



224107 - What is the evidence that it is permissible for a woman to take off her hijab in front of her mahrams?

the question

I noticed that you issued a fatwa saying that it is permissible for a woman not to wear hijab in front of a man who is forbidden to marry her (mahram). But the verse about showing adornment does not say that; rather it identifies specific people (in front of whom she does not have to wear hijab).

So what is the evidence that it is permissible for a woman to uncover her hair in front of men who are forbidden for her to marry?

An example to prove my point: it was forbidden for any man to marry the Mothers of the Believers [after the Prophet's death], but despite that they still observed hijab. In other words, the permanent prohibition on marriage has nothing to do with hijab.

Hijab in the verse is specific (to the people mentioned in the verse), and is not general in application and does not apply to every person (mahram) a woman is not permitted to marry, as you say.

Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says:

{Tell the believing women to avert their gaze [from that which is forbidden] and restrain their carnal desires, and not to show their adornments except what ordinarily appears thereof. And let them draw [part of] their headcovers over their chests and not show their adornments except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their [fellow Muslim] women, slaves whom they own, male retainers who are free of physical desire, or small children who still have no awareness of the private aspects of women. Nor let them stamp their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And, O believers, turn all together towards Allah in repentance, so that you may prosper}[An-Nur 24:31].



The verse does not mention men who are forever forbidden to marry a woman.

For example, should the young wife of the father observe hijab in front of his young son? I am talking about hijab, not the prohibition on marriage. Is it forbidden for her to uncover her hair in front of him?

I hope that you will not connect the issue of hijab to the case when marriage is forever forbidden without evidence.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The mahram for a woman is one who is permanently forbidden to marry her because of blood ties (such as her father and grandfather, no matter how far the line of ascent extends, and her son and grandson, no matter how far the line of descent extends, paternal uncles, maternal uncles, her brother, her brother's son and her sister's son), or ties through breastfeeding (such as a woman's brothers through breastfeeding and the husband of the woman who breastfed her), or ties through marriage (such as the mother's husband, the husband's father and grandfather, no matter how far the line of ascent extends, and the husband's son and grandson, no matter how far the line of descent extends).

This is indicated by the texts of the Quran and Sunnah. In the Quran, Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{and not show their adornments except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their [fellow Muslim] women} [An-Nisa' 24:31].

In the Sunnah, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "What becomes



mahram (forbidden for marriage) through breastfeeding is the same as that which becomes mahram through ties of kinship.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2645; Muslim, 1447.

According to another version narrated by both of them: “What becomes mahram (forbidden for marriage) through breastfeeding is the same as that which becomes mahram through childbirth.”

The evidence that could give an answer to the question asked by the questioner is clearly referred to in the verse, and is not a connection that we have made without evidence, as he claims. In the text of the verse there is an exception: {their husbands’ sons}. This verse is speaking about the rulings on looking and adornment, not the rulings on who is a mahram. What evidence is the questioner looking for on this matter after that, when the verse is general in meaning and applies to all the believing women with all sons of their husbands, and does not make any exception for men or women who are young?

Secondly:

A woman’s `awrah in front of her mahrams – such as her father, brother and brother’s son – is her entire body except what usually appears [when at home], such as her face, hair, neck, forearms and feet. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{and not show their adornments except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands’ fathers, their sons, their husbands’ sons, their brothers, their brothers’ sons, their sisters’ sons, their [fellow Muslim] women} [An-Nisa’ 24:31].

Thus Allah has permitted the woman to uncover her adornment in front of her husband and her mahrams. What is meant by adornment is the places where it is worn, so the hand is the place of the ring, the forearm is the place of the bracelet, the ears are the place of the earring, the neck and chest are the place of the necklace, and the shin is the place of the anklet.

We have previously discussed that in detail in the answer to question no. [113287](#).

It says in *Sharh al-Khurashi li Mukhtasar Khalil*, 1/248:



The `awrah of a free woman in the presence of her mahram through blood ties, ties through breastfeeding or ties through marriage is her entire body except for her face and extremities; that includes what is above the chest, the hair, feet and forearms. End quote.

Al-Hattab al-Maliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Al-Basati said: The `awrah of a woman with her mahrams is everything apart from the face, the feet, the wrists, the hair and so on. End quote. Al-Qurafi said in *Jami` adh-Dhakhirah*: There is nothing wrong with a man looking at the hair of his wife's mother. It says in *Jami` al-Muwatta' fi Fasl al-Sunnah min ash-Sha`r*: Malik said: There is nothing wrong with a man looking at the hair of his son's wife or the hair of his wife's mother. Al-Baji said: What Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) meant when he said, "There is nothing wrong with a man looking at..." – and Allah knows best – is looking in a permissible manner at his mahrams such as his mother, his sister and his daughter, and there is no difference of scholarly opinion regarding that.

End quote from *Mawahib al-Jalil*, 2/182.

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is permissible for a man to look at what usually appears of his mahrams, such as the neck, head, hands, feet and so on. He does not have the right to look at what is usually covered, such as the chest, back and the like. Al-Athram said: I asked Abu `Abdillah about a man looking at the hair of his father's wife or his son's wife. He said: This is mentioned in the Quran: {and not show their adornments} except to such and such, and such and such.

Al-Hasan, ash-Sha`bi and ad-Dahhak disallowed looking at the hair of mahrams.

But the correct view is that it is permissible to look at what usually appears, because Allah, may He be exalted, said: {and not show their adornments except to their husbands...}. Sahlah bint Suhayl said: O Messenger of Allah, we used to regard Salim as our son, and he used to sleep with me and Abu Hudhayfah in the same room, and he would see me in the clothes that I usually wear at home, but now Allah, may He be Exalted, has revealed concerning them what you know, so



what do you think about him? The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Breastfeed him." So she breastfed him five times [expressing her milk into a cup], and thus he became like a son to her. Narrated by Abu Dawud and others.

This indicates that he used to see of her what ordinarily appeared of her, as she said: he would see me in the clothes that I usually wear at home. What is meant is scruffy clothes that do not cover the hands and feet.

Ash-Shafa`i narrated in his *Musnad* from Zaynab bint Abi Salamah that she was breastfed by Asma', the wife of az-Zubayr. She said: I used to regard him as a father, and he would come in to visit me when I was combing my hair, and he would take hold of some of my hair and say: Come close to me.

And because it is not possible to avoid that (i.e., looking at the hands and feet), it is permissible, like the face. As for that which does not ordinarily appear, that is not permissible, because there is no need to look at it and there is no guarantee that it would not provoke desire and lead to what is forbidden, therefore it is forbidden to look at it.

End quote from *Al-Mughni*, 7/98-99.

Thus it becomes clear that hijab is strongly connected to the issue of mahrams, and this connection cannot be ignored. So everyone whom a woman is forever forbidden to marry is a mahram to her, and it is permissible for her to uncover in front of him, and for him to be alone with her and travel with her. This is according to scholarly consensus.

It says in *Al-Mawsu`at al-Fiqhiyyah*, 18/162:

An-Nawawi and others narrated that there was scholarly consensus on the prohibition on being alone with a non-mahram woman and the permissibility of being alone with mahrams.

The word mahram here refers to any woman who a man is forever forbidden to marry due to a permissible reason. End quote.



As for looking at some mahrams with desire, it is forbidden according to scholarly consensus. Al-Hattab said:

Al-Abi said – and I think he was narrating from an-Nawawi –: Everything that it is permissible to look at, in what we have discussed above, is subject to the condition that it is without desire. If it is with desire, then it is not allowed, and that even includes a man’s looking at his daughter and mother.

It says in *Jami` al-Kafi*: There is nothing wrong with a man looking at the face, hair and hands of his wife’s mother, and also looking at his father’s wife and his son’s wife. But it is not permissible to look repeatedly or stare at a young woman, whether she is a mahram or not, except in the case of need or necessity, such as when testimony is being given and the like.

Ibn `Abd al-Barr said in *At-Tamhid*: It is permissible to look at the face and hands of a mahram, for anyone who looks without desire and without anything that is suspicious or improper. As for looking with desire, it is prohibited to stare at her with desire when she is clothed [in complete hijab with her face covered], so how about looking at her bare face?

End quote from *Mawahib al-Jalil*, 2/183.

Based on that, if there is the fear of temptation, it is not permissible to look, and in the case of a father’s young wife, his young son should not be alone with her, so as to ward off temptation and bar what could lead to it.

See also the answer to question no. [5538](#).

Thirdly:

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{The Prophet has a greater claim over the believers [and is closer to them] than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers} [Al-Ahzaab 33:6].

Thus the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) are the Mothers of the



Believers, meaning that it is forbidden to marry them [after the Prophet's death], and they are to be treated with respect and honour. It does not mean that any man could be alone with them or that they became mahrams to all believing men. Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That is: it was forbidden to marry them, and they were to be respected, honoured and held in high esteem. But it was not permissible to be alone with them, and the prohibition on marrying them did not extend to their daughters or sisters, according to scholarly consensus.

End quote from *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 6/380.

The clearest evidence from the Sunnah regarding these two issues – namely the issue of not wearing hijab in front of mahrams and wearing it in front of non-mahrams, and the issue of the Mothers of the Believers being like other women with regard to the rulings on mahrams and hijab, and that their being forbidden for marriage does not mean that they could be without hijab in the presence of non-mahram men – includes the hadith of `Urwah, according to which `A'ishah told him that Aflah, the brother of Abul-Qu`ays, came and asked for permission to visit her, after the (command of) hijab had been revealed. Abul-Qu`ays was `Aa'ishah's father through breastfeeding. `A'ishah said: I said: By Allah, I will not give permission to Aflah to come in until I seek permission from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), for Abul-Qu`ays is not the one who breastfed me, rather his wife breastfed me.

`Aa'ishah said: When the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came in, I said: O Messenger of Allah, Aflah, the brother of Abul-Qu`ays, came to me and asked permission to visit me, but I did not want to give him permission to come in until I asked you for permission.

`A'ishah said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Give him permission."

I said: O Messenger of Allah, the man is not the one who breastfed me; rather his wife breastfed me.

He said: Give him permission, for he is your paternal uncle, may your right hand be rubbed with dust!



'Urwah said: Because of that, 'Aa'ishah used to say: Regard as mahram (forbidden for marriage) through breastfeeding that which you regard as mahram through blood ties.

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5804; Muslim, 1445.

So you can see (from this hadith) how it was well established that the paternal uncle is a mahram and it is permissible for the woman to give him permission to come in, and she does not have to observe hijab in front of him when she has to cover in front of others; and how the Mother of the Believers (`A'ishah) it was uncertain about the ruling on the paternal uncle through breastfeeding until the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) explained that he was indeed her paternal uncle, and told her to give him permission to come in.

So the prohibition on the believers marrying the Mothers of the Believers (after the Prophet's death) was a specific ruling and has nothing to do with the issue of the mahram relationship that we are talking about. Otherwise, if the Mothers of the Believers were mahrams as well, it would have been permissible for them to not observe hijab in front of the believing men, and to be alone with them, and so on, according to the rulings on mahrams, but no one says that. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Minhaj as-Sunnah*, 4/369:

The Muslims are unanimously agreed that it was prohibited for anyone to marry the Prophet's wives after his death, and that it is obligatory to respect them, for they are the Mothers of the Believers in the sense of the obligation to respect and honour them and the prohibition on marrying them (after the Prophet's death). But they are not the Mothers of the Believers in the sense of being mahrams, so it is not permissible for anyone except their close relatives to be alone with them, or to travel with them, as a man may be alone with and travel with his own mahrams. Therefore they were enjoined to observe hijab. End quote.

Our advice to the questioner is to seek knowledge, and find out the sources and authentic books of knowledge, and find out about the reliable scholars from whom he may learn before hastening to denounce and disagree regarding any issue before he does proper research.