69432 - Should she take off her hijab because of the harassment that she is faced with after the London bombings?

the question

Following the bombings on July 7th, many Muslim women in Britain were faced with harassment which may lead to killing by extremists in some cases. Is it permissible for a Muslim woman living there in those circumstances to take off her hijab so as to avoid possible harassment?.

Detailed answer

Before issuing a general fatwa in such cases it is essential to have a complete picture of the situation and find out whether or not it has reached the degree of necessity which would make it permissible to do a haraam deed on which there is consensus that it is haraam.

It seems that it has not reached this stage, rather these are the actions of a few fools and extremists, and it is not a general trend in that country. Rather as some of them have said, it is just a few instances of provocation and harassment which can be dealt with without such a serious compromise. Based on that, the Muslims have to ask for their rights to protection, and they should not be blamed for the actions of others, or compromise on practising their religion which is the source of their pride and distinction.

We must remember that hijab is an obligation that Allaah has enjoined on the Muslim woman, which is proven in the Qur'aan and the saheeh Sunnah, and the ummah is agreed upon it despite the differences in their madhhabs and schools of thought. No madhhab has deviated from this view, and no faqeeh has gone against it, and this is what the practice of the ummah has been throughout the centuries. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies (i.e. screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as

not tobe annoyed. And Allaah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”
[al-Ahzaab 33:59]

“and to draw their veils all over Juyoobihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment”

[al-Noor 24:31]

It is the duty of every Muslim to adhere to the obligations of his religion, and to strive to please his Lord and obey His commands, and no one should force him by any means to give that up.

You would be surprised to see people who advocate freedom and the protection of human rights taking away the freedom of others because of some actions that they had nothing to do with.

With regard to a Muslim woman taking off her hijab because of her being faced with harassment, we may sum up this issue in the following points:

·It is not permissible for a Muslim woman to stay in a land where she cannot practise her faith openly. Based on that, every Muslim woman who lives there and is not able to practise her faith openly must migrate to a land where she can practice her faith openly with complete freedom.

·If she is not able to migrate, then the Muslim woman in such circumstances should stay home, especially if she has a guardian who can look after her and meet her needs, and she should not go out except in cases of necessity, for fear of the fitnah (turmoil) to which she may be exposed.

·It is not necessary for her to go out to work and study if there is someone who can support her and she can delay her study until the next semester or take a leave of absence from work, until things calm down, because this harassment only happens in the days following an incident, then it soon calms down and things go back to normal.

·But if she goes out for some necessary reason and she is afraid that she may face harassment, then she should look at what kind of harassment it is. If it is something that can be put up with, such as swearing or insults, or just hostile looks from some people, this does not mean that it becomes permissible for her to take off her hijab, because one can put up with this kind of

harassment. It is false to say to a woman: give up your hijab because of some words that you hear on the street; rather she should be patient and put up with it. This comes under the heading of testing the faith of the believing woman. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“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 29:2-3]

So she should put up with any harassment or mockery that comes for the sake of Allaah, and keep in mind what Allaah has promised of reward to the one who adheres to His religion, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Ahead of you there is a time of patience when the one who adheres to Islam will have the reward of fifty martyrs among you.” Narrated by al-Tabaraani from Ibn Mas’ood and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami’.

·Another means of warding off harassment is not to go out alone, but only in the company of her guardian (wali) or as part of a group, so that the foolish will not harass her when she is alone.

·If she is going to be faced with unbearable harassment, such as being beaten or killed or having her honour tarnished, and she has to go out for some necessary reason, then in this case it is permissible for her to reduce her hijab to a lesser kind, such as covering the head and neck only. She may give up only as much of her hijab as will protect her from being exposed to harm, because necessity should not be exaggerated. Or she may cover herself without the kind of hijab that people are used to, so that the Muslim woman will not appear as a target for harassment in the eyes of those people. Among the winter clothing etc of non-Muslim women there are garments which cover all or most of the parts that are required to be covered by sharee’ah.

·If her hijab is taken from her by force, then she is being put to trial and she will be rewarded, but she must go back to her proper dress when the problem comes to an end.

Such a fatwa must be issued with caution and in a gradual fashion, according to the situation, so that it will not lead to a loss of Islamic identity in societies that are not conservative.