



In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

## The B.C. Muslim Association

جمعية مسلمي بريتش كولومبيا - كندا

### BCMA Statement on Face Veil Ban for Citizenship Oaths

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

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On Monday December 12 2011, Federal Immigration Minister Jason Kenny announced that a ban on face veils during citizenship ceremonies will be put into effect as of immediately.

The BCMA, being the largest Muslim organization in British Columbia and a major Muslim association of Canada, would like to state the following on behalf of the greater Muslim population of BC, as well as Muslims of Canada:

-If the purpose of having women remove their face veils (*niqāb*) at the citizenship oath ceremony is merely to confirm their identity, as well as ensure that they are actually reciting the oath, then such this would not conflict with Islamic values and guidelines, and it would be permissible for a Muslim woman to uncover her face for that period of time. It would be preferable that such verifications be conducted by females. This should not be confused with the *hijāb*, or head-covering, which Muslim women must wear in such ceremonies.

-We feel that the government should have consulted experts on Islamic law before enforcing the regulation in order to understand the correct position of *niqāb* in Islam. The minister's remarks about *niqāb* being a completely cultural practice are inaccurate, and Islamic legal texts can be referred to in this matter. Likewise, the presentation of the regulation as a 'ban' or 'imposition' and the minister's public comments about Muslim women's previous practice as being "ridiculous" or "frankly, bizarre" does not exude finesse and inclusiveness, and displays a lack of knowledge and appreciation for Islamic religious practices.

To summarize, we feel that this regulation may have practical benefit and purpose, and should be fulfilled by Muslim women to that extent. However, Muslim women should not be given the message that it is only by removing their veils that they will be deemed as "full members of our community"; or that wearing the veil in general is not culturally acceptable in Canada, nor should anyone practicing their religious values be made to feel marginalized.

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