

United Nations rebukes France for banning hijab at Olympics

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Geneva, September 28 (RHC)-- The United Nations has rebuked France for banning the country's athletes from wearing headscarves during the 2024 Paris Games. "No one should impose on a woman what she needs to wear or not wear," United Nations rights office spokeswoman Marta Hurtado told reporters in Geneva.

French Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera had announced the ban on Sunday, alleging that observing the Islamic dress code during the games amounted to display of religious symbols and "proselytizing."

"Restrictions on expressions of religions or beliefs, such as attire choices, are only acceptable under really specific circumstances," she claimed, saying allowing the Muslim athletes to observe the dress code was tantamount to "discriminatory practice."

France outlawed full-face coverings in 2010. In June, the country's Council of State upheld a ban on women footballers wearing the hijab.

And last month, France's education minister said the country was to ban wearing across the nation's schools of abayas -- a simple, loose over-garment dress worn by many women across the Muslim world -- citing a violation of French "secular laws." Under France's laws on laïcité (secularism), it is also forbidden to wear the Islamic headscarf in government buildings, including schools.

Public officials such as teachers, firefighters, or police officers are banned from wearing the hijab while they are at work too. The bans are usually spearheaded by the right and far-right political elite, despite an argument by the left asserting that they would encroach on individuals' religious freedoms and civil liberties.

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