

European Court of Human Rights upholds Belgian ban on Islamic full-face veil

11/07/2017 09:37 by admin

Strasbourg: The European Court of Human Rights on Tuesday upheld Belgium's ban on wearing Islamic full-face veil in public. The court found that Belgium's 2011 law banning clothing that partly or totally covers the face did not violate the right to respect for private and family life nor freedom of religion, and that it did not disproportionately discriminate against the Muslim community. In its ruling, the court in Strasbourg, France said that the restriction on veil sought to guarantee social cohesion, the "protection of the rights and freedoms of others" and that it was "necessary in a democratic society".

“The question whether the full-face veil was accepted in the Belgian public sphere was a choice of society,” the court said in a statement.

The law, passed in June 2011, was challenged by two Muslim women -- a Belgian national Samia Belcacemi and Moroccan Yamina Oussar.

What the law says

The law prohibits appearing in public "with a face masked or hidden, in whole or in part, in such a way as to be unidentifiable". Violations of the law can be punished by fines and up to seven days in jail.

France was the first European country to ban the niqab in April 2011. The European Court of Human Rights had upheld the French law in 2014 when it rejected arguments that the restriction breached religious freedom and individual human rights.

In March this year, the European court of justice in Luxembourg ruled that Islamic headscarves can be banned at workplace, but only as part of a general policy barring all religious and political symbols.

- IT