour and religious commitment, but she has to remain as covered and as modest as she possibly can. In this case it is not permissible for her to go out of the house except when absolutely necessary, and there is no concession allowing her to go out to study or to buy things that someone else can bring to her. What we mean is that she should only go out for essential needs that cannot easily be dealt with at home, or for some shar’i action that she cannot forsake, and so on.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him) was asked:

In some countries Muslim women may be forced to take off their hijab and leave their heads uncovered. Is it permissible for them to do that, knowing that whoever refuses to do that is faced with consequences such as losing their jobs or being expelled from school?

The Shaykh replied:

This calamity which is happening in some countries is one of the things by means of which a person may be tested. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Alif-Laam-Meem.

[These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur’aan, and none but Allaah (Alone) knows their meanings.]

2. Do people think that they will be left alone because they say: “We believe,” and will not be tested.

3. And We indeed tested those who were before them. And Allaah will certainly make (it) known (the truth of) those who are true, and will certainly make (it) known (the falsehood of) those who are liars, (although Allaah knows all that before putting them to test)”

[al-‘Ankaboot 29:1-3]

What I think is that Muslim women in these countries should refuse to obey people in charge (the rulers) in this evil action, because obeying those in authority in doing something that is wrong is not allowed. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority”

[al-Nisa’ 4:59]

If you think about the meaning of this verse, you will note that Allaah says “Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority” – but the verb

(obey) is not repeated in the third case with regard to those who are in authority. This indicates that obedience to those in authority is secondary to obedience to Allaah and obedience to His Messenger. If their command is contrary to obeying Allaah and His Messenger, then they should not be listened to or obeyed in that which goes against obedience to Allaah and His Messenger. “There is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience to the Creator.”

The persecution that a woman may face in this regard is something that has to be borne with patience, and she should seek the help of Allaah in being patient. We ask Allaah to guide those in authority to the truth. I do not think that this forcing her not to wear hijab can take place unless the woman leaves her home, but if she stays at home no one can force her, so she can stay in her house so that she will be safe from this thing. With regard to studies that will lead to her committing sin, this is not permissible, rather she should study whatever she needs for her religious and worldly interests. This is sufficient, and this can usually be done at home.

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And Allaah knows best.