



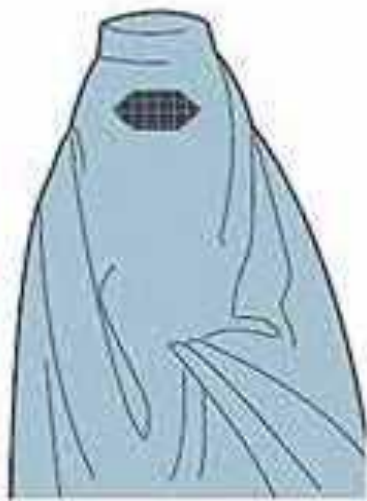
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**Don't know what we can do to stop this horror, personally I think we need to let people know, and to disclose the facts. We have to let the world know how these women live.**



**BURQA**

**The canvas  
prison**

**HIYAB****BURKA****NIQAB****SHAYLA****CHADOR**

## Traditional dresses for Muslim women:

### The Hiyab:

Is a characteristic veil for Arab women. It leaves the face free, and many women wear it as a sign of identity.

### The BURKA :

It completely obscures the body. A canvas grid in front of the eyes allows the woman to see without being seen. And with covered hands.

### The NIQAB :

The garment that completely covers the body to the ankles, leaving only the eyes free. And for the eyes it combines with another veil.

### The SHAYLA :

Is a large rectangular shawl, used in the Persian Gulf area. This veil is worn around the head.

### The CHADOR :

Used by Iranian women when they go out. It covers the entire body and can be combined with a shawl over the head.



Burka



## The BURKA \*

It was introduced in AFGHANISTAN in the early twentieth century, during the HABIBULLA era (1901-1919), who imposed its use to his 200 women harem, in order to avoid tempting men staring at their facial beauty.

They were made of silk and delicate embroidery, Habibulla's princesses even wore the burkas embroidered with golden threads. Thus the burka had become a luxury garment worn by women of leisure. At the same time they would distance themselves from ordinary people and stop them from staring.

**\*It is believed the burka's origin dates back to the Achaemenid dynasty of the Persian Empire founded by Cyrus II (6<sup>th</sup> century BC).**

**And according to some writings dating back to the 13th century BC, (which were discovered in Assyria) mentioned the wearing of the Burka. At that time the Muslim religion did not exist.**



**Historically, it is the proper garment of the Pashtun tribes who are great believers and supporters of the burka. In fact when King Amanullah, who succeeded Habibulla, tried to modernize the country by abolishing the burka, and worst still when his wife the queen Soraya Tarzi appeared without the burka, it created a big scandal. Unfortunately his attempts to Westernize Afghanistan had created a rebellious opposition with the Pashtun tribes. Finally he was forced to abdicate and flee to India in 1929.**







After the departure of the Soviets in Afghanistan the Taliban\* came to power and the wearing of the “Full Burka” became mandatory, thus imposing a garment that can guarantee control over a woman’s body, since it covers the eyes with a thick veil which prevents the wearer to see normally. And because the canvas grid has a limited peripheral vision women become dependent on others to effectively move around, specially in open areas.

**\*Taliban: Islamic fundamentalist group, emerged from the koranic schools in Pakistan. The majority of them are ethnic Pashtun.**

**One of the objectives of the thick veil is to prevent the face and eyes to be visible.**

**The "burka" exerts a strong pressure on the head (it weighs about 7 kg), adding to the fatigue of the walk.**

**The length of the garment goes down to their feet, not only to cover the body, but also to add greater displacement difficulties, especially to prevent them from running.**







The burka is not an actual garment, it is a canvas prison that submits women not to clearly see where they are headed and can't see more than a metre away from their sight. It's like looking through a pair of glasses where vision all around is blurred. The eyes of these women are prisoners like their bodies.

A leader of the clandestine organization of Afghan women RAWA \*, confirms these views when she says:

**"It's like a prison that keeps you warm and isolated. The women have troubles recognise each other. Those who need glasses can't use them. It's as if they were blind. The mesh fabric that covers their eyes is purposely made sufficiently thick to avoid women enlarging them. Some women are beaten, because they have enlarged the holes. For women having to wear it, has been a trauma since it is a matter of humiliation, additionally it affects all movements as well as their sight."**

Often, when crossing the streets, because of their low visibility many have been involved in serious accidents leading to many deaths.

\* RAWA: A group of intellectual women who, under the leadership of Meena Keshwar, in 1977 have founded the Revolutionary Association of Afghan women. The ongoing social work and the fight against the fundamentalists has cost her, her life. On the 2nd of April 1987 she was assassinated by the agents of the Afghan secret police and their fundamentalist's accomplices in Quetta, Pakistan.









- **The Taliban regime is an ultra-radical and fundamentalist regime imposing very taxing demands on women such as, no singing, no dancing or playing of musical instruments, no sports, no employment, no schooling and even not allowed flying kites which is Afghans national pastime, they are also forbidden to walk alone in the streets and not to receive medical assistance except in some dislocated hospitals without water, without electricity or operating rooms, where they go only to die.**
- **There are only male physicians practicing in hospitals, but they are not allowed to treat nor operate on women.**



**Women can only travel in the trunk of taxis**







# What identity do they have?



A woman's identity











- **When a woman is pregnant, the Afghans say she is sick. 97% of Afghan women give birth at home, because they are forbidden to call male doctors, and they almost never have means of transportation to take them to a medical care centre.**
- **Malalai Maternity is surrounded by a concrete wall built by the Taliban, with two little windows. And on the other side are their husbands. They may talk with their wives through small windows.**



# Hospital clothing





**Birth with the burka**

**A recent report by "Physicians for Human Rights" stated that 40% of Afghan women in their productive age die of childbirth complications.**





**Under the burka the child can't see his mother's gaze, her face doesn't exist, her voice is changed and there is no skin contact**



**Also during breastfeeding, the mother can't see her child's expressions.**

**It negates the basic bindings between mother and child.**







When the Taliban forces captured Kabul on 27th September 1996, they suppressed women from their civil rights, taking away their education entitlements and confined them to their homes. The mandatory wearing of the burka became one of the most compelling symbols of the repression exercised on women by the new regime.

When in early Kabul city an emerging civil society where modern women had just begun to enjoy an interesting social status, was removed with a stroke of the pen by the Taliban. Among tens of thousands of women working in the public services had been sent home, there were 7790 female teachers in schools, 63 schools have been closed in Kabul. 65% of the teaching staff, 40% of school children and almost half of the 7,000 university students were female.

The leap into the past was overwhelming, from the twentieth century to the medieval age.

No one dare challenge the mulla Mohammed Omar who was the Taliban leader. The coup was a brutal human and cultural result.







# WOMEN OR RUBBISH?















**Their miserable life is lived with constant threats and fear of punishment if they break a simple rule.**

**With young guards working for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, patrolling the streets with whips, sticks and Kalashnikovs (rifles), spotting women wearing makeup, exposing their faces or bursting out with laughter etc...; they are obliged to take them in without any legal defence, and some of the penalties are stoning, amputation, torture, floggings or public executions.**



# STONING

The adulteress is punished by stoning.

The woman is put into a hole in the ground and covered to the chest with soil, then "men" stone her to death.



The stones should not be too big so as not to cause immediate death, neither too small as they are then not considered stones.





**Drawing made by an Afghan child**



After seven years since the invasion by the United States, and with an exponential growth of armed conflict, we can state categorically that the living conditions of women and girls in Afghanistan today are dreadful, and that not much has changed for them, despite the promises of the international community, not only in areas south and east controlled by the Taliban, but also in many of the places dominated by the international coalition, like Helmad, under British control.



Despite the utopian equality of the new constitution of 2004, women can still be purchased, sold or be as part of an inheritance. As in the days of the Taliban, forced marriages continue, and domestic violence (due to lack of work). There is a city where women leave their homes only twice in their lifetime, when they get married and go to live with their husbands, and when they die.



**During 2007, 165 women victims of violence have tried to commit suicide. 87% of Afghans suffer domestic violence. Half the complaints are due to sexual abuse. Cases of violence against women and young girls, has increased by 40% over the same period the previous year (2007). 60% of women are victims of forced marriages. Half of the marriages are young teenagers who have not reached 16 yet. (even though the law prohibits these marriages). Many girls are given as compensation to a dispute, to a debt or a crime under tribal law, also because of the extreme poverty plaguing the country. A father can get between 600€ and 1500€ for his daughter, which is the equivalent of three years' salary for a worker.**

Similarly to the times of the Taliban, the faded blue burka is still colouring the streets and towns of Afghanistan. (Although now with synthetic fabrics the colour doesn't fade as much) The judging of women in public (especially stoning) is the order of the day.

The nightmare of women is having an existence without basic rights and fundamentals, in an impoverished country, ruined by the war which lasted over twenty years, and without infrastructure, with persistent droughts, a country full of landmines, topped by the difficulties of finding food and shelter, and with most of their men enlisted in the forces. Many of the educated or professional class of people have fled or are dead.





**There are thousands of widows whose only resources is to beg in the streets, or prostitute themselves, many go crazy, or commit suicide; this is because the law denies them the inheritance of their deceased husbands. Thousands of women every day can only afford to eat and feed their children on bread and tea. Hurts them having to see their daughters stay locked up at home and without education, and to see their sons physically kidnapped, or morally induced to serve in the armed forces.**

**In desperation many women commit suicide. This is very common with widows, since without their spouse they are not allowed to go out and are not allowed to work thus they can't feed their children.**

**The public hospital in Herat, a city where women suicide by fire is very common, in 2005 has treated 90 women who tried to burn themselves to death.**



**Zahra, 20 years married was beaten daily by her husband, was also forbidden to see her family; was so depressed she poured cooking oil over herself and lit it up.**

**She survived and legally divorced her husband, now she lives with her mother. She lost mobility of her neck from the cicatrices left by the fire.**



**\* Would it be too much to hope, for the male populations not to be so lethargic and actively participate against gender violence, by campaigning, in demonstrations and in many other ways together with women?**

**\* Will it be possible for men in unison with women to stand up against the aggressors and fight for justice and individual rights for a fair gender equality?**





**I dream that the sufferings of the many concealed and disguised women of, Afghanistan, Palestine, Morocco, and Africa cease and that justice reigns throughout all the lands where presently, being female is synonymous with disgrace.**

**I dream of a more just and egalitarian world, joined by men to be active in this conflict where there are neither winners nor losers. For a hopeful future where all of our children (boys and girls) have learned the basis of mutual respect for each other without discrimination.**

**Would it be Utopia?**

**Not this  
for us!!!**





*« AIMEZ-  
VOUS LES  
UNS LES  
AUTRES »  
!!!*